ASK AN EXPERT . . .

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Q: I always get a urinary tract infection (UTI) during stressful periods in my life. Is the stress causing it?

A urinary tract infection is a common infection affecting the bladder, kidneys or urethra. The most common type is cystitis, usually caused by bacteria from the perineal area entering the bladder.

Many women experience cystitis at some point, and some find it appears more often during stressful times. While stress doesn't cause infection, it can weaken the immune system and increase inflammation, making it harder for the body to fight bacteria.

Symptoms include burning when urinating and needing to go more frequently. Most cases improve on their own. Drinking plenty of water and taking simple painkillers can help, as well as managing stress.

Consult your GP if symptoms persist, are severe, or occur repeatedly as you may need antibiotics or further tests.

WE RECOMMEND . . .

As spring arrives, temperatures rise and so does insect activity. Ticks are out in force across the UK, particularly in grassy and woodland areas, so it's a good idea to apply insect repellent to exposed areas when you're hiking, dog walking, or spending time in nature. Incognito is clinically tested to be 100% effective against ticks.

· Incognito spray £13.99 from supermarkets, Boots and www.lessmosquito.com

Quinoa

Look out for quinoa (it is pronounced 'keen-wah') in the pasta and rice aisle.

This gluten-free seed is hailed as the healthiest carbohydrate, as it is packed with B vitamins, magnesium, potassium, iron and zinc, plus protein and fibre.

It cooks in 15 minutes and can be served hot or cold in savoury or sweet dishes.

One portion delivers 8 g protein and 5 g fibre.

Hay Fever v Sinusitis

For some people sensitive to tree pollen, hay fever symptoms can start in April but if you've never suffered before, an allergy can mimic sinusitis. Here, Niamh McMillan, pharmacist with Superdrug, explains the key differences . . .

1 **LENGTH OF SYMPTOMS** – sinusitis might stick around for two or three weeks if untreated, but hay fever can linger for weeks or even months.

2 **MUCUS** – although a blocked or runny nose is common with both conditions, hay fever usually causes clear, watery mucus. With sinusitis, it is often thicker and discoloured and congestion can feel deep and persistent.

3 **PAIN** – facial pain or pressure around the cheeks, eyes or forehead is a sign of sinusitis and not hay fever.

4 **ITCHINESS** – red and watery eyes are classic hay fever symptoms.

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