

What's on the menu for baby



**YOUR
HEALTH**

DR GITA MATHAI

Q My baby is one and a half years old. She does not eat solid food at all but prefers milk. At night, she drinks about one and a half litres of baby formula.

After the age of one year, children need only about 400ml of milk per day in total. The gut also needs rest and recovery time. If a child is fed continuously throughout the night, they may feel bloated and full the next day and not have an appetite for solid food.

Try introducing an eight-hour gap at night without milk feeds. Also, aim for a three-hour gap between feeds during the day so that the stomach has time to empty before the next meal. This will help stimulate appetite for solid foods.

Gut feeling

Q I am constipated and uncomfortable. My stools are hard and challenging to pass. I have been taking laxatives, but now even they don't seem to work.

Stimulant laxatives, such as those containing senna or bisacodyl, make the intestines contract more frequently and forcefully. While these medicines can relieve constipation, they also have side effects. Over time, the large intestine may become dependent on them, requiring larger doses for the same effect. Therefore, they should be used only as directed and for short periods.

Bulking agents, which are not absorbed like lactulose and isabgol husk, are safer. Consult a physician to determine whether increasing your fluid intake or adding more fruits and vegetables to your diet will help. You may also need further investigations, like thyroid function tests or a colonoscopy, to identify and treat any underlying cause of your problem.



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Nose bleed

Q I get recurrent attacks of bleeding from one nostril. I also have high blood pressure.

Unilateral epistaxis (bleeding from one side of the nose) may be due to local injury — commonly from nose-picking — or the presence of a foreign body in the nose. High blood pressure or blood disorders, such as thrombocytopenia, can also cause nosebleeds.

When bleeding occurs, lean forward, pinch the affected nostril firmly and apply nasal drops if available. Since your condition is recurrent, please seek medical evaluation to identify and be treated for the underlying cause.

Blocked ears

Q As I become older, I find that sometimes my ears feel blocked with wax.

Earwax is composed of oily secretions, sweat and dead skin cells. It protects the delicate inner ear by trapping irritants like dirt, dust, bacteria and fungi and by regulating moisture.

Wax tends to be harder for some people. Using earbuds may push the wax deeper into the ear, causing it to become impacted and stuck. Using sharp objects to remove the wax may damage the eardrum.

Wax-dissolving ear drops are available. If they don't do the trick, it is better to get the wax professionally removed by an ENT surgeon.

Insomnia

Q I have insomnia, but I don't want to take sleeping tablets because I'm afraid I might become addicted.

You are right to be cautious. The body can develop tolerance to sleeping tablets, meaning you may need higher doses over time for the same effect. Instead, try these tips:

- Avoid active exercise at least two hours before bedtime
- Switch off all electronics in the bedroom
- Take a warm bath before going to bed

■ Practise 10 minutes of meditation. It can help deepen sleep, even for people without sleep problems. Meditation is free, requires no equipment and can be done anywhere.

The writer has a family practice at Vellore and is the author of *Staying Healthy in Modern India*. If you have any questions on health issues please write to yourhealthgm@yahoo.co.in