

# Does Bubbe know best about health?

BY DR ASHLEY REECE

A S A general paediatrician I am often told about home remedies, usually suggested by Bubbe. These old wives' tales are now realised to be scientifically incorrect. Let's bust a few myths. Or are some to be believed?

## FLAT FIZZY DRINKS PREVENT DEHYDRATION IN DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING

The treatment for gastroenteritis which presents with diarrhoea and/or vomiting is a solution such as Dioralyte, which contains a special proportion of sugar and salts. Such solutions rehydrate and replace essential minerals. In developing countries, where gastroenteritis is a significant cause of illness and death, they save millions of children's lives.

Fizzy drinks are full of sugar and so will draw water into the bowel, making diarrhoea worse. They contain very low levels of sodium and potassium, minerals which are lost from the body in vomit and loose stools. There is no evidence to suggest fizzy drinks are a good rehydration solution, even if flat. Please don't give them to your children if they have gastroenteritis.

## CHICKEN SOUP IS JEWISH PENICILLIN

A well-quoted study from 1975 by Sackethoo and colleagues showed that chicken soup increased mucus flow in the nose, which may help clear nasal congestion. There is also a study from 15 years ago by Reenard and co, which demonstrated that chicken soup did prevent white blood cells from producing the chemicals that cause inflammation and this may explain why the properties of chicken soup are reported to prevent colds or help us feel better.

However, it's not all good, since chicken soup usually contains a lot of sodium, which will be more dehydrating than fluids containing less sodium.

## AVOIDING NUTS PREVENTS A NUT ALLERGY

Just last year, colleagues at St Thomas' Hospital found that eating nuts in fact prevents allergy. They noticed that Israeli children had less nut allergy than children in other countries and that Israeli children were weaned on Bamba, the peanut snack.

They performed some research called the Leap study, which found that children who were at high risk of developing peanut allergy, for example those with infantile eczema, were less likely to do so if they were given a peanut-containing snack from a young age.

Children aged four to 11 months were randomly allocated to be



The science may be patchy but shared time with Grandmas always precious

given a peanut-containing snack at least three times a week to the age of five years, or to avoid peanuts. Researchers found that 17 per cent of the children avoiding peanuts developed a peanut allergy but only three per cent of those who ate peanuts did. So weaning young babies on Bamba can prevent them from developing peanut allergy in their childhood.

## WHEN MY CHILD HAS A TEMPERATURE, I CAN GIVE IBUPROFEN AND PARACETAMOL TOGETHER

Paracetamol and ibuprofen are both medications that lower temperature. For decades the two have been used together. They work in different ways but the recommendation in updated guidance in 2013 is to

use just one and, if the one being used does not reduce the temperature, then try the other.

In fact, unless your child is distressed by the fever there is no need to give any medication to reduce it. These medications are also used for pain relief and in combination have a very good effect. But be careful. They come in different preparations and the dose must be checked carefully.

There are many more myths out there. Take care to get the right advice; don't always believe Bubbe! For reliable medical information see [nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk)

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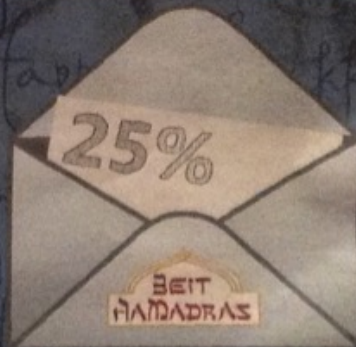


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