

Health information from the  
Family Health Center Closest to You



## Medical Myths



- **Fit Youth Program:**  
Helps your child lose weight. Call 216/986-4000 and ask about FYI
- **Smoke-free environment**
- **Sign up for MyChart:**  
Your medical records online
- **Independence OB/GYNs**  
deliver at Hillcrest Hospital

### **Fact** or Fiction? Investigating Medical Myths

Swallowing a watermelon seed will cause a watermelon to grow in your stomach. Obviously false. But some seemingly common sense “truths” we grew up hearing may or may not be true. We’ve dedicated this issue to uncovering medical myths.

#### **Myth: Going outside with a wet head in cold weather causes colds.**

Cold, wet head chills the body, makes it weak and causes a cold, right? But according to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, scientists have tested that theory, and it hasn’t stuck. But why do we believe it? Experts say it is perpetuated because colds are more common in the winter when most cold-causing viruses survive better, not to mention the fact that we spend more time inside, around other people — closer to their germs!

Some more things that don’t cause colds are: weather changes, cool temperatures, wearing insufficient clothing or walking outside barefoot. But prevention is simple: Wash your hands often to get rid of cold viruses that are easily passed from person to person.

And, the average length of a cold is 12 days, so usually no treatment is necessary. You just need to let it run its course. Nonprescription cold remedies may relieve some symptoms but will not shorten the duration. Antibiotics do not kill viruses.

#### **Myth: My knees can tell when it is going to rain.**

According to research from the American College of Rheumatology, changes in barometric pressure and temperature really *do* cause increased aches and pains for arthritis sufferers. So next time your neighbor’s complaining about aching knees and painful arthritis, watch the skies!

But does cracking your knuckles cause arthritis? The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases says... maybe. Research is inconclusive. Some studies say no, but others show that repetitive cracking can do damage to the soft tissue of the joint and may lead to a weak grip and swelling. Cleveland Clinic physicians recommend keeping cracking to a minimum.

**More...** Look inside for more myths and the truth about them.

## Myth: The flu shot will give me the flu.

IN MOST CASES, THIS IS A COMPLETE MYTH. In very rare instances, one type of flu shot may cause a mild form of the flu.

There are two types of flu vaccines — an inactivated, or killed, vaccine, and an activated, or live, virus vaccine. The inactivated vaccine is recommended for nearly everyone; it is administered by injection into the arm.

The activated flu vaccine is self-administered using a device that sprays a mist into the nasal passage. The strains of live virus in the vaccine are modified so they do not grow well at body temperature. Nasal mist vaccines are only recommended for healthy people between the ages of 5 and 49 who do not have compromised immune systems.

With the activated vaccine, however, there is a *small* risk of developing a *mild* form of the flu. However, the dangers of illness and death from the flu far outweigh the small risk of side effects from the shots. Studies have shown that the flu shot reduces hospitalization by about 70 percent and death by about 85 percent among older people.

And, in most people, the flu shot doesn't cause any side effects. However, if you have a severe allergy to eggs, you should not get a flu shot.

Both vaccines are equally effective in protecting against contraction of the most common flu strain, but building adequate immunity to the flu takes about four weeks from the time of vaccination.



**Pamela Ng, M.D.**, is a dermatologist specializing in adult and pediatric clinical dermatology, acne, skin cancer, psoriasis, phototherapy, cosmetic evaluations and nonsurgical cosmetic procedures.

## Myth: Chocolate causes acne.

**FALSE ... AND MAYBE TRUE** (it may differ for each individual). According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, studies haven't proven a relationship between acne breakouts and certain foods — chocolate or others. If you do notice your acne worsening after chocolate,

cut back on it and see if that makes a difference. But if acne is being appropriately treated, diet shouldn't really matter, says the American Academy of Dermatology. There are also myths about what helps make acne better. For example, acne isn't really helped by the sun.

Treatment for acne is highly individualized. What works for one person may not work for another. Dermatologists take into account several factors when prescribing treatment, including the severity of the acne, types of lesions, co-existing conditions, as well as the patient's age, skin type and lifestyle.

