



## HouseCalls

# House Calls with Dr. De La Flor

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## Dear Doctor,

I seem to always have bruises and marks on my legs. Aside from how they look, they don't bother me much. Should I be concerned that I bruise so easily?

THANK YOU,  
BECKY

## Dear Becky,

Bruising easily does not mean you have a serious health problem, especially if bruising is minimal. Bruises develop when small blood vessels under the skin tear or rupture, most often from a bump or fall. Blood leaks into tissues under the skin and causes the black-and-blue colour. Most bruises are not a cause for concern and will go away on their own.

Home treatment may speed healing and relieve the swelling and soreness that often accompany bruises that are caused by injury. But severe bruising, swelling, and pain that begins within 30 minutes of an injury may mean a more serious problem, such as a severe sprain or fracture.

As we age, the skin becomes less flexible and thinner because there is less fat under the skin. The "cushioning effect" of the skin decreases as the fat under the skin decreases. These changes, along with skin damage from exposure to the sun, cause blood vessels to break easily.

Women bruise more easily than men, especially from minor injuries on the thighs, buttocks, and upper arms. A tendency to bruise easily sometimes runs in families.

Occasionally after an injury, blood collects and pools under the skin (haematoma), giving the skin a spongy, rubbery, lumpy feel. A regular bruise is more spread out and may not feel like a firm lump. A haematoma usually is not a cause for concern. It is not the same thing as a blood clot in a vein, and it does not cause blood clots.

Sudden unexplained bruising or blood spots under the skin or a sudden increase in the frequency



Wholegrain foods will help prevent constipation

of bruising may have multiple causes: aspirin or blood thinners, a bleeding or clotting disorder (Von Willebrand's disease, thrombocytopenia), or another less common bleeding or clotting disorder, other diseases that affect clotting (chronic inflammatory diseases, such as lupis; liver disease, such as cirrhosis; some types of cancer, such as Hodgkin's disease, leukemia, or multiple myeloma; vasculitis, malnutrition, such as deficiencies of vitamins B12, C, or K, or folic acid.

## Dear Doctor,

I've been having a difficult time using the bathroom lately. What causes constipation?

CHEERS,  
NEIL

## Dear Neil,

Constipation occurs when bowel movements become difficult or less frequent. Going longer than two days without a bowel movement is too long, the stool or faeces become harder and more difficult

to pass.

By protocol, you are considered constipated if you have two or more of the following for at least three months: hard stools and/or straining and/or incomplete evacuation more than 25 per cent of the time or two or fewer bowel movements in a week.

Constipation is usually caused by a disorder of bowel function rather than a structural problem. Common causes include: inadequate physical activity and/or water, fibre intake, a disruption of regular diet or routine such as travelling, eating large amounts of dairy products, stress, resisting the urge to have a bowel movement (which end up in haemorrhoids). Overuse of laxatives which, over time, weaken the bowel muscles is another cause.

Sometimes constipation can be the result of a general condition: Just to name a few - hypothyroidism, Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis. Certain medications - antacids containing calcium or aluminium, antidepressants, or iron pills also are common culprits. Irritable bowel syndrome, pregnancy and colon cancer are also frequent causes.

If you have constipation for more than two weeks,

you should see a doctor so he or she can determine the source of your problem and treat it. If constipation is caused by colon cancer, early detection and treatment is very important.

There are several things you can do to prevent constipation.

Eat a well-balanced diet with plenty of water and fibre (fruit, vegetables, legumes, and whole-grain bread and cereal - especially bran). Liquids that contain caffeine, such as coffee and soft drinks, seem to have a dehydrating effect and may need to be avoided until your bowel habits return to normal. Exercise regularly. Move your bowels when you feel the urge.

*Dr. De La Flor, G.P. is licensed in medicine & general surgery. He holds certificates in nutrition, medical exercise and human performance from the University of Berkeley in California, the American Council on Exercise and the U.S. National Strength & Conditioning Association. He is a strong believer in work/life balance and spends much of his time outside of his surgery on the tennis court or chasing his four kids around the neighbourhood. 697.888.666*

## HealthExtra

### Swine flu vaccinations

## Public apathy

A month after the swine flu vaccination campaign began, the health authorities began to notice that very few people within the high risk group were getting vaccinated.

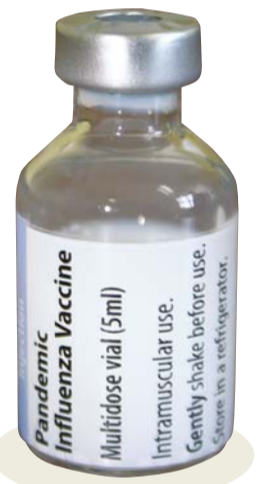
Official sources estimate that less than 20 per cent of the population falling within this group have been immunised.

Appointments made via the official telephone number 012 have not exceeded 40,000, which is a long way from the 400,000 persons at risk registered in the Canaries. If this lack of interest continues, then it is very probable that the Canarian health service will return a fair proportion of the 399,949 doses which have been acquired. Despite this apparent country-wide apathy, the State government's ministry for health continues to insist that for the high risk group, the vaccination is the best way to prevent an epidemic.

Meanwhile, a study undertaken by the health observatory of Spain's general nursing council

revealed that 47.4 per cent of the high risk population had no intention of being vaccinated and almost 67 per cent of this group said that they are not particularly worried about the swine flu.

Luckily, all the contracts which have been signed with the pharmaceutical companies for the supply of the vaccines (GlaxoSmithKline, Novartis and Sanofi Pasteur) include clauses which allow for the return of unused doses so that they can be distributed to other countries or areas of need. 27 million vaccines were acquired for Spain.



Only 20 per cent of the vaccine stock has been used

### Superbugs

## Essential health

Research from the Sligo Institute of Technology in Ireland indicates that some essential oils could well be effective against the most resistant bacteria including MRSA, Vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus (VRE) and Extended Spectrum Beta Lactamase (ESBL).

For a long time people have lauded the health benefits associated with these oils, but this news takes their positive uses a step further. Superbugs have been a problem in most of the world's hospitals in recent years, with their high resistance factor to conventional antibiotics, a real danger, given that they are present where there are patients already suffering some form of illness often worsening their condition, sometimes fatally.

The Sligo scientists have described their findings as "very promising", having tested a large range of oils and their components, and found that among the most effective at killing the MRSA, VRE and ESBL strains were clove, lemongrass, citronella, thyme, oregano, cinnamon while the popular tea tree oil was also found to be "quite effective".