

Happy Begins Here

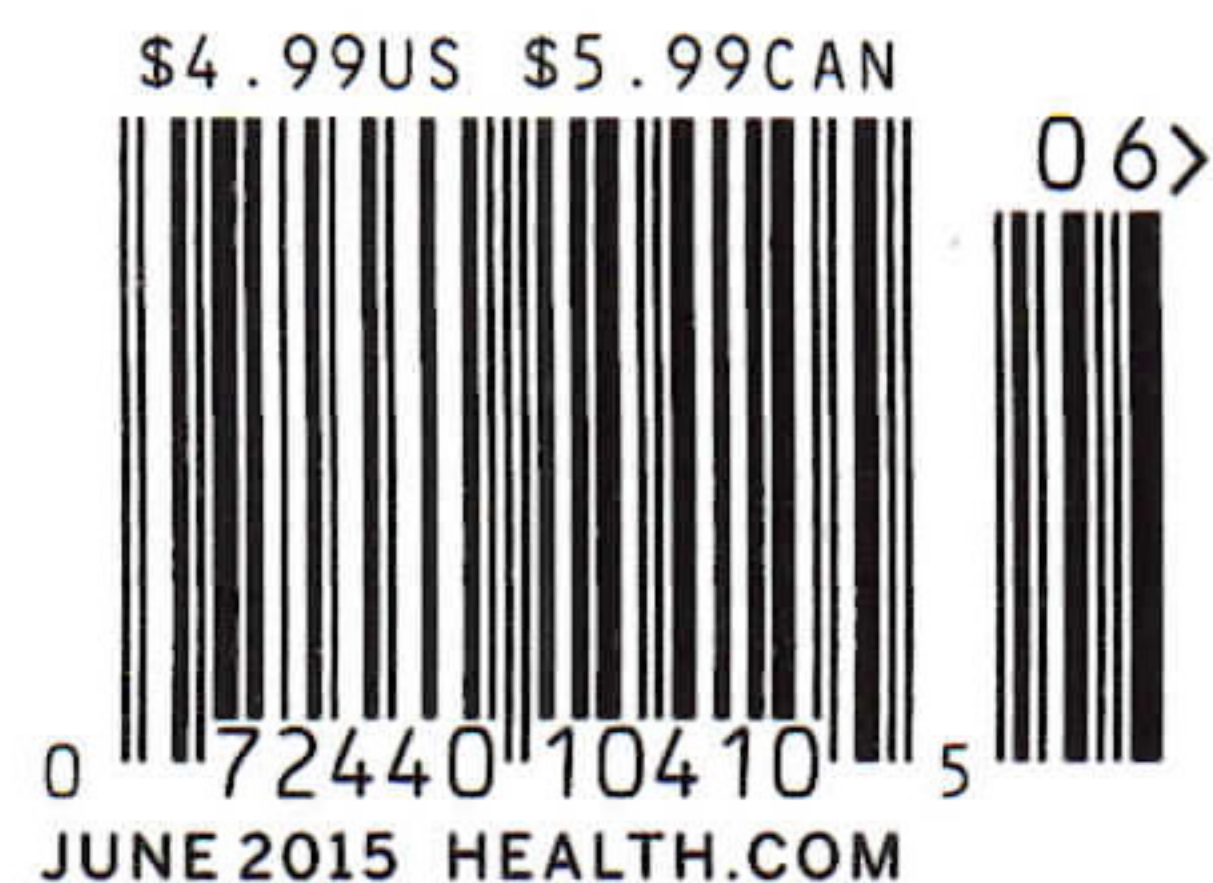
Health

LOSE EVERY BULGE

- FLAT BELLY
- TONED LEGS
- GREAT BUTT

**Sexy Skin
All Over**

STOMACH IN KNOTS?
New Ways to Feel 100%



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FOODS
FOR A
LONG LIFE
Bread Is Back

**Ashley
Tisdale's**
WOW
BODY
SECRETS

What She Does
to Look Like This

BOOST
YOUR LUCK!
4 Habits That
Bring Good Things



What Your Looks Say About Your Health

Beauty problems sometimes signal a deeper concern. Learn how to read—and remedy—common skin, hair and nail complaints.

By JODI HELMER

GOT LACKLUSTER LOCKS?

Or a scaly patch on an elbow? Your body may be trying to tell you something. “There are huge links between how we appear on the outside and what’s happening inside,” says Ramsey Markus, MD, associate professor of dermatology at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Even the most common beauty woes, like brittle nails and a dull complexion, can hint at issues beneath the surface. Give yourself a once-over for these six superficial signs you should see your doctor.

