Medical Lore

Folk medicine could be considered any sort of medical treatment that is part of a cultural tradition that emphasizes anecdotal evidence and tradition rather than any kind of scientific authority. Medical licensing is fairly recent in the history of the world, and for most of its existence has been contained in large cities, funded by the wealthy upper class.

When anyone outside of a rather small geographical and socio-economic sphere had any sort of medical issue they had to turn somewhere else for answers. Aches and pains happen to everyone, especially as they age. Blemishes are the blight of any young person, and every mother has an expert way to cure her children of colds, fevers, flus, and coughs. Areas that are geographically or economically isolated have rich traditions in folk recipes. Cures for common ailments were passed around and refined by generations, shifting as different ingredients became more or less readily available.

A large part of folk medicine is preventative. Cancer is a threat that has existed for a while, but is very difficult to get rid of. Using folklore, it’s possible to calm the worries of those who fear to get it. These cures are things that have not been proven to work except for the fact that there was some sort of correlation at some time. People follow these tips because they are easy to do, and if they work, great. If they don’t work, oh well. One tip was for a long life, avoid breathing in cat hair. (FA 01 682) Cat hair is a generally obnoxious thing to get in the lungs, so it is gladly avoided, and easily forgotten in the case of an early death. Other preventative measures involve rubbing castor oil into the head to prevent hair loss, and avoiding wearing a hat indoors. (FA 01 846)

Preventative tonics got made up every spring, and were tested over time. For a daily tonic, one family caught rainwater in a rusty tin container and drank it by the spoonful to prevent tiredness as well as using it for a dandruff prevention method. (FA 01 846) Their testing had to do with how they felt each spring after taking their tonics. Reportedly, they felt invigorated and refreshed, ready to face the day. "The relationship between culture and health-related beliefs and behaviors is complex. Personal experiences, family attitudes, and group beliefs interact to provide and underlying structure for decision making during illness." (Lee M. Pachter)

There are two kinds of folk remedies; the first is natural medicine is practical, useful advice that gets passed down because it works. Salves for burns or remedies for hiccups fall under this category. These cures come from trial and error or associations and observations made over a lifetime, connecting seemingly unrelated things. One woman noticed over the course of her life that people with rosy cheeks tended to have heart trouble later. (FA 01 822) She is not a scientist, but her observations have
helped her to warn people she knows against risks they may face. Simple observations like that can lead to silly, yet simple solutions to annoying problem. One family prevented snoring, by tying a spool to the back of the snorer to prevent them from sleeping on their back. *(FA 01 846)*

The other type of folk remedies is magic/religious medicine. These work using a placebo effect. They have no explanation, no evidence for working, but bring comfort just the same. One family believed that a silk string worn around the neck will keep mumps from going down to infect the rest of the body. *(FA 01 846)* The human brain can force the body to get better through pure belief, so sometimes the mere act of slathering on a nasty poultice can cure a body who just needs to believe they are being cured. A long time ago, a little boy was run over by a sled and his ear was cut off. His mother spit on it, then tied a cloth around his head to keep it in place, and the ear grew back. *(FA 01 1192)*

Like most folklore, there are some beliefs that no one knows where came from. Things that everyone avoids for fear of some sort of ailment seem completely stupid to other cultures. For instance, in certain cultures, it is believed that eating hot bread will kill you instantly, and eating ice cream on cold days will give you indigestion. *(FA 01 682)* Many cultures have strong beliefs about the interactions of humans with *hot and cold.*

Most of these beliefs have little basis in reality, but presumably have a great story to go along with them which has been lost to the ages. One family insisted that a child who plays with fire before bed will end up wetting the bed that night. *(FA 01 846)* There is no medical reason why these two things would be related, so it can only be assumed that the story came about either through evidence of its truth regarding a certain child or children, or as a warning to prevent certain children from playing with fire. In more recent years, folk remedies have become less necessary with the increase of hospital visits and the success of modern medicine in curing a multitude of injuries and ailments. In their stead, more and more tales of hospital incidents have come into the common experience.

