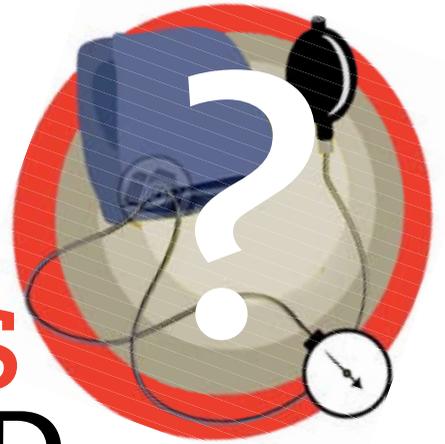


# YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED...



## The panel



### DR APELLES ECONS,

director of three allergy centres in the UK and a member of the British Society of Allergy, Environmental and Nutritional Medicine.

### LIZ TUCKER,

nutritionist and author, with an inside knowledge of food allergy and intolerance. Visit [www.behappybehealthy.co.uk](http://www.behappybehealthy.co.uk)

### DR ADRIAN MORRIS,

allergist at the Surrey Allergy Clinic. Visit [www.allergy-clinic.co.uk](http://www.allergy-clinic.co.uk)

Each month our expert panel answers your questions and any concerns you may have about allergies, food intolerances and lifestyle issues

## I'm addicted to yogurt

**Q** I constantly have a furry tongue – does this mean I have a health problem? I wondered if it could be due to all the dairy products I eat. I constantly crave yogurt and can eat a giant-sized tub in one go. What do you think?

**NAME AND ADDRESS WITHHELD**

**Q** **LIZ TUCKER SAYS** 'Dairy products are very mucus forming and you could simply be eating far too much. If you have other symptoms, such as a constantly runny nose, coughing or vaginal discharge, then you need to cut down.

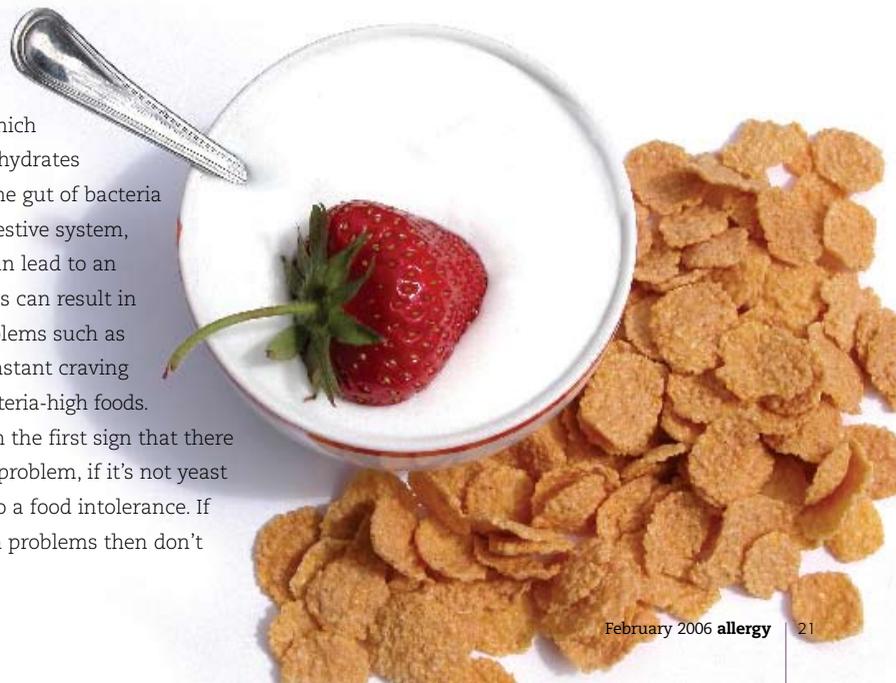
'Alternatively, it could be due to a build-up of bacteria in the gut. Yogurt is very high in bacteria and, although it's often referred to as "friendly"

as it is vital for digestive processes, it's only beneficial if the balance is right. Western diets, which are high in refined carbohydrates and additives can strip the gut of bacteria and cause a sluggish digestive system, but too much bacteria can lead to an opportunistic spread. This can result in yeast related health problems such as thrush, cystitis and a constant craving for yeast-rich, sugary, bacteria-high foods.

'A furry tongue is often the first sign that there is some sort of digestive problem, if it's not yeast related, it could be due to a food intolerance. If you have no other health problems then don't

get too anxious, as making small changes to your diet is probably all you need to do to rectify this. If you eat large amounts of one sort of food it does indicate your diet is imbalanced. This you can rectify by eating lots of raw, fresh foods such as vegetables, meat, fish, nuts, seeds and pulses and cutting down on heavily refined and processed foods.

