



Your grandma ...

... your friends ...

... and even Popeye ...



WERE WRONG.

Medical truths leave little room for mom's remedies

BY ALEX BOLES
Assistant Features Editor

Your parents lied to you. Some of the medical remedies that seemed to work when you were a kid weren't necessarily based in fact. Brenda Higgins, Student Health Center director and family nurse practitioner, said students are less gullible these days because of the availability of more reliable resources but they always should ask questions pertaining to health myths.

Myth: Putting butter on a burn eases the pain.

Higgins said the butter-on-a-burn remedy actually could be dangerous, and members of the medical profession warn people not to do it.

"It actually can intensify the burn effects and make the burn deeper and more severe," she said. "They are recommending now that with a burn, at least a common burn, that one of the best things you can do is apply cold water to decrease the temperature and the burning, ... and then after that, [apply] things like aloe and creams specifically designed for burns. You don't want oil-based creams like butter."

Higgins said the butter-on-a-burn remedy was something her mother always told her. She said that logically it could have been because they kept their butter in the refrigerator, but she is not sure

how the myth started.

Pam Gardner, assistant professor of nursing, said the only thing butter could be used for is keeping the skin unbroken, not for easing the pain.

"It does lubricate and does keep the skin intact, but it should never be used," Gardner said. "... Once the skin is cool, then that emollient in the butter would keep the skin from cracking and keep it nice and moist. As long as it is hot and right after a burn, no oil should be used."

Gardner said cool, not cold, water should be used because the temperature difference between the burn and the water would be too great. She said she heard the butter myth from her grandmother, who always kept her butter at room temperature, so she never understood the logic behind putting butter on a burn.

"But that's what your grandmother always did, 'Oh, slap some butter on it,' and no, it actually makes the burn worse," she said.

Myth: Spinach builds up muscle.

Higgins said she does not think spinach develops muscle, but it is a good source of other nutrients.

She said she does not know why spinach was chosen instead of another dark green and leafy vegetable, like brussels sprouts.

"It is a good source of iron, but generally anything that grows out of the ground, and particularly the dark green, leafy vegetables, are [a good source], so it's not just spinach," she said.

Spinach tends to give the body more energy and make a person less likely to become anemic, she said.

Gardner said spinach helps to produce red blood cells, not muscle.

"But that's what your grandmother always did, 'Oh, slap some butter on it.'"

Pam Gardner
Assistant Professor of Nursing

"The biggest thing for spinach is for red blood cell production, and it helps you carry more oxygen, which then helps you feel better because you're eating it," she said. "It has some wonderful minerals in it too."

Sophomore Josh Dilday said he always wanted to be like the popular cartoon character with giant muscles.

"My parents told me to eat spinach all the time because I wanted to be just like Popeye," Dilday said. "Except they said only fresh spinach because canned spinach tasted bad."

Unfortunately, Popeye made

a false endorsement. Although spinach is very good for the body, eating it does not cause muscle growth.

Myth: Coffee helps the body sober back after drinking a lot of alcohol.

Higgins said coffee, although a great morning pick-me-up, is the worst fluid to drink when intoxicated.

"The caffeine keeps people awake and alert, allowing them to drink more because alcohol is a depressant, and so the caffeine sort of counteracts that," she said.

She said this poses a problem because when people would have stopped and passed out, they end up staying awake and becoming more inebriated, causing further health risks. She said the only good sobering-up remedy is time and non-caffeinated beverages. Both alcohol and caffeine have dehydrating effects, so fluids are the ideal remedy for intoxication, she said.

Another myth that has been perpetuated throughout the years is the rule of waiting 20 minutes after you eat before swimming, Gardner said.

"Muscle cramps have more to do with the lack of appropriate nutrients, overuse of the muscle that hasn't been used in a really long time, dehydration in the sun - those actually contribute to muscle cramps while swimming," she said.

Design by Nick Wilsey, photos by Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

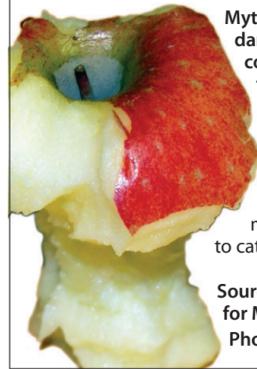
An apple a day?

No one knows for sure if an apple a day keeps the doctor away, but here are some definite untruths:

Myth: Drinking eight glasses of water a day will give you optimal health.

Truth: Drinking plenty of water never hurt anyone, but there's no magic number as far as how many glasses you should drink. You'll be fine as long as you drink enough water to replenish the fluids lost through urination, respiration and perspiration.

The best way to tell if you're drinking enough water is by examining the darkness of your urine - dark yellow indicates a higher concentration of dissolved substances, and consequently a lower water content.



Myth: Not bundling up in cold, damp weather will give you a cold or the flu.

Truth: Colds are upper respiratory infections caused by viruses, not by weather.

However, people tend to stay cooped up indoors during the cold months, making them more vulnerable to catching viruses from others.

Source: University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
Photo by: Kelsey Landhuis/Index

Higgins said a myth she has often heard is that the flu shot can give people the flu, when in fact the recipient could be exposed to the flu before the vaccine has a chance to take effect.

A myth that Dilday said his parents bought into was the belief that carrots would improve his vision. "I didn't want glasses, so I ate as many carrots as I could because

I heard that it helps," he said.

Gardner said myths had to start somewhere, but she does not know what truth they started with, if any at all.

"They had to have had some base somewhere or they would not have kept going," she said. "... And that word of mouth ... is hardly ever questioned. It was the way it was."

Around The Ville

Bingo

Student Activities Board presents Bingo. Come play and win free prizes. Refreshments will be available.

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Tuesday
Student Union Building
Free

Henna Tattoos

The Muslim Students Association invites everyone to come out and get a semi-permanent henna tattoo.

Contact Nadia Mozaffar for an appointment
636-675-2170

12 p.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday
Ryle Hall main lounge
\$3 - \$7

Belly Dancing

The University Society of Middle Eastern Dance is hosting a free belly dancing show featuring Petite Jamila of the Belly Dance Superstars.

5:30 p.m. Saturday
Student Union Building
Down Under
Free