

All forgetfulness is not dementia



YOUR HEALTH

DR GITA MATHAI

Q I have always been very busy, but lately, I have found that I misplace many of my things and then I have to waste a lot of time searching for them. Is it dementia?

In today's busy world, this happens to a lot of people. They are forced to multitask and work against fatigue and stress. One way to reduce this problem is to declutter your desk and your room so it is easy to find things. Even if you are busy, try not to multitask. Do one thing, complete it and then go onto the next task. This way, your brain does not get confused, as it tries to constantly shift from one task to another.

Exercise and cold

Q I had a cold and cough, and I stopped exercising for five days. Can I start now?

Ease yourself slowly into your exercise routine. Remember to warm up and cool down. If you feel fatigue at any point, stop. A good rule of thumb is to do 10 per cent of what you used to do, and increase by 10 per cent every three days, until you reach your previous schedule.

Vaccines for travel

Q I am 67 years old and planning to travel to the US. Are there any immunisations that I need to take?

Please check if you have had the pneumococcal vaccine and the latest flu vaccine. Also, if possible, take the herpes zoster or shingles vaccine.

Juice irritation

Q I like to drink fruit juice and cola drinks. I find that they just leave me more tired and angry.

Fruit contains fibre. When you eat a fruit, its digestion is slowed down by the fibre. Its sugar is released slowly and the blood sugar levels remain normal. When you drink fruit juice, it

is like drinking tasty sugar water with B complex and C vitamins. The blood sugar levels are elevated. They come down equally rapidly, leaving you tired and angry. Cola drinks are just tasty, fizzy sugar water. If they also contain caffeine, then they can make you agitated and depressed. If you really like fizz, take some plain soda, squeeze half a lime into it and drink that without salt or sugar.

Thyroid surgery

Q I have a swelling on the front of my neck. After taking an ultrasound scan, the doctor said it is a thyroid swelling. He also said that I have to have surgery. My thyroid functions are normal. Why surgery?

A swelling on the front of the neck, if it is due to an enlarged thyroid, needs to be operated if it interferes with breathing, sleeping or swallowing,

has certain areas (nodules) which are producing excess thyroid hormone or is suspicious for malignancy. Sometimes radioactive iodine treatment may be recommended instead.

Raw eggs

Q I like to eat two raw eggs a day. My mother says this is dangerous.

Raw or undercooked eggs can be contaminated with bacteria like *Salmonella*, *E. coli* or *Campylobacter*. These can cause fever and diarrhoea. Bird flu viruses can also spread through raw eggs. It is better to cook eggs, as the high temperature will kill harmful bacteria and viruses.

Crimson urine

Q My urine is red in colour. I am afraid it is blood, but I have no pain.

You need to immediately consult a physician and do a urine test. It may be something as harmless as very hard exercise or because you ate something which is red coloured like beetroot or food that contained a red dye. On the other hand, it might be due to an enlarged prostate, kidney disease, stones in the urinary tract, urinary tract infection or even bladder cancer. It needs to be taken seriously and diagnosed.



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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