Stories of how doctors make mistakes support a sense of distrust which encourages folk medicine to flourish. To be fair though, medical professionals have their *fair share of folklore* going the other way, telling stories of patients with weird ailments, or who fail to follow instructions and bring about their own embarrassment. The relationship between doctors and patients is rife with folklore.

However, as Jan Harold Brunvand once said, “People often turn to the traditional in a time of crisis.” When times get hard, medicine is expensive, and it still does not have all the answers.

The most common example of modern folk medicine is used to prevent expensive doctor’s visits for minor ailments. Many families collect home remedies that can be passed down through the generations. Cures of this type consist of easily accessed household ingredients. Over time, many of these remedies have been scientifically tested and proven to work.
They have been refined into ointments for people to use without the accompanying discomfort that most folk remedies produce. In some of the more modern folk medicine projects, families have adopted the store brand version of their home remedies and merely advise each other to keep certain ointments or drinks around the house for certain difficulties. Getting a non-prescription medicine has become cheaper and more efficient than making up a mustard plaster or a poultice.

Despite occasionally containing the exact same ingredients, some of those who trust folk remedies do not want the simplified version of their recipe. They do not trust the pharmaceutical companies to do the job right. The isolations that caused the creation of the folk recipe also encourage a formation of self-reliance that hinders any sort of trust in authorities.

The true motto of folk medicine is “If all else fails, an enema never hurts.” (FA 01 707)

Aches and Pains

Medical Folklore (FA 01 4)

For cavities or general pain in teeth, dip a piece of cotton in clove oil and place on tooth until it stops hurting.

For rheumatism and inflammation relief, mix mud with hot sod and apply it to the uncomfortable areas.

To relieve kidney pain, boil the bark of a Greenwood tree, strain and drink.

Folk Medicine and Traditions (FA 01 84)

If there is over a foot of snow on the ground, it is advisable for people with aches in their feet to run around the house with bare feet. While they are doing so, their older siblings may lock them out. By the time they have pounded on the door and been let in, they will have forgotten all about their aches.

The Use of Medical Folklore in Modern Times (FA 01 366)

Lick the index finger of your right hand and make the sign of the cross over the area where you have cramps and they will go away.
Put a teaspoon of vinegar in a large glass of water and drink it. Do this for ten days, and it will build up something in your body that will prevent you from having as many cramps.

Drinking plain hot tea will cure stomach cramps.

**Medical Folklore (FA 01 490)**

To cure arthritis, mix equal parts apple cider vinegar and honey in a jar and take one tablespoon full three times a day.

Wearing a copper bracelet at all times will cure arthritis.

**Folk Medicine in Utah (FA 01 579)**

For a sore throat, take ½ teaspoon of coal oil and sugar, and drink it.

A sore throat may also be to mix ashes with lard and put it around the neck with a cloth.

**Folk Medicine as Collected from My Parents and Grandparents (FA 01 587)**

For aches, pains, and a lot if general discomfort, wear a copper bracelet. The small amount of copper absorbed into the skin makes the joints feel better.

One old aunt wore an onion stung on yarn around her neck to prevent arthritis pain. Each time the onion dried up, she would string a new one because she believed that the juice was absorbing into her body to relieve pain.

**Natural Folk Medicine (FA 01 653)**

Warm pancakes placed on a clean white cloth and put on a patient’s ear will relieve earaches.

For earaches, boil urine from someone of the opposite gender as the person suffering, then plug it in the ear of the patient with warm cotton.

**Home Medical Practices and Disease Prevention Advice (FA 01 682)**

Stomach aches can be cured by eating soda crackers and flat 7Up.

Those with arthritis must drink two tablespoons of safflower oil per day to “oil” their joints.
Warm olive oil poured in an aching ear will fix the ear by morning.

**Folk Medicine in Wasatch County (FA 01 707)**

For a sore throat, soak a rag in alcohol and secure it over the afflicted area.

**Folk Medicine: Home Remedies and Preventive Medicine (FA 01 803)**

A sliced potato attached to the forehead with a clean cloth will cure headaches.

For a sore throat, chew orange peels and allow the spray to run down the throat.

