The Pilates exercise that can leave you in agony

As it’s revealed UK is 27th in world health league, millions wasted on prescriptions for toothpaste, Yakult and Calpol

£13m NHS Bill for Suncream

By Sophie Borland
Health Correspondent

THE NHS is spending millions on prescriptions for suncream and toothpaste, a damning analysis has found.

Some patients are even being given hangover tablets and Yakult yogurt drinks.

Critics said it was ‘ridiculous’ that such items were being handed out when the NHS was rationing routine treatments.

It has prompted concern that patients are abusing the system by demanding prescriptions for household essentials which are cheaply available at their local chemist.

The figures came on the day that Britain was ranked only 27th in the world for health and wellness – below Slovenia, Spain and Portugal – and 111th out of 133 countries for obesity.

In 2014, the NHS handed out 404,500 prescriptions for suncream at a cost of £13million. Another 4.2million prescriptions for indigestion pills cost £26million, while 1.4million were written out for multi-vitamins, at £4.2million.

Other bathroom cabinet items routinely being prescribed by GPs include Calpol, vaseline, strepsils and toothpaste, according to the Health and Social Care Information Centre.

Roger Goss of Patient Concern said: ‘This is ludicrous. Every week we hear of patients being denied another cancer treatment or refused catheters while others are being prescribed toothpaste. Whoever is prescribing this or authorising it must have completely lost their mind! ’

Doctors admit that some patients abuse the system and arrive at surgeries with shopping baskets.

Tories vow to spend £100billion on Trident

TORIES will today open up a new front in the election war by pledging £100billion for a new fleet of four Trident submarines.

The manifesto commitment opens clear blue water between the party and Labour, whose leader Ed Miliband wants only the ‘least cost nuclear deterrent we can have’.

Defence Secretary Michael Fallon will accuse the Labour leader of being prepared to undermine the UK’s nuclear deterrent in a ‘desperate’ bid for power.

Mr Fallon will claim Mr Miliband will stop at nothing to enter No10 – even if it means weakening the country’s defences to win support from the Scottish Nationalists.

The SNP, on whose votes a minority Labour government could depend, has been demanding concessions over Trident.

Who is the new man in Gwynnie’s life?
by Victoria Lambert

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E M A Y all be prone to feeling a bit irritable and slamming a few doors at certain times of the month, but seems our menstrual cycle doesn't just affect our mood, it can also affect our skin. This is because the cells that make up the tough outer layer of our skin, the epidermis, are replaced with new ones every two to four weeks. The relative short lifespan (other cells, such as neurons in the brain, can last a lifetime) is because it is so easily damaged that it needs to be able to repair itself quickly. However, our skin is just not responding to the effects of the outside world but also to commands from inside the body. These instructions are principally from the hormones that cause it to look older or become oily, spot-filled and they also follow a four-week plan.

Life happens to our skin throughout a typical month and what you can do to keep it looking and feeling its best.

**DAYS 1 – 7**

What happens to your body: Your monthly cycle starts with the first day of your period. The body is producing more of a hormone called prostaglandin and this proceeds the uterine walls during menstruation. As your period starts, your level of sex hormones, such as oestrogen and oestrogen drop, making you feel emotional.

**Effect on skin:** Prostaglandin increases pain sensitivity, says Dr Terry Long, a London-based dermatologist. "Your skin will be more tender; spots will feel more painful. Prostaglandin in blood vessels constricts too so you may flush more easily. With less oestrogen in your system, your skin will feel drier and lines or wrinkles appear more pronounced.

**Nutrition tip:** Skin specialist and nutritionist Alice Mackintosh advises foods which are good sources of the natural painkiller magnesium, such as beans, bananas, nuts, and seeds. Magnesium also helps to relax muscles and the vascular system. Alternatively, take a supplement with 200mg of magnesium daily, which can help to calm your skin.

**Beauty tip:** "This is the time for hydrating masks and products with hyaluronic acid to plump up collagen," says Alice. "Hyaluronic acid occurs naturally in the body, attracting and holding water, creating a plumping effect. Skin treatments should be astringing, not too aggressive, as skin will be too sensitive."

**DAYS 7 – 10**

What happens to your body: Your ovaries have restarted production of sex hormones and estradiol levels (the ‘feel good’ hormone) are rising in your mood.

**Effect on skin:** Skin may have a better, more even tone, and feel firmer, says Dr Loong. "Oestrogen is plumping up skin cells and encouraging the production of collagen, which is the protein which gives skin its strength and elasticity. People don’t get spots at this time."

**Nutrition tip:** Though skin can be clearer, remember you are at risk of iron deficiency after menstruation because of the loss of blood. This can leave skin looking pallid, sometimes with dark circles under your eyes. After your period, Alice Mackintosh advises sources of iron, such as red meat, kale, spinach or dates.

