ANNIE'S MAILBOX

His wife turned off intimacy

Dear Annie: I am happily married to an amazing lady who has been my best friend since the day we met 25 years ago. Our kids are all away at college, and we love our empty nest. We keep physically fit, are in great health, are financially stable and have a satisfying social life. The only problem is in the bedroom.

Kathy Mitchell & Marcy Sugar

Menopause hit about five years ago, and it has devastated our intimacy. We both visit our doctors regularly and have been to a counselor twice. Our doctors say everything is normal, and the counselor tried to give us some helpful advice, which my wife followed. She does her best to "be there" for me physically, and I do everything I can to be a great husband for her.

My question has to do with what the counselor told me. She said I need to accept the fact that at our age (48), and after 24 years of marriage, an exciting and fulfilling sex life was an unrealistic expectation.

Annie, I am having a hard time accepting this. While we are still intimate, it's like making love to a mannequin. And after all these years of being faithful, it's getting harder and harder to brush off the continuous opportunities to stray.

My wife and I have discussed this in detail. She can't understand why I am not able to simply "turn off" my libido the way nature has turned off hers. Is the counselor right, or is there hope that our great marriage can become complete again?

— Happy and Sad in Oklahoma

Dear Oklahoma: The counselor is wrong. Your sex life might not be what it once was, but there is no reason it cannot be fulfilling and satisfying and still include passion. We understand that menopause has taken a toll on your wife's libido, but she needs to make the effort to work on intimacy because she loves you and values her marriage. Please see a different counselor who will work with both of you to improve those things you can, instead of encouraging you to give up.

Dear Annie: Yesterday, I celebrated a big birthday and received cards and well wishes from many friends. One in particular sent a nice card. However, I was a bit disappointed there wasn't more. Two years ago, when she celebrated the same big birthday, I wanted to make it special and sent a card with an enclosed gift certificate.

I was surprised she didn't reciprocate. I would have been happy if she had just sent a note saying, "I will take you out to lunch" or something similar. It hurts that she made no gesture at all. I considered us very close. Am I being foolish to feel this way?

— Janet in Reno, Nev.

Dear Janet: Not foolish, but perhaps overly optimistic. It was kind of you to send a birthday gift to your friend, but it was unsolicited, and your thoughtfulness depreciates substantially when you think she "owes" you as a result. All she owes you is a thank-you note. She apparently isn't the type to exchange gifts. Now you know.

Dear Annie: This is in response to "Upset in Santa Cruz," whose stepdaughter-in-law accused her of abusing her son because there were bruises on him.

Unexplained bruises can be the result of a rare, heritable connective tissue disorder called Ehlers-Danlos syndrome. One sign of EDS is tissue fragility, which results in bruises that often are mistaken for signs of abuse.

Please inform your readers, especially teachers, parents and medical professionals, that easily bruised skin can be a symptom of EDS. Additional information can be found at Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome Network C.A.R.E.S., Inc., (ehlersdanlosnetwork.org) P.O. Box 66, Muskego, WI 53150.

— J.R.

Dear J.R.: Thank you for educating our readers — and us — about this rare condition. Unfortunately, when there are bruises, there is often a less benign reason.

anniesmailbox@comcast.net

Allergies move indoors in winter

By BLYTHE BERNHARD St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Allergies tend to flare up in the spring and fall, but they don't hibernate in the winter.

As the cold weather forces people to spend more time inside, indoor allergens can become problematic.

Dust mites, mold and pet dander are all winter allergy triggers that can affect up to 10 percent of the population.

In the winter, smoke from fireplaces can also be irritating and exacerbate allergy symptoms, said Dr. James Temprano, a St. Louis University allergist.

People can mistake winter allergies for the common cold viruses associated with winter.

While colds last about a week and can cause fatigue and coughing, allergy symptoms are ongoing and include watery or clear nasal secretions and itchy eyes and throat.

"When the symptoms are lasting longer than a week and you have the itchiness of the eyes or throat, that's when you start thinking allergies," Temprano said.

If a person's symptoms get worse when they're inside, there could be an indoor allergen at play.

Temprano offered these tips for people experiencing winter allergies:

• Encase pillows, mattresses and box springs with zippered allergen-proof covers.

• Wash bedding once a week in hot water and dry on high heat.

