



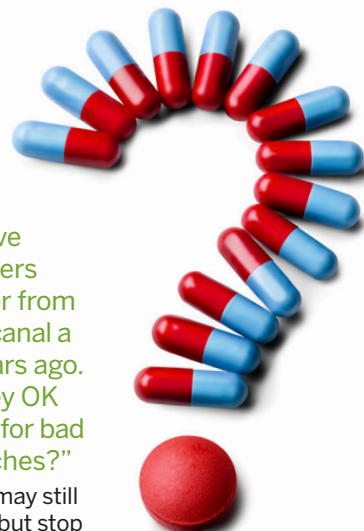
**Q** “I’ve got runner’s knee. Help!”

**A** The dull aching around your knees when you go up or down stairs or squat could be the result of misaligned knee joints—common if you are bowlegged, have knock-knees or pronate (your ankle rolls inward or outward when you plant your foot). “See a sports medicine doctor or a physical therapist to assess your biomechanics,” says Lynn Millar, Ph.D., professor of physical therapy at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. “In some cases orthotics or different footwear can help.” Also, strength-train to build the muscles around your knees to help absorb impact on the joints caused by running. Don’t forget your core and your hips: Limited hip strength makes it harder to control lower-leg motion and may increase the risk of injury.

**Q** “Is it OK to use the morning-after pill before sex?”

**A** It’s not ideal, but a new study in *Obstetrics & Gynecology* concludes that taking the emergency contraceptive levonorgestrel (sold as Plan B and others) around the time of sex is safe for a woman’s health and moderately effective in preventing pregnancy. “It’s better than nothing,” says Carolyn Westhoff, M.D., an ob-gyn and FITNESS advisory board member, who notes that for women who have sex infrequently and don’t want to take a pill every day, it may make sense to have emergency contraception on hand to use in addition to a condom. “But once you’re having sex regularly it’s going to be cheaper, more effective and better for controlling your menstrual cycle to use the Pill,” she says.

By Lisa Haney



**Q** “I have painkillers left over from a root canal a few years ago. Are they OK to take for bad headaches?”

**A** They may still be safe, but stop before you pop. “It’s important to see a physician to assess your condition rather than self-diagnosing and resorting to old medication,” says Suzanne Amato Nesbit, clinical pharmacy specialist at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Painkillers can work for a bunch of problems, but even if the ones you took for tooth pain are still effective (90 percent of meds remain potent for years after the expiration date), they may not be the best choice for your headaches. After a treatment cycle, throw leftover pills in the trash with coffee grounds (to make them unappealing to pets and kids) inside a sealed bag or can.

**Q** “How can I make healthy habits stick?”

**A** Try this cool mental motivator: Predict you will eat better and work out more next week and you probably will, according to a recent study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*. The reason is that once you turn wishful thinking into a plan of action, that goal feels more accessible and your behavior becomes more consistent with your ideal, explains Vicki Morwitz, Ph.D., study coauthor and research professor of marketing at the NYU Stern School of Business in New York City. Simple, but it works. “Self-predictions can help reinforce good habits and disrupt bad ones,” Morwitz says.

