

Medical Myths

Every day advances are made in modern medicine to enable people to live longer, healthier lives. The internet has made medical information more easily accessible than ever before and people are becoming more aware of the importance of looking after their health. However, a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing. Surprisingly, there are many old wives' tales and myths surrounding health and wellbeing that are still believed by many, even though they are actually the equivalent of believing a red hot poker and a bottle of whiskey are essential items for surgery. LexiMed Educates is going to take a look at some strange, funny and sometimes weird medical myths and the stories behind them.

The Myth	True or False?	The facts....	
A hangover can be cured by eating raw eggs, drinking more alcohol, vegemite, cooked breakfast, water, vitamin C, etc.	False	There is no cure for a hangover. Hangovers are subjective, the amount a person suffers and the type of hangover they suffer from depends on many variables such as volume of alcohol consumed, height, weight, gender and genetic make up... the list goes on. Whether one of these remedies might ease the symptoms of the hangover can depend on these variables, however, there is certainly no quick fix. It is also worth remembering these remedies will not assist with sobering a person up as this is dependent solely on the individual's metabolic system.	
Cracking your knuckles will cause arthritis.	False	The cracking sound is made by gas which is dissolved in the lubricant of the joint capsule known as synovial fluid. When pressure is applied to a joint, pressure in the joint capsule builds and the gas is released from the synovial fluid making the cracking or popping noise. Knuckle cracking will not cause arthritis, however, it may cause the joint to weaken over time.	
A long, hard labour before birth means it's a boy.	True	Funnily enough, this old wives' tale has some scientific backing. Researchers at Dublin's National Maternity Hospital published a study done on eight thousand births and found that mothers of boys were significantly more likely to have longer labour and more complications. Boys... trouble from the word go.	
Pull out one grey hair and two will grow in its place.	False	Each individual hair has its own follicle. Only one hair can grow out of each follicle, and once the hair is grey, every hair that grows out of the follicle will be grey from there on. If you are adverse to grey hair, work out if bald or dyed suits you better.	

<p>Drinking alcohol kills brain cells.</p>	<p>False</p> <p>Having a drink will not cause brain cell death, it just impairs the function of those you have. The myth that alcohol kills brain cells dates back to the temperance campaigners of the nineteenth century who wanted alcohol banned, there is no scientific basis for the theory. In fact, experiments have repeatedly shown there is no significant difference between overall number or density of neurones in alcoholics compared to non drinkers. However, there is still no doubt as to the harm that can be done to the brain through consumption of alcohol.</p>	
<p>Back pain should be treated with bed rest.</p>	<p>False</p> <p>Bed rest can actually be a contraindication for back pain. It may delay or even prevent recovery. Patients who continue about their daily life and as far as possible engage in normal activities have been found to have fewer problems with recurring pain. Interestingly this is not just true for back pain, studies have found that bed rest can do more harm than good for a number of illnesses.</p>	
<p>Warm milk makes you sleepy.</p>	<p>True</p> <p>Studies have found that warm milk is likely to make you feel drowsy, although the scientific reason is still not crystal clear. There is a chemical called tryptophan which is known to make you drowsy, however, there is not enough of this chemical in milk to have this effect. Psychologists believe there is a mental link with warm milk and sleep which is derived from infancy.</p>	
<p>Stress can cause a stomach ulcer.</p>	<p>False</p> <p>Stomach ulcers are caused by bacteria called helicobacter pylori. In the early 1980s two Australian pathologists, Barry Marshall and Robin Warren made this discovery, having noticed previously unidentified bacteria colonising in the stomach of ulcer sufferers. They were awarded the Nobel prize in 2005. The belief previously was that stress caused an increase in stomach acid which the stomach lining was unable to cope with.</p>	

Sources: <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/story?id=2283933&page=1>, <http://www.inquisitr.com>, <http://theconversation.edu.au>, <http://theconversation.edu.au/mondays-medical-myth-you-can-cure-a-hangover-1518>, <http://www.psychologytoday.com>, The Book of General Ignorance by John Lloyd and John Mitchinson, <http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/ss/slideshow-sleep-foods>, http://osteoarthritis.about.com/od/osteoarthritis101/f/crack_knuckles.htm