

the Suburban Woman



Ask a Medical Expert:

Making Sense of your Body's Signs and Symptoms

Making Sense of your Body's Signs Pt. 1

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Minor symptoms like brittle nails or cracked lips usually fall on that list of things you pass up mentioning to your doctor, but maybe they shouldn't be. Some of these subtle signs can actually be indicative of underlying issues, which is why it's so important to stay in tune with your body. We've put together a handful of medical symptom that you shouldn't ignore:

Earlobe Crease

Could Mean: Heart Disease

A diagonal crease across the earlobe can be associated with heart disease. This crease suggests cholesterol deposits in arteries, indicating a higher than normal risk of heart trouble. If you have a crease in your earlobe or one appears, ask your doctor if it may be linked to heart disease, especially if it runs in your family.

--Michelle Yagoda, MD, PC

Excessive Ear Wax

Could Mean: Essential Fatty Acid Deficiency

Excessive ear wax can be the first indicator of larger problems related to irritated sinuses, allergies, a cold or it can point toward a deficiency of essential fatty acids (EFAs). Essential fatty acids help guard against ear canal infection by reducing inflammation. EFAs are instrumental in protecting the body against cancer, heart and autoimmune disease.

--Wayne Guerra, MD, MBA

Brittle Nails

Could Mean: Nutritional Deficiencies or a Thyroid Disorder

They say the eyes are the window to the soul. Well, nails can often be the window to one's underlying state of health. Dry, brittle nails that crack and split easily can be due to nutritional deficiencies, such as iron and zinc, or possibly a thyroid disorder (especially if accompanied by coarse hair, constipation, feeling cold and weight gain). Often, though, brittle nails occur as a

normal result of the aging process.

--Katherine Chretien, MD, FACP

Red Palms

Could Mean: Liver Disease or High Estrogen Levels

While it may be completely normal for a person to have red palms, in others it may mean a more serious medical problem exists. In the emergency department, we see many alcoholics who have alcohol-induced cirrhosis that exhibits in red palms. Other types of liver disease can also cause red palms. If your hands are red and itchy, you may have an increased level of the hormone estrogen, typically seen in pregnant patients.

--Dr. Guerra

Peeling Nails

Could Mean: Lack of Lipids

Peeling nails can mean a diet that's lacking in lipids, such as linoleic acid. Lipids include biologically important oils, fats and oil-soluble nutrients and provide the building blocks for healthy, beautiful nails. Lipids are necessary for cell membrane health, vitality and flexibility and for energy storage and hormone production.

--Dr. Yagoda

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