

JOE & TERESA GRAEDON, PhD

Q&A

Q. My husband has had high cholesterol for years. When it got over 26, his doctor prescribed Liptor. Since then his cholesterol has dropped under 200.

He is very happy with the results. He thinks that he doesn't have to watch his diet anymore and has gone back to eating the high-fat foods he used to shun. I worry that

The cheese, ice cream, bacon and butter he is consuming will be bad for his heart. But every time he goes in for a blood test, his doctor tells him he is doing great. Can Liptor really substitute for a sensible diet?

A. Liptor and similar medications are supposed to be used in conjunction with a heart-healthy diet. They are not an excuse to eat foods that are high in fat and cholesterol. Even though your husband's test results remain good, he should stick to a sensible eating plan.

Q. I almost fell over when I read that aspartame could interact with Coumadin. I'd had no idea. Diet Coca-Cola is the only soft drink that I routinely use and I'm on Coumadin. Am I in danger?

A. Aspartame (Equal, NutraSweet) increases bleeding time. For most people, this is not a problem, but for those taking Coumadin, it might raise the risk of hemorrhage. Please discuss this with your doctor to see if an occasional diet soda would be OK.

Why it's wrong to suppress sexual urges

Sex sure gets people excited. They fuss and fret about every aspect of this human behaviour. Frequently readers of this column agonise over lack of sexual desire or inability to perform or enjoy the experience. But recently a woman contacted us to complain about a different kind of problem.

"I have been a widow for 10 years and am terribly annoyed by needs I cannot satisfy. Masturbation just increases my sexual desire.

"I am too embarrassed to talk to my doctor about this. I know it sounds ridiculous, but I am desperate for something to take away my sexual desires."

In our response we suggested that she consult a sympathetic physician about a medication that could dampen libido. Antidepressants like Prozac as well as hormone progesterone may reduce sexual desire. Chaste tree berry extract is an herb traditionally used to lower libido. We

were unprepared for the outpouring of emotion we received in response to this answer. Many widows chastised us:

"When I read your answer, I came very close to bursting into tears or hurling the paper across the room. Would you have given that same advice to a man?"

"Let me tell you about myself. I am a 63-year-old female widowed when I was 51. I was born in 1938 and raised by provincial parents who were very restrictive about sex. Coming from that background, I can well understand the feelings of a woman older than 60.

"I managed to overcome my upbringing, and in the early 60s I married the man who was my husband for the next 28 years. We were sublimely happy and sexually well-matched. "After five years of mourning the loss of my husband and going through the first five years of menopause, during which my libido disappeared totally, I again had strong sexual urges.

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I am a widow also, age 62, and I have a great man in my life with whom I have sex as often as possible – usually three or four times a week. I can't imagine a life without passion.

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“There are many older women who just need to realise we are human beings with natural urges until we die. We shouldn't be scolded for relieving those urges the only way we can, by ourselves.” Other widows wrote that they had similar sexual urges. For one woman, these feelings are a welcome reminder. “My mate and I were exceptionally sexual during our joyous 47-year marriage.

“My sexual yearnings are stronger than ever, because I miss him so. I could not consider sex (or romance) with anyone else. I don't want to lose my sexuality. It's a validation.”

Another reader has a different approach: “I was really surprised by your answer to the widow who wanted to dim her sexual desires with medication. Sex is good for you.

“I would have told her to find a sexual partner. Many men do not want the commitment and responsibility of marriage, but I've never met one who didn't want sex.

“I am a widow also, age 62, and I have a great man in my life with whom I have sex as often as possible – usually three or four times a week. I can't imagine a life without passion.”

Our society has a hard time dealing with sexuality in older people. The death of a spouse does not banish sex drive. We suggest, however, that those who find partners take the same precautions urged upon younger people. Sexually transmitted diseases can strike anyone, so using barrier contraceptives makes sense at any age.

The Herbal Pharmacy

Q. Can you tell me about lice and the use of Listerine in eradicating them? My niece and my nephew have both contacted me because their children have had lice. I had told them I'd read that Listerine could help, but they think I'm crazy.