## Myth #1:

### Only old people get arthritis.

## Myth #2: You just have to live with the pain.

**#1: THE ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION SAYS** arthritis affects people in all age groups, including almost 300,000 children. It is one of the most prevalent chronic health problems afflicting 66 million Americans (nearly 1 in 3 adults) and limits everyday activities such as walking, dressing and bathing for more than 7 million Americans. Arthritis, or "joint inflammation," is a general term for a group of more than 100 diseases, including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and gout.

**#2: CLEVELAND CLINIC RHEUMATOLOGISTS SAY** that there are many things that can help ease the pain of arthritis. Options include medication, exercise, heat/cold, use of joint protection and surgery. Treatment depends on the type of arthritis, its severity and the patient's overall health. A number of different specialists may be involved in the care to increase joint mobility and strength and help patients manage pain.

**Alla Model, M.D.**, and **Denise Smith-Hauser, CNP**, specialize in rheumatology and rheumatoid arthritis. They are available to see you.

## Help shedding pounds?

If your child needs to become more physically fit and lose weight, Independence offers an interactive program designed specifically for children and parents. The Fit Youth at Independence (FYI) Program can help children, adolescents and families create change through healthier eating habits, improved fitness and more efficient ways to handle stress. Pediatrician **Karen Vargo, M.D.**, pediatric psychologist **Eileen Kennedy, Ph.D.**, nutrition therapist **Jill Turner, RD, LD**, exercise physiologist **Beth Sprogis** and athletic trainer **Rhonda Newcomer, ATC**, collaborate closely in this program.



## KIDS KORNER

### Myth: Too much sugar causes hyperactivity.

WE CAN'T BLAME attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, on sugar. Cleveland Clinic experts call that an absolute myth, debunked in a series of scientific studies two decades ago. ADHD affects 3 to 7 percent of U.S. schoolchildren and 2 to 4 percent of U.S. adults. Its hallmarks are distractibility, impulsive behavior and overactivity. False theories about the causes of ADHD abound, but according to the National Resource Center on AD/HD, researchers believe that ADHD is rooted in the neurobiology of the brain and largely based on heredity. Other factors proven to contribute to ADHD include prenatal exposure to alcohol and tobacco; prematurity; low birth weight; and high lead levels in the body.

But what about that famous “sugar high?” According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, there’s no evidence that supports a “sugar high.” Experts suggest that since kids often eat sugary treats in the context of an exciting event, such as a birthday party or trip to the ice cream parlor, that’s the significant contributing factor. Of course, if you are concerned, limit your children’s sugar intake. Less sugar is certainly healthier in general.

Children can, however, get a caffeine high from caffeinated sodas or chocolate.

### Myth: An apple a day keeps the doctor away.

THIS COMMON ADAGE has been around for centuries and for good reason. Taken literally, eating one apple a day will not do much to keep the doctor away, but eating at least five can. The International Agency for Research on Cancer recently reported fruit and vegetables as particularly important in cancer prevention. Eating five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day may especially reduce cancers of the mouth, pharynx, lung, stomach, kidney, colon, rectum, ovary (vegetables only) and bladder (fruit only). One serving is considered a medium-sized apple, banana or orange, a half cup of chopped, cooked, or canned fruit, or three-quarters cup of 100% fruit juice. Experts emphasize eating a variety of colors of fruits and vegetables to ensure you get a variety of vitamins and minerals.

A Red Delicious apple may keep the doctor especially far away. A recent report by the Canadian government found Red Delicious apples have the highest concentration of health-enhancing chemicals, especially in its skin where it has six times as much antioxidant activity.

Jocelyn Russ, M.D., is a new internist at Independence who is welcoming new patients.

### Myth: I have asthma, so I can’t exercise.

NOT TRUE! People with asthma often feel they have to limit their physical activities – especially parents who have kids with asthma. But Cleveland Clinic asthma specialists say regular exercise can improve airway function. According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, activities less likely to trigger asthma include golf, swimming, walking, baseball, biking, hiking and free downhill skiing.

Talk with a physician before beginning to establish a personalized asthma care plan. If the weather is cold, exercise indoors or wear a scarf over the nose and mouth. If you have seasonal allergies, avoid exercising outdoors when pollen counts are high. And of course, limit exposure to cigarette smoke.

