

Liquid soap alleviated painful restless leg spasms

BY JOE GRAEDON AND TERESA GRAEDON
King Features Syndicate

Q: I have suffered from restless legs syndrome for years. I got a little relief from bars of soap in the bed. Then, on a road trip where I had to do all the driving, I experienced hours of leg spasms. It was so bad that I was crying from the pain.

In desperation I bought some liquid soap from a roadside service station and tried rubbing it on my calves. I had complete relief within 2 miles.

I have told at least 25 people about this, and every one of them who tried it experienced almost instant relief.

A: Many people laugh at the idea of using soap for leg cramps or restless legs syndrome. It seems like such a silly remedy. Nevertheless, there is some science to support it.

Over a decade ago, an anesthesiologist published the results of a study that tested crushed Ivory soap in skin patches (*Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, July 2008). The researchers reported positive results for women with menstrual cramps.

In another study, this physician tested soap-scented oil (SSO) in a special skin patch he had created. He reported that "the SSO skin patch consistently and adequately relieved muscular pain" (*Journal of Multidisciplinary Healthcare*, September 2008). The soap-scented oil doesn't seem that different from the liquid soap you used.

Q: This may sound silly, but we New Zealanders and Australians



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Though it may seem strange, a few studies do support using soap to relieve leg cramps or restless leg syndrome.

Asia like Thailand, Bali and Vietnam. A favorite anti-diarrhea ploy is to take sachets of pure raspberry fruit powder or raspberry cordial containing not less than 30% raspberry.

I take a dessert spoon of the powder or a 1/4 glass of cordial the night before I leave and then each morning when I wake up. I don't suffer from the trots during my holidays. This remedy is great for families traveling with kids.

A: Thank you for sharing this intriguing remedy. We could find no research to support your treatment plan, but it does seem benign.

Another low-tech treatment for mild travelers' diarrhea is bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol) (*Journal of Travel Medicine*, April 1, 2017). It will turn the stool black, but that is not something to worry about when used for just a few days.

Q: What is the best vaccine strategy for maximum protection during the flu season? Is the flu worse early in the season or later? How quickly does the shot become effective? How

My pharmacy is urging customers to get their flu shot right now! I worry that the benefits might fade before the peak flu season is over in January or February.

A: Influenza is highly variable. There is no way to predict when it will hit, how long it will last or when it will be most virulent. Last year's flu season persisted for over five months. The nasty H3N2 virus struck late in the season — from mid-February through mid-May. The vaccine did not work well against this strain of influenza.

As for timing, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that: "Vaccinating early — for example, in July or August — may lead to reduced protection against influenza later in the season, particularly among older adults."

The CDC recommends that most people get vaccinated by the end of October. It takes about two weeks for your body to make antibodies against influenza viruses.

In their column, Joe and Teresa Graedon answer letters from readers. Send questions to them via www.fox.com