

Fix It With Food

20 EASY-TO-SWALLOW MEDICAL TREATMENTS

BY KIMBERLY FLYNN



Dr. Harvey Kellogg invented cornflakes, but during the late 1800s he was more famous as a physician. The good doctor claimed he could cure virtually any disease, from ulcers and schizophrenia to acne. All it took, he said, was a dose of yogurt. Well, more specifically, a yogurt enema. Dr. Kellogg, of course, was a flake. But he did make good cereal. And he did have the right idea. Research has shown that some foods can be just as effective as prescription drugs in treating medical conditions. Best of all, unlike his cure-all, our remedies slide into the portal of least resistance: your mouth.

PROBLEM: You're worried you'll start wandering aimlessly through the city

PRESCRIPTION: A bag of almond M&M's Chocolate-covered nuts may prevent or delay the development of Alzheimer's disease. It's not the chocolate that protects you, though; it's the E in the almonds. A National Institutes of Health study found that the antioxidative properties of vitamin E reduce deterioration in the brain as you age. Just 2 ounces of almonds contains your entire recommended daily intake of E.

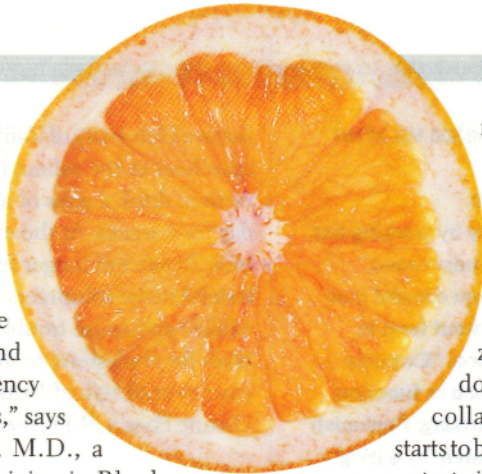


FOOD STYLING: BETTINA FISHER

PROBLEM: You can't breathe

PRESCRIPTION: A few fish fillets each week

"Magnesium helps to improve lung function and reduce the frequency of asthma attacks," says Michael Dacey, M.D., a critical-care physician in Rhode Island. "Emergency rooms use magnesium to treat patients having acute attacks," he says. Plus, recent research found that asthmatics with magnesium deficiencies spent more time in the hospital than those whose diets were rich in the stuff. For men with severe asthma, Dr. Dacey recommends eating at least one serving of fish, seafood, or spinach each day.



mean you aren't getting enough vitamin C, says Cyndi Thomson, Ph.D., R.D., an assistant professor at the University of Arizona. When you don't get enough C, collagen in your body starts to break down. And that process starts in your gums. "One grapefruit provides your entire daily requirement of vitamin C," she says.

PROBLEM: Your breath stinks

PRESCRIPTION: Eight glasses of water throughout the day

Instead of sucking on breath mints, keep a bottle of water by your side. "Bad breath is caused by sulfur compounds in your mouth, and sipping water frequently helps wash away those compounds and trigger the production of breath-neutralizing saliva," says Anthony Dailley, D.D.S., founder of the Center for Breath Treatment in San Francisco.

PROBLEM: You've got diarrhea

PRESCRIPTION: A glass or two of wine

It's not Pepto's pink color that makes you feel better; it's a compound

called bismuth subsalicylate, which is also found in high levels in both red and white wine. According to one study, drinking a glass or two of wine is just as effective at controlling diarrhea as taking a single dose of most over-the-counter remedies. The bismuth compound appears to prevent diarrhea by slowing or stopping the growth of bacteria like *Salmonella* and *E. coli*, before they can make you any sicker.

PROBLEM: You drank too many

Bloody Marys

PRESCRIPTION: Lots of virgin Marys

Only time and aspirin can heal the effects of crazed celebration, but for a major hangover, reach for the red stuff—tomato juice. "If you're throwing up, it's likely you're low on potassium, calcium, and sodium," says Linda Van Horn, Ph.D., R.D., a professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University. "That combination is what leaves you feeling sick and exhausted." Tomato juice is a good source of all those nutrients, along with additional water to make up for the fluids you've lost.

