

Turn to nature for remedies to ease everyday niggles, aches and complaints. By Nicole Sparrow

TENSION HEADACHES

"Stress, particularly muscular tension is a major cause of tension headaches," explains Dr Rohan Budree, homeopath at the Naturally Yours wellness centre in Bryanston, Jo'burg. If you aren't keen on popping painkillers, there are a number of natural alternatives available including Phyto Nova Tension Headache, R38, or TranQuin Stress Spray, R60, which contains calming herbal extracts.

If you have recurring headaches, you need to look at the possible underlying cause advises Budree. It could be stress, low blood sugar, sinus problems or even an overloaded liver, he says, and recommends you consult an expert. A craniosacral therapist, for example, will be able to establish why there is pent-up tension in your muscles and how to release it.

Bear in mind you may not discover a cure immediately, he adds. It's a trial-and-error process and what works for others may not work for you, so be patient.

QUICK TIP: "Try applying arnica to your neck and shoulders to ease tension," says Budree.

ENERGY SLUMP

Do you find yourself feeling completely drained at 3pm and craving chocolate biscuits? That afternoon energy slump signals low blood sugar, explains Dr Budree.

There's no quick fix to beating slumps. Rather, it's about planning mealtimes, he says. You need to make sure you eat regularly, so set meal times and make sure you pack lunch, advises Budree. You can also turn to supplements and herbs to help promote a constant, healthy blood

sugar level. "Chromium polynicotinate, bitter melon and gymnema are good supplement options to try." According to DiabetesLibrary.org, chromium polynicotinate increases the ability of insulin to process sugar; bitter melon helps balance blood sugar; and gymnema can help balance carbohydrate cravings.

QUICK TIP: Keep low-glycaemic snacks like fruit and nuts close to hand to eat when you feel your energy levels dropping off. "You'll see a big difference," Budree notes.

MOUTH ULCERS

You're chewing a mouthful of food and accidentally sink a tooth into the delicate tissues in your mouth. This painful cut turns into a mouth ulcer which is your unwelcome companion for the next 10 days as the lesion heals. According to *Total Health* (Tafelberg) these are known as traumatic ulcers, but you might be surprised to learn that you can also get another kind, known as aphthous ulcers, which usually occur in response to stress, fatigue or illness.

"Aphthous mouth ulcers are a warning sign that your system is tired or run down," says *Total Health*. To help reduce occurrence, it's important to follow a healthy diet, get enough sleep and manage your stress levels.

QUICK TIP: When you do find a painful ulcer in your mouth, US natural health expert Dr Andrew Weil suggests treating them with deglycyrrhizinated liquorice (DGL). "Buy it in powder form at the health

food store and mix it into a paste or solution to swish in your mouth."

UPSET TUMMY

Maybe that spicy curry you ate last night isn't sitting too well with you or you suspect there's a tummy bug doing the rounds. If you've been staying as close to the bathroom as you can, a quick treatment is charcoal tablets, says Budree. These work by attracting excess stomach and intestinal gas and can also ease wind, indigestion and heartburn.

You can also try other natural preparations like Weleda Digestive Diarrhoea & Flatulence Remedy, R51, or TIBB Gastro Stop, R50. If you suffer with an upset tummy on a regular basis, Budree also advises taking a probiotic to help balance the natural flora in the gut.

Also, remember to up your intake of electrolytes. Diarrhoea can rob your body of water and natural salts. As a quick, at-home fix, Rehydration.org recommends you add one teaspoon of salt and eight teaspoons of sugar to one litre of boiled water and leave it to cool. Drink after every loose motion.

QUICK TIP: "Grate an apple, leave it to stand until it turns yellow and then eat it," suggests Budree. The pectin in the fruit acts as a binding agent to help normalise loose stools.

ANXIETY

You're sitting in a traffic jam, rapping your fingers on the steering wheel because you're late for an important appointment. The kids are arguing on the back seat and another driver is trying to push in front