By controlling these environmental triggers and with appropriate use of preventive medications, adults – and kids – with asthma can definitely enjoy the benefits of regular physical activity.

#### Breathing issues?

Independence offers a Pulmonary Function Laboratory with **David Holden, M.D.** Pulmonologists treat respiratory disease as well as related conditions, such as chronic bronchitis or emphysema.



Anita Bojtos, M.D., specializes in pediatric asthma and breathing issues and is available to see your child.

## Appointments

### Cleveland Clinic Independence

5001 Rockside Road  
Independence, OH 44131  
216/986-4000 or 800/544-6333  
Monday through Thursday: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.  
Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Saturday: 8 a.m. to noon

### Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center at Independence

6100 W. Creek Road  
To see our medical oncologists about cancer diagnosis or treatment, please call  
216/524-7979  
To schedule appointments with our radiation oncologists, call  
216/447-9747  
To speak with a nurse about cancer symptoms or concerns, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., please call the Cleveland Clinic Cancer Answer Line:  
216/444-7923 or 866/223-8100

### Other Family Health Centers

Avon 440/899-5555  
Beachwood 216/839-3000  
Brunswick 330/225-8886  
Chagrin Falls 440/893-9393  
Elyria 440/366-8822  
Lakewood 216/521-4400  
Lorain 440/204-7400  
Solon 440/519-6800  
Strongsville 440/878-2500  
Westlake 440/899-5555  
Willoughby Hills 440/943-2500  
Wooster 330/287-4500

## Imaging Nearby

THE CLEVELAND CLINIC offers adults and children the services of board-certified imaging specialists at Independence. Services include CT, ultrasound, X-rays, mammography, bone-density testing, echocardiography, stress echo, dobutamine stress echo, cardiac stress testing, upper and lower GI studies, and genital and urinary imaging.

## CLEVELAND CLINIC Nurse on Call

To speak with a nurse, 8 a.m. to 11 p.m., Monday through Friday, about your adult and pediatric health concerns, call

216/444-1234  
800/801-2273

## Free Health Info

To request free written health information on a specific disease, illness, procedure or treatment, contact the Health Information Resource Center Monday - Friday, from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., at 216/444-3771.  
[www.clevelandclinic.org/health](http://www.clevelandclinic.org/health)

---

*Cleveland Clinic Family Checkup* is published by the Division of Marketing to provide up-to-date health information and news about Cleveland Clinic Family Health Center services. The information contained in *Cleveland Clinic Family Checkup* is for educational purposes only and should not be relied upon as medical advice. It has not been designed to replace a physician's medical assessment and medical judgment.

Editor: Jennifer Moseley  
Art Director: Barbara Coleman  
Photographers: Don Gerda and Tom Merce

## Patients Enjoy 24/7 Connection with MyChart

Patients like Sondra Pliml of Burton, Ohio, have found a better way to manage their health care. e-Cleveland Clinic MyChart, a secure online medical record, is giving adult primary care patients at The Cleveland Clinic and the Cleveland Clinic Family Health Centers access to their personal health information from home.

“MyChart is so easy to use,” says Ms. Pliml. “And since it’s available 24/7, I can address my health concerns when it’s most convenient for me, not just during regular office hours.”

Ms. Pliml is one of more than 25,000 patients currently enrolled in the program. Any adult with a primary care physician practicing on the main campus or any of the 13 area Cleveland Clinic Family Health Centers is eligible to participate.

Ms. Pliml says that managing her diabetes is easier since she enrolled in the program two years ago. Her family health center physician suggested that she give the program a try. Now she schedules her appointments, reviews test results and renews prescriptions online.

e-Cleveland Clinic MyChart also provides links to health information on sites that are reviewed and updated by health care professionals on a regular basis.

Ask about signing up for e-Cleveland Clinic MyChart the next time you check in to see your doctor, or you can sign up online. For more information, visit [www.clevelandclinic.org/mychartinfo](http://www.clevelandclinic.org/mychartinfo).



**Jocelyn Russ, M.D.**, is a new internal medicine physician at Independence who is welcoming new patients. Call for an appointment and to ask about MyChart.