PROBLEM: You've got hic—, hic—, hic—
spasmodic closing of the glottis

PRESCRIPTION: A spoonful of sugar

If the thought of Dick Cheney's heart

PROBLEM:

You've got sore joints

PRESCRIPTION: Half a cup of cooked, mixed vegetables

The more cooked vegetables you eat, the lower your risk of developing arthritis, according to a recent Greek study. Researchers studied the diets and health of 330 people and found that those who ate the most cooked vegetables were 75 percent less likely to develop arthritis than those who consumed the least. One possible reason: Heat destroys the vegetables' cell walls, allowing your body to absorb more of the nutrients that would otherwise pass through your system.

PROBLEM: Your gums bleed when you brush your teeth

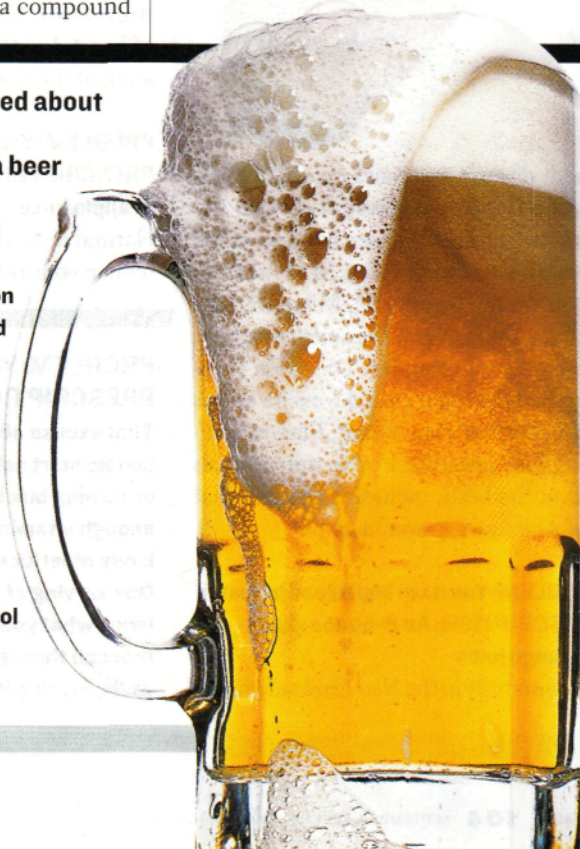
PRESCRIPTION: An A.M. grapefruit

Inflamed gums hurt, and they can also

PROBLEM: You're worried about heart disease

PRESCRIPTION: Drink a beer (but just one)

Beer may lower your risk of heart attack, according to a University College of London study. Researchers followed men in the Czech Republic and found that those who drank an average of one beer a day had the lowest risk of heart disease. But men who drank an average of two or more beers a day lost that extra protection. Doctors theorize that ethanol in the beer thins the blood and helps protect the heart.





PROBLEM: Your legs seize up after you leave the gym
PRESCRIPTION: A banana

You try to take care of your body by working out. It thanks you by cramping up. In most cases, though, those cramps don't mean you overdid it at the gym. "Muscle cramps after a workout tend to be a sign of a deficiency," says Thomson. "Exercise depletes the nutrients your muscles need to function properly." The alternative to pain and cursing: Replenish your magnesium and potassium immediately by eating a banana and drinking a glass of water to fight off dehydration. "That should be enough to eliminate cramps before they occur," says Thomson.

of Medicine reports that increasing the amount of potassium and calcium in your diet will significantly lower your blood pressure, whether it's elevated or not. "The minerals protect your kidneys from high levels of sodium, a known hypertension risk," says Van Horn. Calcium-fortified, not-from-concentrate orange juice is a good source of both calcium and potassium, along with vitamin C. Another plus: According to English researchers, people with the most vitamin C in their bloodstreams are 40 percent less likely to die of heart disease than people with lower levels of the nutrient.