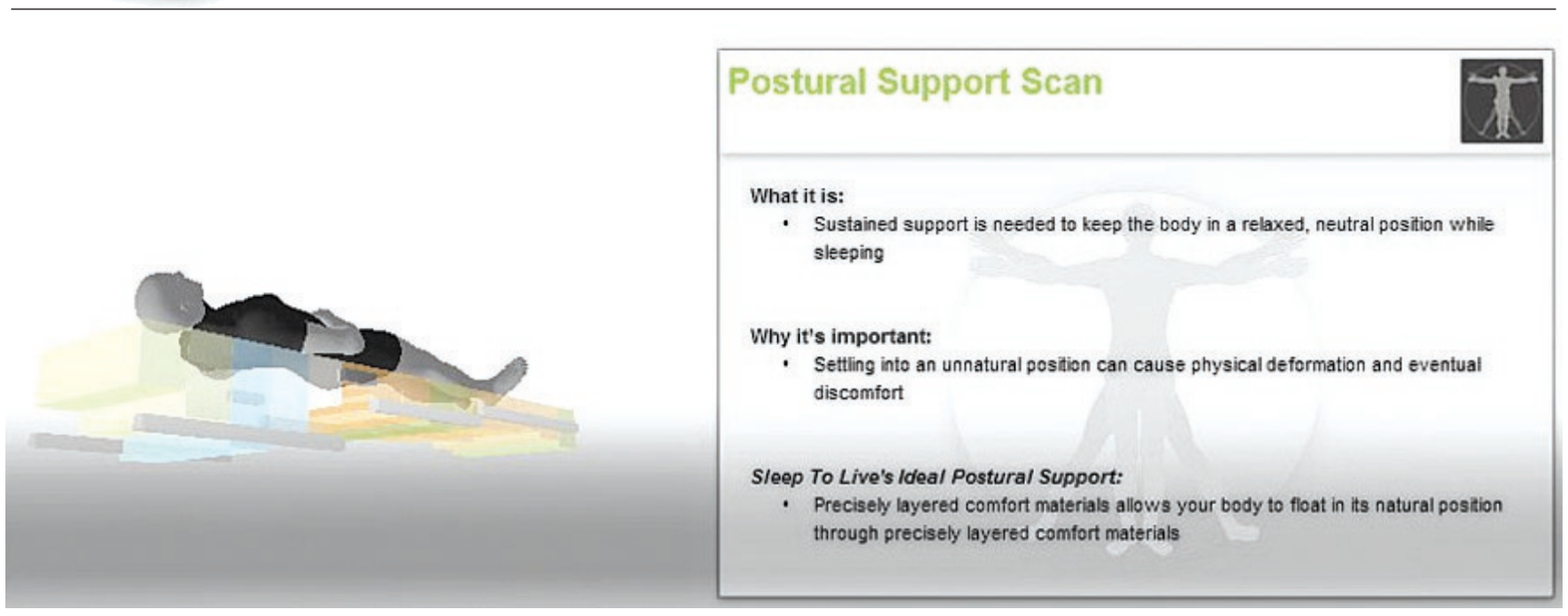
• Keep pets out of bedrooms and other commonly used rooms.

• Use a vacuum cleaner that has a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.

• Wear a mask to cover the nose and mouth when dusting or vacuuming.

• Try over-the-counter allergy medicines.

"If you've done a lot of those things and you're still having symptoms, then it's time to see your doctor," Temprano said.



SLEEP STUDY FROM PAGE C1

hours of sleep per night were nearly three times more likely to develop a common cold than those who reported eight or more hours per night in the weeks leading up to the experiment.

Sleep was primarily ignored as a medical topic until the late 1950s, Fotinakes said, when research into dream sleep became popular and revealed the importance of our ability to function each day after a good night's rest, which is attributed to better sleep environments, among other issues.

"A hundred years ago, when describing a mattress, the poor had nothing — it was part of a bad life — while the wealthy were better off but still not up to speed.

"With the advent of technology and better education — when people were seeking out better health — they realized not everybody needs the same bed."

According to Fotinakes, the National Sleep Foundation has some suggestions and tips to help you have a better night of sleep — not just once in a while — but every night.

"You need to practice good sleep hygiene — that means a bed that is big enough both partners can move. A really stiff bed is better for those who like to pretend they are sleeping on (wooden) doors. You need a bed that is firm enough to support the body but soft enough to accommodate the pressure points — if it's too hard for long enough, your body will get sore."

The consumer sleep study, which was conducted online, stated women are more likely to link their health to the "cozy comforts of their bed," and 64% of women said on numerous occasions they felt sick or not rested when they slept on an old or uncomfortable mattress.

"It's as simple as finding a new pair of shoes," Fotinakes said. "If they fit — they're comfortable — take a walk around in them. That's what you need to do when you purchase a new mattress — pillows are important as well." Fortinakes said it is important to optimize how we sleep to prevent sleep disorders including sleep apnea and insomnia.

