

# Did You Know?

## Medical Myths

Remember when Mom told you “You have to wait an hour after eating before swimming” and “If you cross your eyes they’ll stay that way?” Even though Moms, as a general rule, *DO* know best, here are several medical myths that even Moms may still believe.

1. **Chewing gum takes 7 years to pass through your system.**

**Wrong!** Gum doesn’t stick to your insides! It is not digestible in the human body but it does pass through just like any other food eaten.

2. **Hair and fingernails continue to grow after death.**

**Wrong again!** The actual growth of hair and nails requires a complex hormonal regulation that is not sustainable after death. The dehydration of the body after death may lead to retraction of soft tissue, especially the skin. This in turn creates the appearance of increased length of nails. Of course, this is less obvious with hair.

3. **We only use 10% of our brain**

O.K...there could be a lot of jokes here. However, brain-imaging studies show that **no** area of our brain is inactive.

4. **Shaving hair causes it to grow back faster, darker and coarser.**

**No,** Chewbacca, not true. Clinical trials show that shaving has no effect on hair growth. Shaving removes the dead portion of the hair, not the living section lying below. Shaved hair may give the impression of coarseness because it lacks the finer taper seen at the ends of unshaven hair. Since new hair has not been lightened by the sun or chemicals, it may seem darker.

5. **Hangovers can be cured.**

Wishful thinking. There is **no** scientific evidence that proves there is ANY cure for alcohol hangovers. Since hangovers are caused by drinking too much alcohol, the only way to avoid one is , you guessed it, not drink too much. Alcohol, a diuretic, causes you to lose a lot of water. Drinking lots of water will rehydrate your body and make you feel better.

6. **Coffee will help you sober up.**

Sorry Starbucks, **not true.** There is no way to increase the rate at which your body eliminates alcohol . . . just ask Amy Winehouse.

7. **Getting a flu shot will give you the flu.**

**Au contraire.** The injectable vaccine does not contain the live virus and cannot infect you with illness. The vaccine stimulates your body to make antibodies that fight the virus.

8. **Eating at night makes you fat.**

**Not so much.** Snacks at night are no worse than snacks at any other time of day. Bottom line: it doesn't matter what time of day you eat, as long as you burn the total number of calories you consume that day.

9. **Cracking your knuckles will cause arthritis later in life.**

**Nope.** Arthritis is caused when the immune system attacks the joints. We have no control over this. However, your finger joints may weaken over time from cracking them.

**FYI:** Do you ever wonder where that cracking sound comes from? When the bones move apart it causes a gas bubble. The cracking sound is actually the bursting of that bubble. Gross.

10. **Cold weather can give you a cold.**

**Negative.** Remember when Mom always said “Put on your coat or you’ll catch a cold!” or “Don’t go outside with wet hair or you’ll get sick!” While she was looking out for our best interests, this simply is not true.

**VIRUSES** give you a cold or upper respiratory infection. It has nothing to do with weather. Colds are more prevalent during colder temperatures because we spend more time inside then. This makes the virus easier to spread from person to person.

**So, please excuse me now while I eat a meal and immediately go swimming (that’s really O.K.), after which I’ll read my novel in dim light(which will not ruin my eyes), eat a watermelon and it’s seeds (a watermelon will not grow in my stomach) and indulge in some chocolate (which will not give me acne)!**