PROBLEM: Your LDL has gone to hell
PRESCRIPTION: An 8-ounce glass of apple juice

Natural antioxidants in apple juice help reduce your risk of heart disease, accord-

PROBLEM: You're black-and-blue all over
PRESCRIPTION: A couple of sides of broccoli

That excuse about walking into a door only lasts so long before people start asking questions. "If you're constantly getting bruises or turning black-and-blue, it may be a sign that you aren't taking in enough vitamin K," says Thomson. Although asparagus and some kinds of lettuce are good sources of vitamin K, broccoli is better. One serving of cooked broccoli has 250 micrograms, more than twice what you need each day. Eating at least a couple of cups of broccoli throughout the week will help strengthen your blood-vessel walls, making it harder for them to break—and for you to bruise.

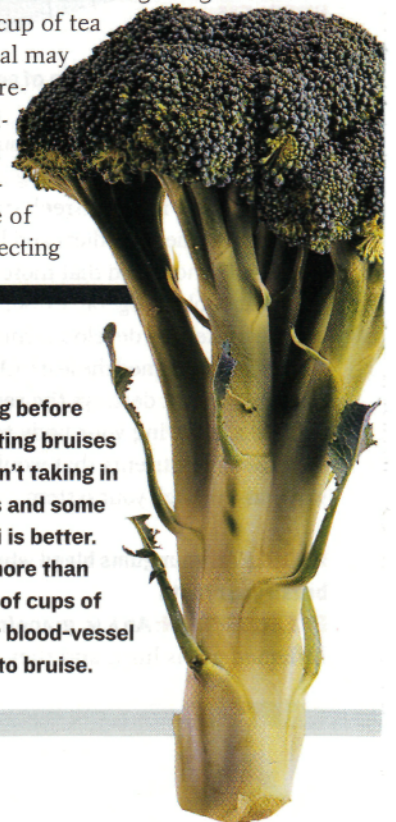
ing to a University of California study. Researchers at the school had 25 men and women drink a glass of apple juice every day for 6 weeks. At the end of the trial, it took 20 percent longer for bad LDL cholesterol in the volunteers' bloodstreams to oxidize and cause trouble. "The longer it takes for cholesterol to oxidize, the lower your overall risk of heart disease," says Dianne Hyson, R.D., the study author.

PROBLEM: You're starting to go bald
PRESCRIPTION: Dinner at a steak house

Researchers may have discovered why Patrick Stewart lost his hair: one too many cheesesteaks. Order top round steak instead. It's the leanest cut of meat available on most menus. Going lean instead of eating fatty cuts of meat won't keep you from going bald, but it may slow down the process. According to a study from Australia, men who ate lean cuts of meat were less likely to go bald than those who ate fatty cuts of meat. Another plus: "Beef is an excellent source of zinc," says Thomson. "And not getting enough zinc can lead to sudden hair loss."

PROBLEM: Your teeth hurt
PRESCRIPTION: A cup of tea

Although you wouldn't know it from looking inside the average Englishman's mouth, a cup of tea with a meal may help to prevent cavities. "Tea is a natural source of tooth-protecting



health doesn't scare away your hiccups, try this: "Pouring a spoonful of sugar under your tongue can cure a bad case of the hiccups," says Marla Tobin, M.D., a family physician in Higginsville, Missouri. Like hiccups themselves, the science behind the cure isn't clear, but Dr. Tobin theorizes that the sugar granules excite nerves in the back of your throat. Once stimulated, the nerves block other nerve signals within the body, including the one that might be causing your hiccups.

PROBLEM: You have high blood pressure
PRESCRIPTION: An 8-ounce glass of orange juice

A recent study in the *New England Journal*



fluoride,” says Shelby Kashket, Ph.D., a senior investigator with the Forsyth Institute for Dental Health Research in Boston. Tea also contains polyphenols, the same stuff that keeps gum from sticking to your teeth. Drinking a cup before a meal will give your teeth a Teflon-like coating that’ll keep cavity-causing sugars from sticking to your chops.

