

# Infection Prevention and You



## Is it an old wives' tale or is it smart advice?

Every day, we are bombarded with information from a variety of sources. We can safely ignore some of it, but when it comes to your health, how do you know if the information you're viewing on the TV screen or internet is accurate?

Since you were a child you have heard "old wives' tales" regarding your health: "An apple a day..." or "don't swim for an hour after eating..." When it comes to infection prevention, are these anecdotes safe to listen to?

One piece of advice we have all heard is: "Chicken soup to cure a cold." This one actually has some grains of truth. Researchers from the journal *Chest* found chicken soup appears to inhibit neutrophil chemotaxis, which may be responsible for mucous production. This could help relieve congestion. While there is no cure for the cold the study concluded chicken soup may have anti-inflammatory properties, which may help relieve cold symptoms. So you can follow grandma's advice on this one.

Another tale with a long history is having your dog lick a wound. This belief dates back to the Egyptians. It could potentially be very dangerous to follow this practice. Dogs' mouths contain billions of bacteria, some of which could cause your cut to get infected. So instead of allowing a dog to lick your wound, clean your hands, wash the wound with soap and water, and keep it clean and dry.

Probably the most common tale we hear is: "The flu shot will give you the flu." This advice is just not true: getting your annual flu vaccine is the best way to prevent the flu. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), flu vaccine is made either with a) flu vaccine viruses that have been inactivated and are therefore not infectious, or b) with no flu vaccine viruses at all. So don't let this false information keep you from protecting yourself and your family with a flu shot this season.

When it comes to old wives' tales, the best advice to keep you and your family safe is to check with your healthcare provider.

### Additional Resources

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—Misconceptions about seasonal flu and flu vaccines  
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/misconceptions.htm>

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