A. We have heard from several readers that Listerine can be helpful in preventing lice infestations. We recently received this testimonial from a reader: “The best way to prevent head lice is old-fashioned Listerine Antiseptic Mouthrinse. We were in the Army 33 years ago and moved a lot, but my kids never got lice.

Teachers asked me why my children didn't get lice when the others did. I used to put Listerine on their hair and scalp a week before school started and periodically after that, and also put a tablespoon of Listerine in the rinse water when I washed the clothes and sheets.”

Listerine Antiseptic Mouthrinse contains essential oils including thymol, eucalyptol, menthol and methyl salicylate. It also has a 26.9 per cent alcohol, which may kill lice.

Q. Some time ago a lady wrote to you about how thyme tea helped her husband's bad cough when nothing else would. I would like your readers to know it really works. My husband had a dreadful cough, so I made him some thyme tea. The relief was miraculous.

A. Thyme leaves, the kind you might find in your spice rack, contains oils called thymol and carvacrol. These can loosen thick mucus in the respiratory tract and reduce irritation, which might be why thyme tea is a traditional home remedy for cough.

Q. Do you have inexpensive remedies for dry skin and brittle nails?

A. Despite the budget, your first step needs to be a doctor to rule out thyroid trouble or psoriasis, which would require medical treatment. A strong moisturiser should help strengthen your nails as well as make your hands feel better. Petroleum jelly (Vaseline) is both cheap and effective if applied after patting washed hands dry.

Joe and Teresa Graedon are happy to take queries from readers via email on their website

www.peoplespharmacy.com.

Joe Graedon is a pharmacologist. Teresa Graedon holds a doctorate in medical anthropology and is a nutrition expert. Please raise any matters that may affect you with your own doctor or pharmacist

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drive



SIMON JONES

citroen makes an impact in burgeoning 'mini mpv' market

Citroen is promising to bring versatility and practicality to the increasingly popular 'mini-MPV market' as supplies of its stylish new car arrive in New Zealand.

Already a sales hit in Europe, the Xsara Picasso is available with a choice of a 1.8 litre petrol (at \$36,990) or 2.0 litre common rail diesel engines (\$39,990).

Built on the chassis of the Xsara hatchback, it shares the model's excellent ride quality and fun-to-drive handling, but offers a large and capacious body which provides comfort for up to five people.

Both versions of the car are fully equipped with ABS brakes (including electronic brake distribution), dual front and side airbags, automatic air conditioning and six-function on-board computer.

"Where the Xsara Picasso stands out from the pack is in its remarkably versatile interior," explains a Citroen

spokesman. "Load space with all seats in use is a remarkable 500 litres, and all five seats are individually constructed and separately adjustable.

There are aircraft-style trays on the backs of the front seats, and the rear seats can be individually folded or removed altogether.

The central rear seat can be folded into a table, and there are additional hidden storage compartments in the floor."

The Xsara Picasso is one of the first cars to be fitted with a multiplexed circuit. Multiplexing involves the transmitting of electronic information in digital form, meaning that different types of data can be conveyed simultaneously along a single wire. Information can also be shared: for example, the information on vehicle speed picked up from the ABS system is transmitted simultaneously to the engine, gearbox and instrument panel.

nissan unveils 'affordable' new z-sports car

Nissan has unveiled plans for a new Z sports car retailing under \$US30,000 – which it says will be as revolutionary as the Datsun 240Z was 30 years earlier.

"The new Z promises to deliver the performance and high design qualities of today's cutting-edge sports cars at a truly affordable price," says Carlod Ghosn, president of Nissan Motors.

Designers from the US and Japan worked in partnership to come up with concept for the latest Z car. 'Must have' features include front engine/rear-wheel drive configuration, two-seat interior and a powerful six cylinder engine.

"A long wheelbase and wide stance provide a great starting place," says chief designer, Diane Allen. "Our first thought was to recreate the sensation of an open-wheeled Formula 1 car – all wheels and an intimate centre structure." The new Z body is put together much like an airplane fuselage – front compartment, centre cockpit and rear compartment. The top line is extremely arched in both side view and plan.

