Medical Minute

SOME QUICK FIXES…OR AT LEAST HELPS

1. Having trouble hearing the TV? Before you turn it up loud enough for the neighbors to follow the plot, try the audio settings. Turn down the bass, which can mask dialogue, or boost the higher-frequency sounds. If your TV has a "night mode," it helps lift softer sounds and lower loud ones. Hearing aids also help. Apparently, yelling "WHAT DID HE SAY?" at the screen is not considered stimulating conversation with your partner.

2. Dry mouth or too many cavities? Chew sugarless gum! It gets the saliva flowing and helps neutralize acid that harms tooth enamel. Not a glamorous job, but somebody has to protect the teeth we still have. Xylitol-sweetened gum performed better than sorbitol gum at lowering cavity-causing bacteria and reducing plaque. So now I have to read gum labels, too. I miss when the hardest decision was spearmint or peppermint.

3. Do your berries or grapes get moldy before you've had a chance to enjoy them? Mine apparently consider the trip home from the store their farewell performance. Try storing them in a colander—not a closed plastic container—in the refrigerator. Cold air can circulate through the holes and around the fruit, helping it stay fresh longer. Wonderful. My berries need better ventilation, and at these prices, I'd like to eat a strawberry before it grows a fur coat.

4. Get a grease spot on your clothes or table linens? With Thanksgiving tablecloths now in the dirty clothes pile, I prefer to call it "proof I enjoyed dinner." Rub some chalk on the spot, let it absorb the grease, then brush it off. Repeat, if necessary, before laundering. This also works on the dreaded "ring-around-the-collar." The oil holds the dirt in, so a heavy coating of chalk before washing helps absorb that oil and send the dirt packing. Finally, a reason to own chalk that doesn't involve doing math on a blackboard, or hopscotch. If this works, my Thanksgiving outfit may survive… except for the waistband fastener.