### I would like the following free information:

#### Fact Sheets:

- Dental Implants
- Family History Chart
- Laser Vision Correction
- Osteoporosis
- MyChart, your personalized medical record
- Smoking Cessation

#### Newsletters:

- Competitive Edge* (sports health)
- Images* (plastic surgery)
- Keeping Your World in Sight* (eye)
- Pain Management*

#### Brochures/Pamphlets:

- Atrial Fibrillation
- Dental Implants
- Is Weight Loss Surgery for You?

#### Videos:

- Osteoporosis: Conquering Bone Loss
- Pain Management

### To receive our fact sheets, brochures or newsletters, simply:

- Send this completed coupon to  
The Cleveland Clinic Foundation, P.O. Box 943, Wooster, OH 44691
- Or call toll-free: 800/545-7718
- Or go to [www.clevelandclinic.org/fhc](http://www.clevelandclinic.org/fhc) and click on “Health Resources” and then “Family Checkup” to request them online.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Send me *Family Checkup* via e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please add me to your Family Health Center mailing list

Please remove me from your Family Health Center mailing list

Please add *my friend* to your Family Health Center mailing list

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Myth: Eating after 8 p.m. causes weight gain.

**NO.** Too many calories and too little exercise cause weight gain, say Cleveland Clinic dietitians. The American Dietetics Association reports that it's what and how much you eat that matters.

Snacking at night usually occurs in front of the television — when we aren't paying attention to what we're eating. So we eat more than we should without realizing it, and if we do it consistently, we gain weight. Plus, usually by nighttime, we've already consumed all the calories we should for the day, so any extra are going to be stored as fat.

The ADA recommends eating small portions of healthy snacks every three to four hours. Whole-grain crackers and low-fat cheese, low-fat yogurt and fruit, whole-grain cereal and low-fat milk, or natural peanut butter and apple slices are good options. Eating snacks with both carbohydrates and protein helps the body stay fueled, the ADA says.



Dietitian **Jill Turner, R.D., L.D.**, specializes in weight loss/management, diabetes management, lipid management and wellness/prevention. She is available to see you.

## WOMEN'S HEALTH



### Myth: No one in my family has had breast cancer, so I don't have to worry about it.

**NOT TRUE, SAY CLEVELAND CLINIC CANCER CENTER EXPERTS.** In fact, 70 to 75 percent of all women diagnosed with breast cancer have no family history of the disease whatsoever.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among American women; at least one in seven will develop it during their lives, according to the American Cancer Society. Age is the biggest single risk factor. As women age, normal genes can undergo changes, or mutations, which lead to breast cancer. If every woman over 50 scheduled regular mammograms, deaths from breast cancer would fall by 30 percent, experts say.



**Pelin Batur, M.D.**, is an internal medicine physician who specializes in women's health issues such as osteoporosis, menstrual disorders, breast cancer risk assessment and hormone replacement therapy. Make an appointment with her or her colleagues by calling 216/986-4000.

Women who have a close female relative with breast cancer are at increased risk because they may have inherited the faulty gene responsible. Inherited breast cancers usually develop by age 40. Our experts advise women with breast cancer in the family to start getting regular mammograms 10 years before the age that their first-degree relative developed it. In other words, if your mother or sister developed breast cancer at age 37, you should get your first mammogram at age 27.

### Myth: A woman can only become pregnant during her "time of month" because the uterus is opened at that time.

**FALSE.** Cleveland Clinic physicians say while it is possible to become pregnant during menstruation, fertilization of a woman's egg is more likely before or during ovulation (when the egg is released from the ovary into the fallopian tube). Ovulation usually occurs about 14 to 16 days before menstruation.

There is no fool-proof way to know the risk of pregnancy each time a man and woman have intercourse. The chances of getting pregnant during menstruation are greater if the woman has a short cycle. There are

days during a healthy woman's cycle when she is fertile, days when she is infertile, and some days when fertility is possible, but unlikely, say experts. However, the days change from woman to woman and often from one month to the next in the same woman.

THE CLEVELAND CLINIC  
FOUNDATION 

Family Checkup / W14  
9500 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44195

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
CLEVELAND, OH  
PERMIT NO. 4184