"We had to find our own statement, which required a different way of putting the Z together," she adds. "With a high tech, mechanical crispness balancing the more fluid shapes and sections.

The Z's cockpit establishes the car as an intimate two-seater with a small greenhouse and a squared-off rear window treatment reminiscent of the 240Z. In addition to the hatchback coup, a convertible version of the new Nissan Z is planned.

Production is expected to begin shortly in the States and the car is expected to hit the road in early 2002.

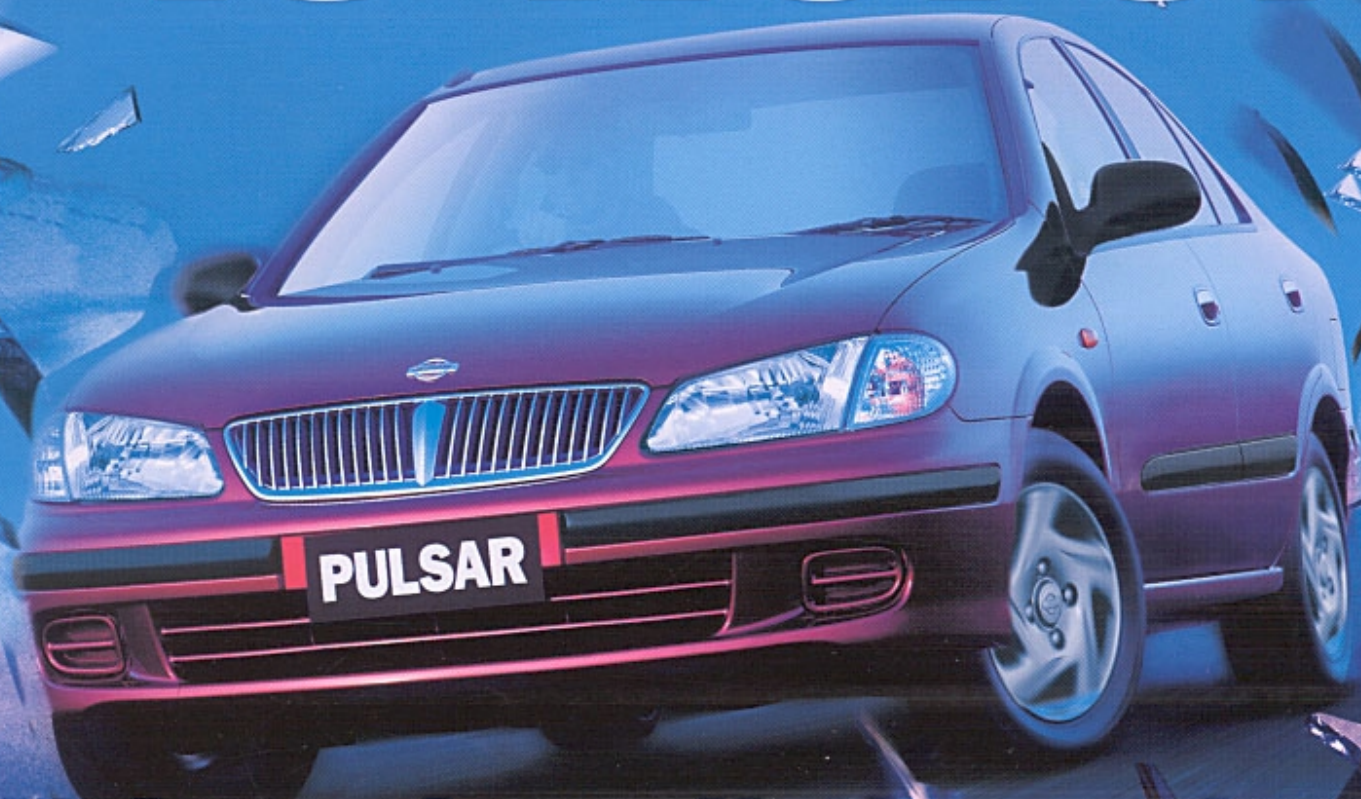
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Just wait 'til you drive it.

