

# 10 OF THE BEST

## MEN'S HEALTH PRODUCTS

Selenium-ACE, £4.29 for a month's supply, from Boots and supermarkets.  
www.wissen.com  
SELENIUM has been shown to improve male fertility and help reduce prostate cancer risk. Also contains vitamins A, C and E.

Fertility Test for Men, £23.99, mail order 0870 042 9207, www.testin-prive.co.uk

THIS home test reveals if sperm concentration is below the minimum fertility standard of 20 million/ml.

HairMax LaserComb Premium, £326, mail order 0870 350 1264, www.innovate4u.com  
TREATS hair loss by using the stimulating effects of light therapy to activate follicle growth.

Tanita Ironman, £99, Stockists: 0895 439577, www.tanita.co.uk

BODY composition monitor helps reveal body fat percentage. Also tells you muscle mass, hydration level and individual body fat measurements.

Heart Rate Monitor, £25.99, mail order www.bhf.org.uk  
AS WELL as monitoring heart rate during exercise, this also has a stopwatch and digital clock. Can be mounted on your bike.

The Male Diet Plate, £19.99, mail order 088 950 5882, www.bhf.org.uk

ENSURE you eat a balanced diet with this earthenware plate, split into sections, you can determine how much protein, carbohydrates and vegetables you should be eating.



Lamisil One, £9.99, from pharmacies nationwide  
A ONE-HIT application containing terbinafine to kill the fungus that causes athlete's foot, which is twice as common in men as women.

No 7 Gradual Tan Body, £9.50, from Boots

FOR men who want to look tanned without risking skin cancer through sunbathing, this discreetly tops up colour bit by bit every day.



Golden Root Complex, £21.95 for ten, Stockists: 0845 4746 247, www.goldenrootonline.co.uk  
FOR men suffering from erectile dysfunction, a natural alternative to Viagra, approved by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

Microfile BP-3AGI Automatic Home Blood Pressure Monitor, £34.99, 020 8772 4924, www.bpsoc.org.uk

ENABLES men at risk of heart disease and stroke to keep an eye on their blood pressure at home.

# Thousands could be spared shingles

By VICTORIA LAMBERT

THE PAIN, sufferers say, is unbearable. 'I had it on my face, and I have been to hell and back,' says one. Another describes it as 'sending me mad'. For a third: 'Four years on and I'm still looking for some relief — does one ever get rid of shingles?'

Shingles affects a quarter of a million Britons every year, nearly half of whom will suffer dreadful long-term pain. But according to a leading expert prompt treatment with anti-viral drugs could prevent, or at least reduce, suffering. The problem is that patients aren't receiving treatment soon enough.

The cause of the disease is a virus, known as herpes varicella-zoster, which can be dormant in the nervous system for years until triggered.

The Shingles Support Society says 40 per cent of sufferers will have long-lasting pain due to permanent nerve damage. The condition predominantly affects older people, among whom it is remarkably common: by the age of 50, 46 per cent of us will have suffered this excruciating disease — but younger people can suffer from it, too.

'Shingles can be really debilitating,' says Professor Steve Field, chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners. 'The problem is the long-term pain and damage it causes. It can affect your whole life.'

While the disease cannot be prevented, and there is no 'cure', Professor Field stresses the importance of early treatment with anti-viral drugs.

SHINGLES sometimes begins with a tingling sensation in the skin — 'the way your lip might feel' before a cold sore appears, says Professor Field. Then two or three days later a painful red rash, like a hot stripe of pain, will appear on just one side of the body.

Within two or three days this is covered in fluid-filled sacs. These harden and crust but cause intense itching and prolonged agony. Other symptoms include tiredness, loss of appetite, loss of memory and possibly a slight fever.

Areas most commonly affected by shingles are the abdomen, under the arm, chest and on the face — by the eye, from cheek to nose, and along the lower jaw.