PROBLEM: The world is a constant blur

PRESCRIPTION: Half a cup of cooked greens
Just opening your eyes can make you susceptible to disease. “Basic elements like light and oxygen increase a person’s chances of developing vision problems such as cataracts,” says Joanne Curran-Celantano, Ph.D., R.D., a professor of nutrition at the University of New Hampshire. “But eating half a cup of cooked greens every few days gives you enough antioxidants to delay the formation of vision problems by years.”

PROBLEM: The FBI wants answers, now

PRESCRIPTION: A cup of coffee
Caffeine does more for you than wake you up in the morning. According to Dutch research, taking as little as 32 milligrams of caffeine (the amount in just 2 ounces of coffee) before a test helped volunteers improve their memory, as well as their overall reading speed and level of mental alertness. To maximize the benefit, down the coffee at least half an hour before you really need to be thinking clearly. Looking for a bit more long-term acuity? Keep drinking coffee or caffeinated soda, but pass on the artificial sweetener. A recent study suggests it may impair short-term memory levels.

PROBLEM: You’re a few swimmers short in the fallopian-tube relay

PRESCRIPTION: A bowl of cereal
There may be a link between low sperm

counts and folic-acid intake. In a study conducted at the USDA Western Human Nutrition Research Center, researchers found that men with the lowest sperm counts also had the least folic acid in their diets. “It appears that men who are trying to conceive need folic acid for proper DNA synthesis and sperm production,” says Lynn Wallock, Ph.D., a research chemist and the lead study author. Cereals are one of the best sources of folic acid. One bowl of Wheaties or Raisin Bran, for example, has 25 percent of your daily requirement.

PROBLEM: Everyone but you has a cold
PRESCRIPTION: As much garlic as you can stomach

The second you notice that familiar tickle in your throat, drop everything and head to your nearest Italian restaurant for a plate of garlic bread and shrimp scampi. “Garlic has powerful antiviral properties that fight infections,” says Thomson. “Just a couple of cloves of garlic, mixed into food, will jump-start your immune system and improve your chances of fighting off an illness.” If you have to continue the garlic-heavy diet for more than a few days, stick to tomatoey Italian foods, or drink a glass of tomato juice with each meal. Acids in the tomatoes will neutralize the odor-causing oils in the garlic, just as they do other scents—like skunk spray.



PROBLEM: You have a family history of prostate cancer

PRESCRIPTION: Low-fat vanilla ice cream
Can’t stomach another tomato, no matter how much cancer-fighting lycopene it has? Cancel the pizza delivery and head for the freezer instead. In a study recently presented at the Society for Experimental Biology’s annual conference, researchers revealed that the more boron there is in your diet, the lower your overall chances of developing prostate cancer. Vanilla ice cream is one of the very best sources of boron, with 25 micrograms per cup. ♦



4 PROBLEMS YOU CAN CURE WITH FOOD

(BUT NOT BY EATING IT)

It really is okay to play with your supper, especially if you want to...

DISINFECT A WOUND

Pour a dab of honey on a cut before covering it with a bandage. “Studies show that honey has powerful antibacterial properties,” says James A. Duke, Ph.D., author of *The Green Pharmacy*. One New Zealand study found that honey was capable of destroying almost all strains of the most common wound-infecting bacteria.

REPAIR DRY SKIN

Baste yourself. “Try rubbing a small amount of corn oil over dry skin on your hands or feet, to add moisture and seal it into the area,” says Cyndi Thomson, Ph.D., R.D., an assistant professor at the University of Arizona college of public health.

TREAT POISON IVY

Got itching? Get milk. Soaking a rag in cold milk and then holding it on your skin will dry out the rash of poison ivy and help ease the itch, says John Romano, M.D., a New York City dermatologist.

SOOTHE A SUNBURN

To stop the itch and burn, mix together a bit of dry oatmeal and cool water. Make it slightly slushier than if you were going to eat it, and spread the mixture carefully on your sunburned skin. “This will relieve the pain and help reduce swelling,” says Patricia Farris, M.D., a professor of dermatology at Tulane University.