New privacy site unmask Big Brother

SIMON JONES

Warning: you are being watched. Like it or not Big Brother is peering over your shoulder.

Every click of the mouse is being monitored, every tap of the keyboard recorded.

Internet privacy - or the lack of it - has always been a hotly debated subject. New legislation in the UK allows sceptical bosses to access their employees email in order to prove it is work-related.

New legislation in New Zealand could soon give police the same right over your private home email.

But if you think the idea of Big Brother on the Net is over-hyped, then check out www.privacy.net, a new site which lets you analyse just how anonymous your movements through cyberspace are. The site will automatically run a free trace on your computer and within minutes you are handed details of the route you took to get to the site, what plug-ins are installed on your PC, even details of what screen resolution you've opted for. Within the few seconds it took me to access the site it knew my ISP and what system they were running.

So how do you cover your tracks? Webveil (www.Webveil.com) is a surfer's guide to Internet privacy that promises to show you how to gain control of your personal information.

Anonymity, it argues, should be available to all. But there is a flip side to the coin. The prospect of paedophiles and other predators using the net unhindered is chilling, yet on the other hand, if you are using the net to try and glean information on a personal problem, do you really want other people to know what you're up to?

Those issues aside, webveil is a useful resource if you'd like to know more about the latest privacy issues or how to throw up a smokescreen between your PC and the sites you visit.

If, for example, you'd like to ensure that you leave no digital footprints as you go about your daily browsing, you could use proxies - intermediary sites that allow you to browse anonymously. For example, have a look at Safeweb (www.Safeweb.com), a free service that blocks cookies, encrypts and protect content, profiles the snoopers, and most satisfying of all, disables those irritating pop up windows.

And if you want to ensure the information you send over the internet is private have a look at Hushmail and PrivacyX. These are email encryption services which ensure that your information is beyond the clutches of snooping eyes.

Now, if on the other hand you want to try and find out what other people

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are up to, then take a look at www.metaspys.com. The Internet has long been a market researchers dream with quick, easy to glean information tracking what's hot and what's not.

Well, metaspys allows you to take a sneak peak at the keywords and phrases people are tapping into their search boxes. It's updated every 15 seconds and there are two services you can opt for: the filtered version (minuses the porn references) or the no-holds barred version, known as 'MetaSpy Exposed'.

Only when you try the latter do you come to realise that the internet is a magnet for the sick and depraved. I don't particularly recommend it unless you want an insight into internet psychology. Occasionally, though, you do get the odd gem, such as one hopefully search request: "goats in panties".

For other similar services try **Ask**

Jeeve's Peek, **Kanoodle's** Search Spy and **Search.com's** snoop.

More useful from a marketing point of view are the sites that recount the top searches of the week such as Lycos 50 and AltaVista's A-List. Most constructive of all is Wordtracker which has a live ticker showing the latest 30 search items entered in the various search engines it scrutinises, as well as weekly reports (emailed to you for free) showing the top 500 search terms. The site also provides details of 100 'rising' terms of the week do that you can monitor trends.

The third option if websites that peddle the latest internet and e-commerce statistics. Some require that you pay to get in-depth results, but most provide the goodies in summarised form for free. Try Nua Internet Surveys, Forrester Research and Cyveillance.

Finally, onto the big internet news of the month. Now, you may well think that Microsoft's own internet sites would be so impenetrable to be beyond susceptibility of any cunning hacker. Not so. Microsoft, it seems has fallen victim yet again to pirates who infiltrated their various domain sites and effectively closed them down.

Recently all Microsoft's four domain servers were down because of 'technical problems', but already insiders say they were broken into by hackers out to prove they can penetrate even the most secure of sites. What makes this piece of news even more incredible is that it is the second time in less than a year Microsoft has been broken into. If Microsoft can't guarantee the integrity of its security system, what hopes have we got of beating ever more sophisticated viruses?

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