'With regards to dairy, aim to eat organic, sugar- and additive-free produce within a balanced and varied diet. I also recommend that you see your doctor to rule out any underlying medical condition. You could also consider taking a clinically validated food intolerance test, such as the Yorktest foodSCAN tests, which screen against some of the most common triggers, including dairy.' ❖



### Allergies are ruining my love life

**Q** I'm allergic to latex and nuts. Plus, I'm chemically sensitive, especially to strong perfume and aftershave. This is playing havoc with my love life because I'm too scared to date. If I kiss a man who has eaten nuts, it could send me into anaphylactic shock. I don't even want to think about lovemaking! How can I get my love life back on track without putting my health at risk?

**JUDY CLASPER, NOTTS**

**A** **DR ADRIAN MORRIS SAYS** 'Don't despair. I'm sure we can get your love life back on track. Firstly, have you had a reliable allergy test to confirm your latex and nut allergy? This is extremely important in order to determine the severity of your allergy and find out exactly which nuts you're allergic to. The best test to take is called a RAST or UniCAP test for latex and an "fx1" nut allergy screen, which tests against peanut, brazil nut, hazel nut, almond and coconut. These tests are available on the NHS but you may need to be quite persistent before your GP agrees to sanction them.

'As you already know, latex allergy may put you at risk during dental and surgical procedures, so make sure your dentist, GP and surgeon are well aware. Remember, if you're allergic to latex, you may also react to avocado, kiwi, banana, chestnut and, as in your case, nuts. If tests show that you are highly allergic to latex and nuts (with anaphylaxis), you should always carry an adrenaline auto-injector and wear a Medic Alert bracelet.

'Your sensitivity to perfume and aftershave, although unpleasant, is unlikely to be life threatening. A gentle hint to your partner that you prefer his natural odour should be enough to get rid of the offending scent. As for nuts, surely he can go without these when he's with you. Ask him to keep a mini-size toothbrush on him – this may help to reduce your risk of exposure to nuts.

'On a more active note, latex-free condoms are readily available at pharmacies – make sure that you have these to hand whenever you need them. Perhaps a romantic shower together will wash away any lingering traces of aftershave.'



### Baby it's cold outside

**Q** Winter is a particularly stressful time for me and my three-year-old child. We both suffer with eczema, which is aggravated by the bitter weather. My skin gets cracked, sore and painful and becomes sensitive to perfumed cosmetics so I can hardly even bear to wash my face or wear make-up. It's worse for my son whose playmates don't understand why his face and hands are so red and cracked. Is there anything I can do?

**CATHERINE STANTON, NORTH WALES**

**A** **DR EGONS SAYS** 'I assume that with your GP's help you've already tried to control the eczema with some emulsifying preparations or steroid creams (although the latter are used more sparingly these days). 'It's true that perfumes and toiletries make sensitive skin worse, as does the cold and the wind. However, these factors are likely to exacerbate the condition rather than cause it.

'An overwhelming majority of atopic eczema is caused by natural airborne allergens such as dust mites, moulds and pollens and/or food sensitivities. A growing number of GPs and dermatology or ENT departments offer basic skin prick tests or IgE blood test, which can help to pinpoint your triggers.

'If your skin gets better during the summer when you spend more time outdoors and your home is better ventilated, it's likely that airborne allergens are partly to blame for your condition. If you suspect this is a cause, it would make sense to start using an air-filter in your bedroom. You could also invest in a special anti-mite mattress cover, which can prevent dust mite emissions from circulating.

'Food sensitivities can also make eczema worse. Common culprits include milk, cheese, wheat, corn, egg, orange, chocolate, soy and, in kids, artificial additives. Try avoiding these for a while to see if your symptoms improve. Also, many children with multiple allergies have nutritional deficiencies. They seem to benefit from taking gamma linoleic acid (evening primrose oil), zinc, magnesium and a multivitamin supplement.'

**If tests show that you're highly allergic to latex and nuts (with anaphylaxis), you should always carry an adrenaline auto-injector and wear a Medic Alert bracelet**

\* We regret that we're unable to answer questions individually

#### Contacts

- **Yorktest** Call 01904 410410 or visit [www.yorktest.com](http://www.yorktest.com)
- **Lactose.co.uk** Call 0794 1133 448 or visit [www.lactose.co.uk](http://www.lactose.co.uk)
- **The Latex Allergy Support Group** Call 07071 225838 or visit [www.lasg.co.uk](http://www.lasg.co.uk)
- **The Anaphylaxis Campaign** Call 01252 542029 or visit [www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk)
- **Asthma UK** Call 08457 01 02 03 or visit [www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)
- **The National Eczema Society** Call 0870 241 3604 or visit [www.eczema.org](http://www.eczema.org)

**Write to us!** Send your questions\* to **Questions/ allergy magazine, PSP Communications, 15 Craven Street, London, WC2N 5AD. Email [allergy@pspc.com](mailto:allergy@pspc.com)**