IF YOU HAVE

Thick, dark facial or body hair

IT MIGHT MEAN: Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). “We’re not talking about a few wispy strands,” says Zoe Stallings, MD, a family physician at Duke Medicine in Durham, N.C. “This is a thick coat of ‘I have sideburns that tweezers can’t handle’

hair.” It tends to sprout in places where men grow hair (like the cheeks, chin, chest and back) and may be due to elevated levels of male sex hormones—a common symptom of the endocrine disorder PCOS, which can increase your risk of infertility and diabetes. Ask your doc for a blood test. Birth control pills and lifestyle changes like losing excess weight (even just a few pounds)

can reduce symptoms. Your MD might also prescribe a steroid to help correct the hormone imbalance or a cream that inhibits the growth of facial hair. Another option: talking to your dermatologist about laser hair removal. “The pro is that it’s effective,” Dr. Stallings says. “The con is the price.” Each session costs around \$300, though some insurance plans will cover the treatment.

IF YOU HAVE

A brittle nail

IT MIGHT MEAN: Fungus. It’s disgusting but true—your nail bed is a perfect home for fungi. “They like having a warm, moist layer of skin to feed off,” Dr. Markus explains. When a parasite moves in, your nail may start to split or crumble at the edges. A dermatologist might prescribe medication. It may also help to limit exposure to moisture by



←
Your
nutrient
deficiency
may be
visible to
the naked
eye.

wearing gloves to do the dishes or changing socks after a workout.

If the nails on both hands are brittle, you can probably blame overzealous hand washing; a supplement could do the trick. Vitamins containing keratin, in particular, improve nail strength, according to a 2014 study.

IF YOU HAVE

A scaly red patch

IT MIGHT MEAN: Psoriasis. This rash isn't just a skin problem. Psoriasis is an autoimmune disorder that can crop up at any age and is linked to inflammation throughout the body (experts are unsure if psoriasis causes inflammation or vice versa).

Lesions—typically on the scalp, elbows and knees—are a common symptom, but moderate to severe psoriasis is also connected to cardiovascular disease, according to a longitudinal study published last fall. Fortunately, “your risk of heart attack goes down when you treat a more severe case of psoriasis,” says Jennifer Chen, MD, clinical assistant professor of dermatology at Stanford School of Medicine. See your dermatologist: A variety of oral and topical meds, as well as phototherapy, can reduce outbreaks.

IF YOU HAVE

Persistent acne

IT MIGHT MEAN: A hormonal imbalance. Breakouts aren't just

for teens and tweens. “Acne may recur during perimenopause,” Dr. Chen explains. As estrogen and progesterone levels drop, your hormonal balance can tip toward testosterone, which triggers a surge in the production of pore-clogging oil. “Like menopause itself, this acne varies in duration and intensity,” Dr. Chen says, though the pimples often appear on the jawline. The good news, Dr. Chen says: “We have great medications to prevent acne. You just have to be proactive about it.”

IF YOU HAVE

Dry, blotchy skin

IT MIGHT MEAN: An omega-3 deficiency. “As we age, our sebaceous glands produce less oil that lubricates skin,” says Valori Treloar, MD, co-author of *The Clear Skin Diet*. Omega-3 fatty acids help keep your complexion healthy-looking in part because they protect dry skin from developing inflammation. If you have a deficiency, your skin may become itchy and blotchy, Dr. Treloar says. Eat plenty of foods rich in omega-3s, like walnuts, flaxseed and cold water fish. Still worried you're not getting enough? Consider taking a fish oil supplement.

IF YOU HAVE

Thinning hair

IT MIGHT MEAN: Hypothyroidism. When your thyroid gland is underactive, too many of your hair follicles go into resting mode. As strands naturally shed, they aren't replaced, and “women start

to notice that their scalp is showing,” Dr. Stallings says. Synthetic hormones and other remedies can help. Another possible culprit: low estrogen. For women in menopause, a B complex multi with collagen may restore thinning tresses, Dr. Stallings says. If you've just had a baby (another cause of an estrogen dip), don't fret: Your hair's volume should return to normal by the time your little one is six months old. ■

WHAT IS THAT?

While you should point out these minor “imperfections” to your doctor, they're almost always harmless.

