

**Q** I have been told that I have Keratosis Pilaris (small red bumps) on the back of my arms. I am getting married in July and would like to know how to get rid of them.

*S. Trussell, Allen*

**A** Keratosis Pilaris is a common skin condition. Although it isn't serious, it can be frustrating because it is difficult to treat. It is particularly common on the upper arms of teenagers. It may remain for years, but generally it will gradually disappear before age 30. The cause is an accumulation of dead skin (keratin) that plugs the hair follicle. These appear as small pimples that have a dry, "sandpaper" feeling.

Treatment is directed at softening and removing the keratin deposits. Initial treatment should be intensive moisturizing. It is best to use a moisturizer with a medicated cream containing urea (Curel, Carmol-20), glycolic (Aqua Glycolic) or lactic acid (Lacticare).

Soaking in a hot bath and rubbing the area with a washcloth or loofah-type scrub will also help unplug the pores.

In persistent cases, you may want to consult your doctor to get a more concentrated cream (Glytone-KP Kit, Lachydrin). Tazorac cream can also be prescribed for more severe conditions.

Remember, some unsightly skin conditions only require a little attention to get great looking skin.

*Dr. Fiona Wright, Aesthetic Institute of Plano*

**Q** I have had two children and cannot get my stomach back into shape. What are the best exercises to tighten up these muscles?

*A. Gonzales, Flower Mound*

**A** Trimming the waistline requires both burning fat off the midsection and doing exercises that tone the underlying core muscles. Unfortunately, there is no quick fix to spot reduce a particular area of the body. You need to do cardiovascular aerobic exercise such as walking, swimming, biking or running to burn fat. An exercise ball is a relatively small investment, which can pay off in many ways. Using a stability ball is a fun way to work your core muscles. Sit on the ball to perform crunches or roll out with your feet on the ball in a traditional push up position and curl the legs in and out. Yoga and Pilates are also excellent exercises for strengthening the abdominal muscles.

*Wendy Randall, Fitness Editor*

**Q** I am a 41-year-old woman. I want to make my workouts as effective as possible. What are the guidelines to determine if I am doing enough (and intense enough) cardio to get the maximum benefits?

*Anonymous, Frisco*

**A** To obtain the maximum cardiovascular benefit through exercise, it is advisable to attain the target heart rate for your age. "Maximum heart rate" is a term very widely used in physicians' offices. It is calculated by a simple formula:  $220 - \text{Age} = \text{Maximal Predicted Heart Rate}$ .

"Target heart rate" is calculated as 85 percent of the Maximal Predicted Heart Rate for a certain age. This formula is not without flaw. Heart rate is a very dynamic number that fluctuates throughout the day. Therefore, as a guideline, we use  $\pm 8$  beats. There have been some studies and trials that have shown that exercising the heart more than the target heart rate can cause increased workload.

The bottom line is that the exercise should always be regular, graded with stepwise increase in order to condition the heart and muscles appropriately.

*Leena Sharan, MD, Board Certified in Cardiovascular Diseases, HeartPlace, Plano*