

Do my kids need polio shots?



YOUR HEALTH

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Q Now that polio has been officially eradicated in India, do I still need to immunise my children?

Yes. Although India has been free of the wild poliovirus for many years, polio has not been eradicated worldwide. The virus can still be brought into India from countries where it continues to circulate.

We don't usually see polio-afflicted children in India because of the success of widespread vaccination. If immunisation rates fall, the disease could return. Therefore, children should continue to receive polio vaccination according to the National Immunisation Schedule.

High uric acid

Q I was prescribed allopurinol for elevated uric acid levels but now my level is normal. Do I need to continue taking it?

Your uric acid level may have become normal because the allopurinol is working. If you have gout, kidney stones or persistently high uric acid, treatment may need to be continued for many years and sometimes lifelong. Do not stop the medication because your uric acid is now normal; discuss it with your doctor first.

Palpitations

Q I am 25 years old and worried because, for no apparent reason, my heart suddenly starts beating very fast. At the same time, I feel tightness in my chest. I have tried

deep breathing, but it does not help.

These episodes are called palpitations. They may be caused by anxiety, lack of sleep, caffeine, nicotine, certain medicines, anaemia, thyroid problems or an abnormal heart rhythm. As you also experience chest tightness, please do not assume it is merely anxiety. Consult a physician promptly. Avoid energy drinks, excess coffee, smoking and decongestant medication. Note when the episodes occur and how long they last.

If the rapid heartbeat and chest tightness do not settle within a few minutes, or are accompanied by breathlessness, sweating, dizziness or fainting, go to a hospital immediately.

Bone scan

Q I have been advised a bone scan as I am 62 years old and have bone pain. My doctor thinks I may have osteoporosis.



Osteoporosis usually does not cause pain but it can cause a fracture after a minor fall. It is diagnosed with a DEXA scan and is routinely recommended for women aged 65 and above and men aged 70 and above.

Stiff fingers

Q My fingers have been stiff over the last two weeks. I am 80 years old.

Finger stiffness may be due to osteoarthritis, particularly if it is worse on waking. Rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes and thyroid problems can also cause stiffness. Gentle finger-stretching and opening and closing your fists for 5-10 minutes daily may help. As the stiffness is new and has persisted for several weeks, consult your doctor for evaluation and treatment.

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