



House Calls with **Dr. De La Flor**

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Causes of Oedema

Oedema is a normal response of the body to inflammation or injury.

For example, a twisted ankle, a bee sting, or a skin infection will all result in oedema in the involved area. In some cases, such as in an infection, this may be beneficial.

Increased fluid from the blood vessels allows more infection-fighting white blood cells to enter the affected area.

Oedema can also result from medical conditions or problems in the balance of substances normally present in blood. Some of the causes of oedema include:

Low albumin (hypoalbuminemia):

Albumin and other proteins in the blood act like sponges to keep fluid in the blood vessels. Low albumin may contribute to oedema, but isn't usually the sole cause.

Allergic reactions:

Oedema is a usual component of most allergic reactions. In response to the allergic exposure, the body allows nearby blood vessels to leak fluid into the affected area.

Obstruction of flow: If the drainage of fluid from a body part is blocked, fluid can back up. A blood clot in the deep veins of the leg can result in leg oedema. A tumour blocking lymph or blood flow will cause oedema in the affected area.



Oedema and heart disease (congestive heart failure): When the heart weakens and pumps blood less effectively, fluid can slowly build up, creating leg oedema. If fluid build-up occurs rapidly, fluid in the lungs (pulmonary oedema) can develop.

Oedema and liver disease: Severe liver disease (cirrhosis) results in an increase in fluid retention. Cirrhosis also leads to low levels of albumin and other proteins in the blood. Fluid leaks into the abdomen (called ascites), and can also produce leg oedema.

Medications and oedema: Numerous medications can cause oedema, including: NSAIDs (ibuprofen, naproxen); Calcium channel block-

ers; Corticosteroids (prednisone, methylprednisolone); Pioglitazone and rosiglitazone. Most commonly, these medications produce no oedema, or mild leg oedema.

Symptoms of oedema

Oedema symptoms depend on the amount of oedema and the body part affected. Oedema in a small area from an infection or inflammation (such as a mosquito bite) may cause no symptoms at all.

Leg oedema of any cause can cause the legs to feel heavy and interfere with walking. In oedema and heart disease, for example, the legs may easily weigh an extra five or 10 pounds each. Severe leg oedema can interfere with blood flow, leading to

ulcers on the skin.

Pulmonary oedema causes shortness of breath, which can be accompanied by low oxygen levels in the blood. Some people with pulmonary oedema may experience a cough with frothy sputum.

Treatment of oedema

Treatment of oedema often means treating the underlying cause of oedema. For example, allergic reactions causing oedema may be treated with antihistamines and corticosteroids.

Oedema resulting from a blockage in fluid drainage can sometimes be treated by eliminating the obstruction:

A blood clot in the leg is treated with blood thinners, and the clot slowly breaks down. Leg oedema then resolves as fluid drainage improves.

A tumour obstructing a blood vessel or lymph flow can sometimes be reduced in size or removed with surgery, chemotherapy, or radiation.

Leg oedema related to congestive heart failure or liver disease can be treated with a diuretic like furosemide (Lasix). When urine output increases, more fluid drains from the legs back into the blood. Maintaining a sodium-restricted diet will also help limit fluid retention associated with heart failure or liver disease.

HealthExtra

□ By Doctor Chanut

Clinica Implantologia

Sweet decay



• At parties and holiday times many of us over-indulge with sweet foods and drinks, but there are ways to counteract the potential impact of excess sugar intake according to Dr Denis Chanut of a leading institute of dental implants.

Revellers overdosing on cake, chocolate, crisps and champagne, face possible tooth decay because of the high sugar content in such party favourites. These epochs when people eat more sugar – and more frequently – than at any other time of the year, can cause serious problems for teeth unless sensible and straightforward steps are taken. “The continuous sugar dosage at these times means teeth are under constant attack because saliva doesn't get a chance to do its job properly,” said Dr Chanut. “Outside these special times, our teeth usually get time to recover after eating sugary or acidic food and drinks as we can brush an hour later. That's because, at this time, our mouth reaches its neutral ph level thanks to our saliva. That doesn't happen at parties.”

However, Dr Chanut says that there is no need for people to be party poopers or miss out on a good time as there are simple measures that can be taken to protect teeth. He advised, “avoid fizzy drinks and diet and fruit juices which are very acidic and cause tooth erosion. Sticking to safe snacks such as bread sticks, crackers, cheese and dried fruits can also help a lot and obviously, brushing your teeth before going to bed is crucial.”

He also has advice for the morning after the night before. He recommended, “I know this might sound awful but if you're sick the next morning, you shouldn't brush your teeth immediately. Vomit is highly acidic and attacks the teeth so if you brush straight away, you brush away the protective enamel on the teeth, which has been weakened by acid. Using a fluoride, alcohol free, mouthwash is a better option to avoid possible acid erosion. Also, if you have an accident which involves your mouth, then it's best to seek the advice of a dentist immediately. Leaving it longer could create a bigger problem.” Dr Chanut believes his advice can help people, and their teeth survive any party season. “I am no killjoy, but looking after your teeth can often be forgotten during a prolonged period of festivities,” he added.

Dr Chanut's top tips include:

- 1. Keeping a spare toothbrush** and toothpaste at work or carry one around or, if that isn't possible, then keep a travel size fluoride mouthwash (preferably alcohol free) handy.
- 2. Don't brush your teeth** straight after having sugary/acidic foods or drinks, the mouth takes one hour to reach a neutral ph - this is when it's better to brush.
- 3. Chew sugar-free gum** throughout the day or evening to speed up the process of your mouth reaching a neutral ph condition.
- 4. Carry sugar free mints** to keep breath fresh.
- 5. Don't drink bubbly champagne** or sparkling drinks for long periods of time - stick to still drinks and if you must drink a fizzy drink, use a straw.
- 6. Avoid sweet and sticky snacks** - even most crisps contain sugar.
- 7. Don't snack all the time** - have one-hour breaks between nibbles.
- 8. Pick safe snacks** like bread sticks, crackers, vegetable sticks, cheese and dried fruit.
- 9. Always brush your teeth** before going to bed.

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