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Weird Home Remedies that Actually Work

By Lisa Collier Cool
May 21, 2012

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Day in Health

by Lisa Collier Cool

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Strange but true: you've probably got an amazing assortment of stuff in the kitchen, the tool box or the medicine chest that can do double duty as remedies for all kinds of common ailments. What's more, there's actual scientific research to back up some of these do-it-yourself treatments. Here's a rundown on the most intriguing nine:

Didgeridoo for Sleep Apnea

Okay, so this probably isn't something you've got lying around the house. You may not have heard of it either, but if you've got sleep apnea, this strange-sounding [Australian wind instrument](#) may be just what you need.

According to a study from Switzerland, four months of learning to play the didgeridoo worked well for patients with moderate sleep apnea, made for a better night's sleep, and reduced daytime sleepiness. Even more, their bed partners slept better, too. Playing the instrument addressed sleep apnea by strengthening the upper airway, which prevents it from narrowing as you inhale.

[10 Natural Ways to Sleep Better](#)

Biting on a Pencil for Headache Relief

This won't work for migraines, but if you get common [tension headaches](#), the pencil trick may help prevent them. We tend to automatically clench our jaws and teeth when we're anxious or stressed, and this is a subconscious reaction that can lead to a tension headache.

When you feel your jaw clench, put a pencil between your teeth (don't bite down) and hold it there. This simple strategy will cause your jaw to relax, easing tension, forestalling the headache, and easing the pain.

[How to Avoid a Migraine Before It Happens](#)

Listerine for Blisters

You know it as a breath freshener and an antiseptic, but Listerine can also dry out blisters. Dab some on a cotton ball and apply it to your blister three times a day until it dries and the pain vanishes. Integrative medicine pioneer [Andrew Weil, M.D.](#), [recommends](#) applying petroleum jelly on a blister for temporary pain relief.

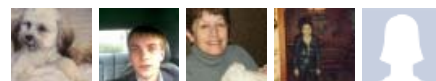
Lemon Balm Tea for Cold Sores

[Lemon balm](#) is a member of the mint family and packs an anti-viral punch that can heal cold sores caused by the herpes simplex virus (this isn't the herpes that is sexually transmitted). A big study in Germany found that once treated with lemon balm, not a single cold sore recurrence occurred.



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Duct Tape for Warts

This is not an old wives tale. [Using duct tape to remove warts](#) has been shown to work better than freezing them off. In one study, duct tape eliminated 85 percent of patients' warts in two months (freezing eradicated only 60 percent).

Here's how it works: make sure the wart and surrounding skin are clean, then cut a piece of duct tape a bit larger than the wart and press into place. Remove the tape every three days, rub the wart with an emery board or pumice stone, and repeat until the wart is gone.

Ginger for Motion Sickness

Crystalized ginger, ginger tea, ginger syrup, or capsules of ginger powder can combat motion sickness and nausea in general (ginger ale or even ginger snaps may help, too). One study found that ginger worked better for motion sickness than anti-nausea medication, and Danish researchers report that [ginger helped quell seasickness](#) in susceptible naval cadets better than a placebo.

Papaya for Smoother Skin

The active ingredient is papain, an enzyme that dissolves dead surface cells that give skin a dull, rough look. Try this fruity facial to soften and smooth your skin: wash and peel a ripe papaya and swirl about two tablespoons in a food processor. Add a tablespoon of dried oatmeal and apply to your freshly washed face for 10 minutes. Remove with warm water or a wet washcloth.

Banana Bonanza

You can do a lot more with a banana than slice it on your cereal. Among the fruit's other uses: slap a banana peel (the inside part) on an itch caused by a bug bite or poison ivy; this will dial down the inflammation and relieve the itch. You can also use mashed banana as a facial--it's great for moisturizing dry skin. Banana peel also has anti-acne properties: just rub the inside part of the peel over your clean face to get the anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial effects.

Mustard for Minor Burns

Slather mustard on seared skin. After an initial sting, the mustard will relieve the pain and prevent scarring and blistering. No science here, but lots of enthusiastic testimonials.

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