

PREVENTION

WELLNESS

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5 MYTHS ABOUT

HOME REMEDIES

There's nothing wrong with DIY health care chez you, but maybe a little science could come for a visit? Here, a few folk cures that haven't cured many folks.

BY KATE ROCKWOOD



MYTH:

Apple cider vinegar is a great choice for getting rid of warts.

MYTHBUSTER

For warts, this is not effective or recommended. The idea is that the acid in apple cider vinegar (ACV) can burn away layers of a wart and spur the body to mount an immune response, says Elizabeth Houshmand, M.D., a board-certified dermatologist in Dallas, but “there is little scientific proof that ACV is reliably effective for treating warts.” Meanwhile, some people have given themselves chemical burns by trying it. About half of warts will go away on their own in a year

and two-thirds in two years, but if you want to speed up the process, “there are better ways,” Dr. Houshmand says. Methods that have been researched for efficacy and safety include over-the-counter treatments that

contain salicylic acid; when followed correctly, they cure warts 50% to 70% of the time. Two instances in which you should always seek a doctor’s help with treating warts: if warts are spreading or are on your genitals.



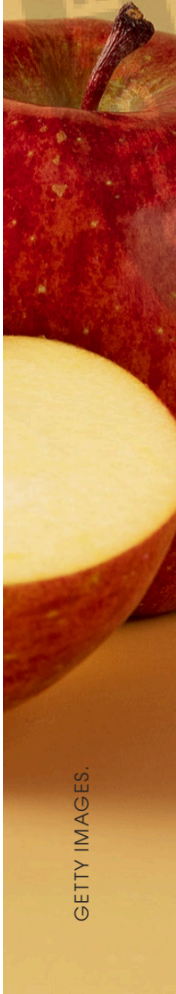
MYTH:

Toothpaste can make a pimple go poof.

MYTHBUSTER

Putting toothpaste on a zit can backfire.

Common toothpaste ingredients like alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, menthol, and baking soda can irritate skin and make pimples worse, says Dr. Houshmand. While toothpaste may dry out and shrink a pimple, it can also clog pores, she explains, which can lead to more breakouts. Toothpaste used to contain an ingredient called triclosan that could kill the bacteria that causes acne, but since 2019 it has not been in any toothpaste on the market. Instead of toothpaste, try over-the-counter products that contain benzoyl peroxide, salicylic acid, glycolic acid, or lactic acid, which target bacteria, says Debra Jaliman, M.D., a board-certified dermatologist with a practice in New York City.



GETTY IMAGES.

WELLNESS

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MYTH:**Treat minor burns with egg whites.****MYTHBUSTER**

"This old wives' tale is actually **dangerous**," says Sean McGann, M.D., an emergency medicine physician at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia. Eggs often contain bacteria like salmonella, and burns make it easier for bacteria to get past skin's protective barrier. What about a 2019 study showing that an egg white-based ointment did help heal burns? There's a big difference between a lab-created ointment and cracking an egg onto your skin. "Applying bacteria to a fresh, open wound can be very risky," Dr. McGann says. The first and best thing to do after a minor burn is run cool or room-temperature water over it for 15 to 20 minutes, says Dr. McGann. A study found that this method led to faster healing. Major burns should be checked by a doctor before you put anything on them.



4 NO

MYTH:**A glass of warm milk helps you sleep.****MYTHBUSTER**

There's not much credible evidence that a glass of warm milk will help improve your sleep, says Michael Breus, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and a board-certified sleep specialist. Milk does contain tryptophan, an amino acid used to make the sleepy-time hormones melatonin and serotonin, but you would have to drink more than a gallon to feel any impact,

Breus says. The myth may persist because drinking warm milk is a relaxing and perhaps nostalgia-inducing bedtime ritual, he explains. "If a loved one gave you warm milk at night as a child, those memories can be comforting and may lower your anxiety, helping you sleep." If drinking warm

milk helps you snooze and doesn't cause stomach issues, there's no reason to stop. But if you're looking for better, proven tips to help you sleep at night, Breus suggests taking a warm bath or shower before bed, keeping your bedroom dark and cool, and limiting screen time before lights-out.



5

MYTH:

**Feed a cold,
starve a fever.**

MYTHBUSTER

Not so! In fact, you should feed them both (but not too much). That's because when you're sick, your body has to work harder to fight illness, which revs up your metabolism and causes you to burn more calories,

explains Dr. McGann. That's especially true if you have a fever—for every two degrees by which your body temperature goes up, your body expends 10% more energy, research shows. Hundreds of years ago, people thought it was better to starve a fever because eating raises body temperature, but the rise is very slight and the

immune system needs the calories, Dr. McGann says. If you don't feel like eating much, soup is a good choice, he adds, because it provides hydration and sustenance (including calories, salt, and nutrients). If you simply can't eat much for a couple of days, don't worry, Dr. McGann adds, but drinking is a must. "When we see people in the ER who are very sick from colds and flus, dehydration is often the main culprit," he says. So, drink up!

MIKE GARTEN.