Shingles can be particularly nasty if it gets into the eye — where it causes inflammation and may damage the nerves

permanently, even causing sight loss — or in the ear, where it may affect hearing.

The initial rash usually lasts seven to ten days, but a second rash often appears after the first has died down, and an attack can last for a very long time.

'And then there is the pain — the real problem with shingles.'

Such pain may occur after the rash has settled down and the blisters have crusted over, when the patient is no longer contagious. This can last for years and, in some cases, a lifetime.

'The virus that causes all this misery has its roots in a common childhood ailment, chicken pox.'

Most of us will have suffered this in childhood, when it is a fairly harmless illness. But recovery doesn't mean we've got rid of the virus. In fact, it travels down to the nerves of the spine, where it lurks, waiting to be reactivated.

No one knows why it can reappear as shingles many

years later, but it's thought a weakened immune system could be to blame — perhaps due to other illnesses, stress or poor nutrition.

This is why the elderly, but also anyone whose immunity has been suppressed by drugs — such as cancer sufferers, those on anti-rejection drugs following transplants and HIV patients — are at increased risk.

When the virus returns, it cannot come back as chicken pox, as the body is primed to defend against that virus. So it mutates, transporting itself along the nerves — this is why it can lead to long-term pain.

The standard treatment for shingles is an anti-viral drug, aciclovir, which can be successful at fighting pain if given fast enough — in the first 24 to 48 hours of the condition. This can reduce the severity of the attack and limit the risk of long-term pain.

Professor Field admits he often starts a patient on the

treatment even if he just has a hunch that they have shingles, to prevent further complications.

However, many doctors are not so keen to prescribe aciclovir if they think that 48-hour golden window of opportunity has passed.

And some patients may not realise they need to see a GP until it is too late. The result is the sufferer will have to battle the virus unaided, and then live with any long-term complications.

Strong painkillers such as Tramadol and even a cream made of chili peppers called capsaicin, which is believed to act on nerve endings gradually reducing pain signals to the brain. Capsaicin is available over the counter or via your GP.

Anyone who begins to suffer post-shingles pain may be offered amitriptyline, an antidepressant that is also effective in switching off pain at the root of the nerve itself.

But for many people, finding a cure for their burning pain is a never-ending search.

Help The Aged produces a helpful leaflet on the condition and The British Pain Society has details of specialist NHS Pain clinics where sufferers can get advice on managing long-term pain.

PRACTICAL tips include keeping sores clean and avoiding scented toiletries. Soothe the rash with ice cubes

wrapped in a flannel or tea-towel and placed in a plastic bag to avoid trapping a pack of frozen peas wrapped in a towel, or apply a lotion, such as calamine.

There is some good news: some studies have found an amino acid called lysine, which can be bought as a supplement or found naturally in dairy products, can help prevent recurrences, shorten healing time and the severity of symptoms.

And at Cardiff University, Chris McQuinn, professor of medicinal chemistry, has developed a new drug for shingles, FV-100, which is doing well in phase I trials.

FV 100 looks like it will be very potent (more than 10,000 times as strong as aciclovir), safe and could prevent long-term pain, too. It could be on the market by 2011.

In terms of prevention, there is a shingles vaccine, not currently licensed for use in the UK in the U.S. where it is available, research suggests it could be cost-effective compared to the price of looking after sufferers with long-term complications.

■ The British Pain Society, 020 7631 6570, www.britishtainsociety.org  
Shingles Support Society, 0845 123 2303, www.shsp.org.uk/hinlogies.

## JUICE DOCTOR LIVER BOOSTING

BLEND together: 200g (7oz) carrots and 200g (7oz) fennel.

Both carrot and fennel are good for detoxing and rehydrating your body. Fennel also helps to digest fats, supporting the often over-worked liver. A glass of this juice should give you an immediate lift.

■ TAKEN from The Miracle Juice Diet by Amanda Cross (Naimin, £8.99). To order a copy (p.p.p.free), call 0845 806 4286.