For a sore throat, place kerosene oil on a cotton swab and touch the places inside the throat that are sore.

**Folk Medicine (FA 01 822)**

One woman remembers her grandpa carrying around a buckeye in his pocket for rheumatism. It would start out white when he first put it in his pocket and gradually turn brown with the rheumatism germs. Others with this ailment chose to use horse liniment to attempt to alleviate their pain. Kerosene was occasionally used, but one man who regularly rubbed his legs with kerosene sat too close to the fire and ended up burning to death because he was so saturated with fire starter. A better method involves a mixture of menthol crystals and alcohol, which should work since menthol is a local anesthetic. It is also toxic in large doses, but you know, whatever. Inhaling the vapors was also used to open up nasal passages.

Spirit of camphor was applied to the forehead to alleviate headaches.

For a stomach ache, St. John’s drops or peppermint drops taken in warm water would help a lot.

Paregoric was used to alleviate teeth pain on babies’ first cutting teeth and on children with cavities.

For a sore throat, one mother had her children hold bacon around their throat.

**Folk Medicine (FA 01 846)**

Pipe smoke blown in the infected ear will cure an earache.
Vinegar can be used to relieve pain. To help soothe a headache, a small amount of vinegar dampening a cloth that is placed on the patients forehead will help them feel better.

For a stomachache, one mother dosed her children with one tablespoon of coke syrup, which worked rather well when coke still had codeine in it.

Ginger tea, made with one cup of boiling water and half a teaspoon of ginger powder will cure menstrual cramps. Honey may be added to taste.

For sore throats, gargle an entire glass filled with warm water, vinegar, and salt.

The good bacteria in yogurt will cure canker sores.

For migraines drink a heavily caffeinated soda.

For a sore throat, eat popsicles or ice-cream.

Melissa officinalis, commonly called balm mint, can be used for cold sores.

For earaches, melt paraffin into the ear.

Rub a wart with raw meat, and then bury the meat and the wart will go away.
Children with warts are encouraged to swing a dead cat around their head three times at night then bury it. It is better and more effective to dip it in water from a hollow stump, but not totally necessary.

Rub a penny on your wart and then throw it away and your wart will go away If someone picks the penny up they will get the wart.

Place a bit of dry ice on the wart and it will burn the wart off. Caution necessary to avoid burning any other portion of the skin.

Put vinegar on ingrown toenails so they will stop being a bother.

Medical Folklore (FA 01 490)

Cure a cold sore by rubbing fingers behind the ear and then over the cold sore.

To cure boils, make a poultice of bread and milk applied between two pieces of white cloth.

To cure stys, scrape the meat of a raw potato and put in a clean white cloth. Apply to eye with sty.

Folk Medicine As Collected From My Parents and Grandparents (FA 01 587)

Remove warts by dissolving soda in water and washing the warts in them for a minute or two.

Remove warts by making a paste of water and powdered meat tenderizer. Apply to wart and wrap with an adhesive bandage.

Remove warts by rubbing them with a copper penny until they are smooth. This may take a few days of treatment before the wart is gone for good.

To remove freckles mix two ounces of rectified spirits of win with two teaspoons of muriatic (hydrochloric) acid. Add this to one pound and a half of distilled water. Apply as a lotion to the area afflicted and they will clear up after a short time.

Remove freckles with mashed strawberries fresh from the garden. Apply to the freckles every night before bed and they will go away.

Milk of Roses
4 oz. bitter almonds, 3 oz. distilled water, 2 oz. elder flower water, make an emulsion. Add 1 1/2 oz. oil or tarter and 1/2 oz. of tincture of benzoin. Mix well and put in clean jars. Use to beautify and smooth skin.

**Folk Medicine (FA 01 619)**

Chicken pox must be fumigated from a home with sulfur, and can be relieved from the children’s skin with mustard poultries.

**Natural Folk Medicine (FA 01 653)**

Kerosene applied to warts will get rid of them.

Scorched or browned cornstarch powder is used to cure diaper rash.

Tobacco steeped in hot water makes a wash to cure ringworm.

