

Pink slip could bring on depression



**YOUR
HEALTH**

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Q I lost my job and, instead of being careful with money, I'm using my credit cards and just buying things which I don't need. I also tend to forget where I have placed things and have trouble sleeping.

The changes in behaviour you've described could be signs of depression, possibly triggered by the job loss. It may help to consult a psychiatrist or seek counselling. You might benefit from talk therapy, motivational support or, if necessary, a mild antidepressant — until you find a new job.

Stiff joints

Q I am 60 years old. When I wake up in the morning, my joints are stiff and it is difficult to move. It is not pain but stiffness.

As we age, the cartilage that cushions the bones in our joints becomes more rigid and less flexible. Additionally, the synovial fluid that lubricates the joints decreases. Movement is essential to keep this fluid circulating, which helps prevent stiffness. However, during sleep, prolonged immobility can lead to stiff joints in the morning.

It's important not to let this stiffness discourage you from staying active. Don't stop your exercise or daily activities. Instead, incorporate gentle movement like passive flexion, stretching, yoga or consult a physiotherapist to maintain joint mobility. Morning stiffness is usually not a cause for concern and typically doesn't require medication. Too much rest can worsen the stiffness.

Insect bite

Q There are many insects in my garden. They bite and sting. Once this happens, I start itching uncontrollably. This goes on for a long time. It is incapacitating.

Here's what you should do when you get an insect bite.

■ **Cool the Area:** Wrap an ice cube in

a plastic bag and gently rub it on the bite to reduce swelling and itching.

■ **Remove Any Sting:** Check if a stinger is left behind. If you see one, carefully remove it.

■ **Apply a Paste:** Mix baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) with water to form a paste and apply it on the bite.

■ **Take an Antihistamine:** A mild antihistamine can help ease allergic reactions and itching.

■ **Use Calamine Lotion:** Apply calamine lotion to itchy areas for relief.

■ **Identify the Cause:** Make sure it's an insect bite, not a reaction to a plant or other allergen.

■ **Prevent Future Bites:** Wear long sleeves and full pants to minimise exposure to insects outdoors.

Opening bottles

Q I find it difficult to unscrew the tops of jars. I tend to drop things. I am also unable to pick up anything weighing more than two kilos. I was able to do all this before.

This may be due to inactivity and ageing. As we grow older, we lose muscle mass every year in a process known as sarcopenia.

Unless we actively work to maintain muscle strength and mass, we gradually become weaker over time.

If the weakness has developed suddenly, it could be related to a recent illness. Consult a doctor for a thorough evaluation in such cases. Common causes of weakness include poor sleep, thyroid issues, muscle disorders, heart failure or diabetes.

If your test results are normal, the solution might be as simple as incorporating weight training exercises into your routine. These can easily be done at home using light weights.

Steroids and weight gain

Q I have asthma. I got instant relief after I went to a new doctor. The only problem is that my appetite has increased and I have gained weight.

Steroids are often prescribed to manage asthma. However, higher doses or prolonged use can increase appetite, potentially leading to weight gain.

Speak with your doctor about how to best manage these side effects. In some cases, switching to inhaled steroids — rather than oral ones — may help reduce systemic effects.



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