**Beauty tip:** ‘New skin cells are forming,’ says Dr Loong, ‘so it is a good time to speed up cell turnover by exfoliating dry patches, leaving the skin looking brighter. Your pain threshold is higher, so book hair removal methods now. You can have a peel, laser or laser therapy, as skin is more robust.’

**DAYS 12 – 16**

What happens to your body: This is the ovulation phase—a time when many women feel at their best. ‘Nature gives you your most attractive face to catch the eye of a mate,’ says Dr Loong. ‘Hormones, such as oestrogen and luteinising hormone (which regulates the ovaries), peak and cause you to look, smell and sound your best.’

**Effect on skin:** Collagen production is on maximum, says Dr Loong, ‘and our pore size smallest, making our skin look its best. It is a great time for dates or getting photographs taken. You probably won’t need so much make-up either.’

Some women get spotty now, particularly on the chin and jaw line. ‘If you get spotty at ovulation time, it suggests too much oestrogen,’ says Dr Loong.

Oestrogen can stimulate the production of sebum, an oily substance which acts as the skin’s lubricant, blocking pores and increasing spots. More melanin, the pigment which gives skin its colour, is also being produced now, giving a better, more attractive complexion.

**Nutrition tip:** Eat foods rich in vitamin A, says Alice Mackintosh, to help ensure sebaceous glands don’t overproduce sebum. Look for such colourful vegetables as butternut squash, red peppers, cantaloupe melons and carrots.

**Beauty tip:** This is a good time for anti-ageing treatments which involve plumping up the skin (like light peels, masks and fillers) to maximise collagen production and maintain skin’s elasticity, says Dr Loong.

Because of the extra melanin in your body, however, you should be wearing a sunscreen with a high SPF if you can. Deeper patches of dark skin called melasma. ‘This is caused by a combination of hormones and sun exposure,’ says Dr Adam Friedman of The Harley Street Dermatology Clinic. ‘Oestrogen and progesterone interact with ultrasound giving pigmentation on the skin, typically on the cheeks, nose, lips and forehead.

Melasma can also be caused by skin trauma so avoid peels or lasers, especially if you have an uneven skin tone already.

**DAYS 17 – 24**

What happens to your body: If you are not pregnant, hormone levels start to drop in preparation for menstruation, says Dr Loong.

**Effect on skin:** One hormone, progesterone, does briefly increase. While this can leave some women’s skin calmer, it makes others oilier and more spot-prone. That is because progesterone stimulates the production of sebum. As levels rise, the skin swells and sebaceous pores shut, leading to a breakout. Testosterone also creates sebum and can aggravate the problem. Women have a small amount of testosterone building up towards menstruation to maintain the feminine glow. ‘Sometimes, if you have too much, it leads to spots.’

**Nutrition tip:** Alice Mackintosh advises foods that help to remove excess hormones. Go for cleansing vegetables like courgette, kale, broccoli and beetroot. These contain substances which bind to, and help excrete, excess hormones.

Try juicing your fruit and veg as it helps to absorb nutrients more easily.

**Beauty tip:** Have skin peels to rid yourself of excess oil. Professor Howard Murad, a dermatologist, says ‘Proper exfoliant products are coming in two to three days, use a topical antibiotic cream once a day to help fend them off.’

That can help to kill bacteria that infect blocked hair follicles and cause spots.

**DAYS 25 – 28**

What happens to your body: If the egg is not fertilised, levels of oestrogen and progesterone gradually fall until they are low, they lose their effect on the womb and the endometrium, triggering a period. This can lead to bloating and feelings of discomfort because during this ‘luteal’, or latter phase of the menstrual cycle, there is build-up.

Your mood may be affected, too. Low levels of oestrogen produce serotonin, making you feel ‘happy’. When production drops, so does your mood.

Dr Murad warns: ‘You may not be interested in sex and feel low on energy because of dropping hormone levels. This may make you want to eat more junk food or drink sugary, fizzy drinks to satisfy yourself. It is not fully understood why but one theory is that women’s bodies become more sensitive to the hormone insulin at this stage, making them more prone to blood sugar levels not triggering a craving for sweet food.

**Effect on skin:** ‘You’ll be suffering from spots, your skin will look dry and your wrinkles more apparent,’ says Dr Murad.

Ironically, your face may get plump at this time because the body retains water, although it is not fully understood why.

**Nutrition tip:** ‘Encourage the removal of estrogen with herbal teas containing ingredients that also help to support the liver and restore hormone balance,’ says Dr Murad. Look out for fennel, nettle and dandelion to drink hot water with fresh ginger to enhance.

**Beauty tip:** ‘Deep cleansing facials are useful to clean the pores and stimulate circulation. And anything soothing may also help your general mood.’