Catnip tea with honey in it will allow stubborn hives to break out and heal.

For measles that will not break out, make a tea of the under bark of a persimmon tress, boiled until dark. After they have taken a cup of the tea, they must lie in bed, wrapped in blankets.

Salt pork is great to bring boils to a head and neutralize poison.

To break out measles, boil the inside bark of a white oak tree and soak in it for twenty or thirty minutes.

**Home Medical Practices and Disease Prevention Advice (FA 01 682)**

Raw potato rubbed on warts, then buried in the garden will cure warts.

**Folk Medicine in Wasatch County (FA 01 707)**

For warts, put nail polish on frequently to suffocate it.

**Folk Medicine (FA 01 822)**

For warts, tie a string around the wart as tight as possible to cut off all blood supply and leave the string on until it falls off.
One young man was told to rub his hand against his uncle’s corpse at the funeral to get rid of his warts. He did it, but his warts did not go away.

Coal oil applied to a pimple will cure the malfunction of the sweat gland.

**Folk Medicine (FA 01 846)**

Green tomato cures poison oak.

For a rash, root of mullein should be stewed with wild cherry bark, brown sugar, and vinegar then drank as a tea.

**Westwood, Virlie V. “The Fruit of Her Hands”: Folk Medicine of Mormon Women in Utah County (Utah) From 1900 To 1950s (FA 01 2047)**

A sty may be cured by rubbing it with a gold wedding ring or spit.

**Why Folk Cures Continue to be an Important Part of American Folklore (FA 01 3032)**

Garlic will get rid of warts. It must be sliced thin, placed over the wart, and held in place for a few days with a band aid.

**Burns**

**Medical Folklore (FA 01 4)**

For sunburn relief, mix equal parts vinegar and lukewarm water. Dab on sunburn with a cotton ball.

Mix sulfur and pig lard and rub it on an itch.

**The Use of Medical Folklore in Modern Times (FA 01 366)**

Put well chewed tobacco on a scorpion sting and it will draw the poison out.

Boil milk and bread together and add a bit of soap. Apply it to infected wounds.

**Folk Medicine As Collected From My Parents and Grandparents (FA 01 587)**
Treat mild sunburn with mashed strawberries fresh from the garden. Apply to the sunburn every night before bed and it will go away.

The best thing for sunburn is a bath of vinegar water. After preparing a lukewarm bath, dilute a large amount of white vinegar in the water, and soak in it until the pain of the sunburn goes away. Make up a smaller bottle for use away from the tub.

Another relief for sunburns is aloe vera plants. After cutting the leaf in half to expose the middle, rub the innards over the burn and wrap with clean gauze.

A recipe for sunburn wash, used by a family in Montana is as follows: two ounces of Borax, one ounce of Alum, one ounce of camphor, one half ounce of sugar candy, and one pound of ox-gall. Mix and stir well for ten minutes, three times a day for two weeks until the solution is clear. Strain through blotting paper and bottle for use.

**Natural Folk Medicine (FA 01 653)**

If someone is cut badly and there is nothing to be used as a tourniquet dirt can be mixed with blood to stop the bleeding and create a scab.

For slivers, take a bit of bread, soak it in milk, then wrap the affected area with the moist bread.

For athletes’ foot, add two cups of vinegar and two cups of salt. Make sure that water is as hot as can be stood. Soak feet in the solution once a day.

**Home Medical Practices and Disease Prevention Advice (FA 01 682)**

For sunburns, lemon juice will take the pain away, though it will not fix the dry skin. Apple vinegar will also release pain temporarily.

Vitamin E tablets broken open over a sunburn will heal it. Vitamin E also prevents scarring. Poison Ivy blisters can be cured with hot, nearly boiling water.

**Folk Medicine in Wasatch County (FA 01 707)**

Mineral water will “take care” of burns and open wounds.

Vaseline can be used as a salve to cure burns.
Butter is good for healing burns.

If you have an infected wound, cut open a live chicken and immediately put it over the wound. The maggots attracted to the chicken will eat away the infection.

