



Dispelling THE MYTHS

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There are hundreds of examples of food and drink being touted as cures for illness or being blamed as the cause of it. I would like to dispel 10 of the most commonly mentioned myths.

MYTH | Eating carrots can improve your vision.

Beta-carotene is a nutrient found abundantly in carrots; this is converted by our body to vitamin A. Extreme vitamin A deficiency can cause blindness, but it only takes a very small amount of beta-carotene to preserve normal sight. Eating an overabundance of carrots could cause vitamin A toxicity, the symptoms of which are weight loss, hair loss, headache and fatigue.

MYTH | Drinking coffee can stunt your growth.

Attempts have been made to link caffeine consumption to a loss of bone density and even osteoporosis. The conclusion, however, is that moderate caffeine consumption, along with a balanced diet including adequate calcium, has no effect on bone growth or height.



MYTH | Spicy food causes ulcers.

There is no doubt that spicy foods make stomach ulcers worse, but there is no proof that they cause them. The most common causes are aspirin and anti-inflammatory medicines such as Advil and a bacterium called *Helicobacter pylori*.

MYTH | Eating Pop Rocks and Coca-Cola together could kill you.

The urban legend is that Mikey from the Life cereal commercials died by chasing a mouthful of Pop Rocks with a Coke, causing his stomach to rupture. This myth only makes the top 10 because it was mentioned on VH1 at 4 am as I wrapped up this article. I did give this a try in the '70s and survived. Personally, I think Pixie Sticks and chocolate milk gives a better buzz and can be used as drywall paste.

continued on page 10

Dispelling THE MYTHS

continued from page 8



MYTH | Oysters are an aphrodisiac.

Chocolate, strawberries and champagne also share this claim, but none have been proven to reliably enhance interest. Oysters, like most foods that are disgusting, are loaded with vitamins and minerals, including zinc. Zinc helps control the body's progesterone level, which has a positive effect on libido.

MYTH | Applying a raw steak is the best treatment for a black eye.

Everyone from Fred Flintstone to Rocky Balboa has slapped a fat, juicy steak on a shiner. In reality, any pressure applied with a cold compress will help decrease swelling. Keeping your head elevated and avoiding ibuprofen and aspirin also help. As with most conditions, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure – so try not to get punched in the first place.

MYTH | Bathing in tomato juice will neutralize the smell of being sprayed by a skunk.

There is no data to support that tomato juice has any ingredient that counteracts the horrific sulfur smell of skunk spray. The most commonly recommended treatment is a mixture of a quart of hydrogen peroxide, a teaspoon of dish soap and a cup of baking soda.



I hope this helps dispel some of the myths that are out there. My final piece of advice that I share with my patients, which is the key to a long and healthy life: If it feels good – Stop doing it! If it tastes good – Spit it out!



MYTH | Drinking cranberry juice can cure a bladder infection.

This one is almost true. A bladder infection occurs when bacteria in the urine take hold of the wall of the bladder, causing inflammation and bleeding and the typical symptoms of pain with urination, urgency and frequency. Once the bladder is infected, cranberry juice can't help. However, an ingredient in cranberry juice does make the wall of the bladder slippery and prevents bacteria from attaching.

MYTH | Too much sugar can make a child hyperactive.

I have never been able to convince the parents of a hyperactive child that sugar plays no role. Studies have never confirmed a cause-and-effect relation. Sugar provides energy but does not promote hyperactivity. Hyperactivity is also not caused by caffeine or sleep deprivation. Sorry, parents, it's mostly genetic.



MYTH | Eating chocolate can cause acne.

Chocolate is another innocent victim. While frequently blamed for acne, studies have never confirmed a correlation. Acne has been closely linked to stress and hormonal changes. Greasy foods like pizza, French fries and fried chicken have also never been proven to worsen acne. But I suspect



“Hormone Face” will never replace “Pizza Face” as the standard teenage insult.