"When I have someone who is very desperate to stay awake, we go over sleep hygiene and the person's sleep environment — their mattress, pillow — everything. Often they are too close to the problem. If someone needs to stop their partner from snoring — if one person is hot and the other is cold (at night) or has the sniffles or is prone to allergies or asthma — they have to remember pillows, mattresses, covers — these are all important — all these things must go together to get a good night's sleep."

lroth@avpress.com

HELPLINE

TODAY

• Co-Dependents Anonymous — 7:30 p.m., This is our new location: 7th Day Adventist Church, 43824 30th St. West, Lancaster, the back building. (661) 946-5060, (661) 944-4927.

• Diabetes seminar — 1-3 p.m., Kaiser Permanente, 4502 East Ave. S, Palmdale. (661) 533-7600.

• AV Al-Anon — 6:30 p.m., Larry Chimbole Cultural Center, 38350 Sierra Highway, Palmdale. Spanish-speaking only. (661) 266-4952.

TUESDAY, FEB. 2

• Ups and Downs/Anxiety — 11 a.m., AV Discovery Resource Center, 1609 East Palmdale Blvd., Suite G. (661) 947-1595.

• Dual Diagnosis Anonymous — 12 p.m., AV Discovery Resource Center, 1609 East Palmdale Blvd., Suite G. (661) 947-1595.

• Co-Dependents Anonymous — 1 p.m., AV Discovery Resource Center, 1609 East Palmdale Blvd., Suite G. (661) 947-1595.

• Parent/Family Empowerment Community Group, 10:00 a.m. George Lane Park, 5520 West Ave. L-8. (661)945-2360 or Sonja, (661)-547-9895.

• Take Off Pounds Sensibly — 6 p.m., Grecian Isle Mobile Home Park community room, 4444 East Ave. R. (661) 946-5528, (661) 947-7378.

• AV Child Abuse Prevention Council/Yes2Kids — 7-9 p.m., Village Pointe Apartments, 43748 Challenger Way, Suite D, Lancaster. (661) 538-1846.

• ProCare Hospice — 10:30-11:30 a.m., 42442 10th St. West, Suite E, Lancaster. Spanish-speaking adults. (661) 951-1146.

• Gamblers Anonymous — 7:30 to 9 p.m., Antelope Valley Hospital, Conference Room 10.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 3

• Schizophrenia Anonymous — 12 p.m., AV Discovery Resource Center, 1609 East Palmdale Blvd., Suite G. (661) 947-1595.

• Hoffmann Hospice grief support group meetings — 10-11:30 a.m., Horizon Community Church, 1850 East Ave. R; or 5:30-7 p.m., Hoffmann Hospice, 1543 East Palmdale Blvd., Suite N. (661) 272-2355.

THURSDAY, FEB. 4

• Life Changing Classes — 7 p.m., No RSVP needed. Infinite Possibilities by Mike Dooley, www.tut.com. $5 donation. (661) 942-4220.

• ProCare Hospice — 10:30-11:30 a.m., 42442 10th St. West, Suite E, Lancaster. (661) 951-1146.

• AV Al-Anon — 1 p.m., Palmdale Cultural Center, 38350 Sierra Highway, Palmdale. (661) 285-2132.

HEALTH NOTES

QUARTZ HILL

TOPS offers weight loss support

The Take Off Pounds Sensibly Club meets 10 a.m. Mondays, at Mayflower Gardens Community Center, 6570 West Ave. L-12.

The first meeting is free for attendees.

For details, call (661) 948-0970.

Group for parents set

The Parent Empowerment Community Group meets from 10 to 11 a.m. on Tuesdays, at George Lane Park, located at 5520 West Ave. L-8.

Parents who have issues with their teenage children are welcome to attend, as the group focuses on problem solving techniques.

For details, call (661) 945-2360, (661) 547-9895.

LANCASTER

Get ready for 2012

The Stress Management Institute for Living Empowered will offer a "2012 Preparation" featuring a discussion, and relaxation at 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 5, at the Institute, 44130 Division St.

Donations will be accepted.

For details, call (661) 942-4220.

Spanish-speaking clients may call (661) 609-3851.

PALMDALE

Support for Parkinson's

The Antelope Valley Parkinson's Support Group will meet from 10 a.m. to noon Tuesday, Feb. 21, at the Palmdale Senior Center, locatd at 1002 East Ave. Q-12.

The group meets the third Tuesday of every month.

For details, call (661) 533-9011.

MS group to meet

The Self-Help Group for Multiple Sclerosis will meet from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 18, at the Larry Chimbole Cultural Center, 38350 Sierra Highway.

The group now holds meetings on the third Thursday of every month.

For details, call (661) 225-9826.

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