LITTLE RED MOLES

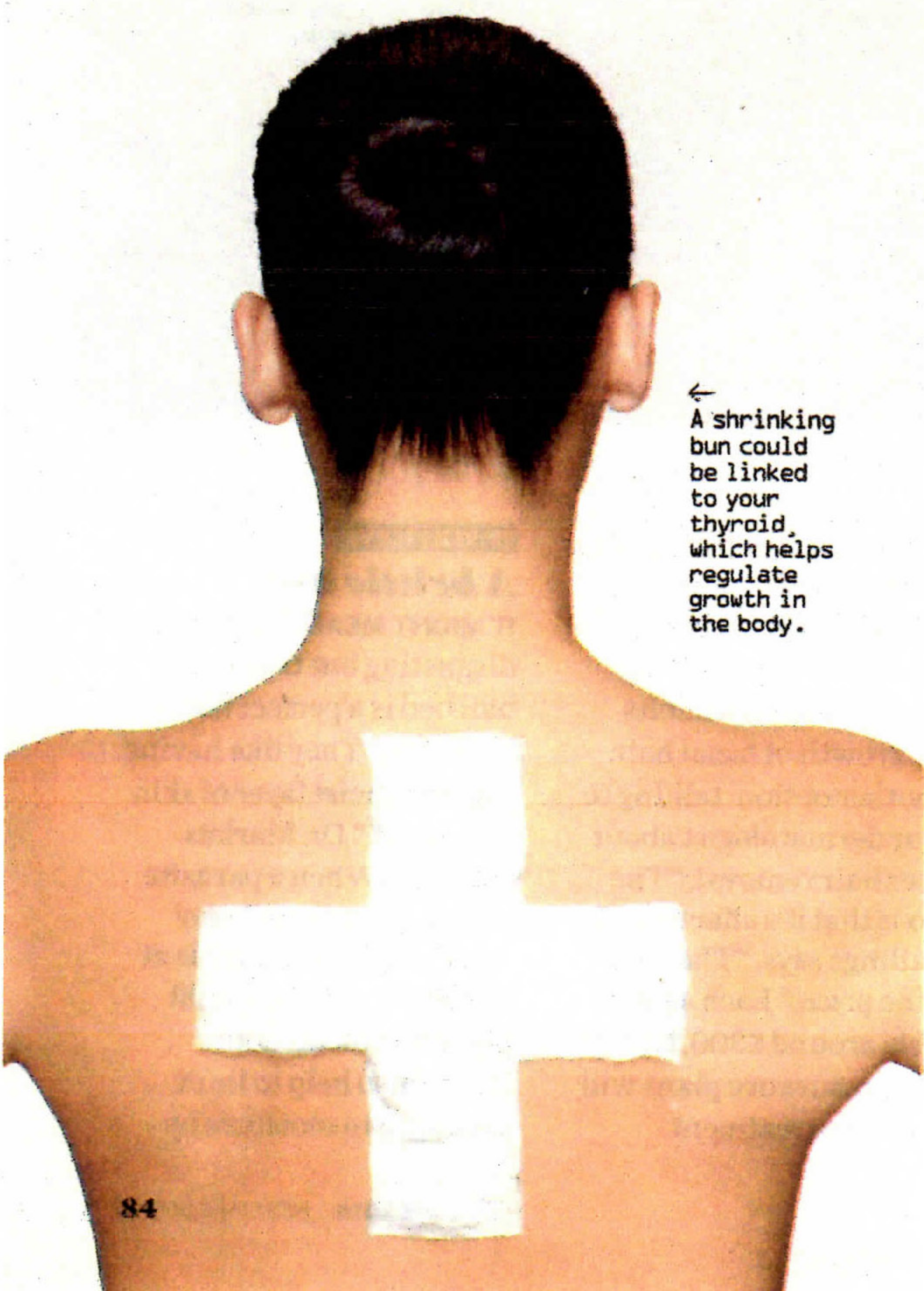
► Ranging in size from 1 to 5 millimeters, cherry angiomas are “so common—they're normal,” according to dermatologist Markus Ramsey, MD.

SKIN TAGS

► These floppy, flesh-toned nodules often crop up in the armpits, neck or groin—areas where folds of skin cause friction (which is why they tend to appear when you're pregnant or carrying extra weight). “Skin tags can be annoying if they get caught on your clothing,” Dr. Ramsey says, but they're easily cut off or cauterized.

SMALL, HARD BUMPS

► They're caused by the protein keratin forming hard plugs within hair follicles, typically on the thighs, butt or upper arms—a condition called keratosis pilaris. Dr. Ramsey estimates that 40 percent of people have it, and it's tough to cure, though salicylic or lactic acid may smooth the skin.



← A shrinking bun could be linked to your thyroid, which helps regulate growth in the body.