Pine gum packed into open wounds will help them heal quickly without getting infected.

For bee stings, mud will sufficiently draw all poison out of the wound.

**Folk Medicine (FA 01 822)**

Beefsteaks were put onto black eyes to alleviate pain and heal the bruised area faster. One doctor used leeches to drain the excess blood in a black eye.

A more general medicine, used for everything from wounds to bruises, is lily leaf poultice, a solution of alcohol and the leaf of the lily plant.

Nosebleeds can be alleviated by placing a cold knife against the back of the neck.

Tobacco juice is good for cuts. For the truly tough, it can be taken straight from the mouth to be applied to open wounds.

Egg whites will draw out infection if left overnight to dry on wounds.

**Folk Medicine (FA 01 846)**

Salt will stop the bleeding of a slight wound.

For bug bites, baking soda that has been moistened will prevent swelling, and chewed tobacco will draw out the poison to cure the bite.

**Alternative/Folk Medicine (FA 01 1560)**

Lavender oil will heal burns, help sleep come,

**Alternative Medicine: Folklore Cures and Home Remedies. (FA 01 3432)**

In a pinch, cayenne pepper will cauterize a wound. One woman used it on her neighbor when he accidentally shot himself, and the doctor later said it saved his life.
Sage brush will make cuts feel better.

Australian Blue is for athletes’ foot or yellow toenails because it kills fungus.

# Cancer

**Folk Medicine in Wasatch County (FA 01 707)**

Drinking carrot juice with parsley and celery will prevent cancer.

Massive quantities of apricots will cure cancer once it has already developed.

Nibbling wheat stalks will prevent cancer.

Wheat germ and vitamin E will help ensure pregnancy.

**The Nutritional Remedies of Arline Hardy Heaton (FA 01 4508)**

One grandmother cured cancer for one of her librarian’s daughters. The first step, she said, was vitamin C. Then she told her to take selenium and go sit in the sun to soak up vitamin D. She told her patient not to eat any sugar. Once the patient was doing all these things, her cancer was arrested, but still there, so the grandmother told her to take ten thousand milligrams of vitamin C a day and some L-lycene. The girl was cured.

# Cold, Cough, Fever, and Flu

**Medical Folklore (FA 01 4)**

*Cough Drops*

2 C sugar

1 C honey

Boil to a crisp stage, test in water

Take off the stove, add ¼ t soda and stir lightly, not touching the bottom of the pan.
Pour into a greased dripper and let sit until cook. Pick it up and stretch with the tips of your fingers. Lay it out on wax paper until it sets up, and then break it up into chunks.

*Cough Syrup*

2 Tbs. Glycerin or Lemon
8 Tbs. Honey

Mix and drink as a cough medicine.

*Mustard Plaster*

10 Tbs. flour
1 Tbs. mustard

Mix with water until a thick paste is formed. Spread between two pieces of fabric and lay on chest until it begins turning red. Take off and place a warm cloth over chest. Good for congestion relief.

*Onion Plaster*

Cut up an onion and fry it. Place between two thin cloths and place on chest to clear up congestion.

*Spice Plaster*

Spread lard on a piece of thin cloth, then sprinkle on a layer of mustard spice, then sprinkle on cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, cloves, cayenne pepper and black pepper. Fold another thin cloth on top of it, and then sew them together. Pin it to the underside of whatever clothes you are wearing next to your skin and put another cloth over it. Leave it on for up to three days to keep warm.

Wear a narrow leather strip around the neck to prevent whooping cough.

Wring a rag out in alcohol and wrap it around the baby’s neck.

*Fever Reducer*

1 Tbs. soda
1 quart lukewarm water.
Mix and use a sponge to bath a fevered person.

**Folk Medicine and Traditions (FA 01 84)**

Warm big pieces of wool in the oven and wrap them around the one with a cold.

Take a tablespoon of sugar and cover the top completely with black pepper. Swallow it whole without any water, and the cough will not come for the rest of the night for fear of needing more ‘medicine.’

**The Use of Medical Folklore in Modern Times (FA 01 366)**

Stuff a cold and starve a fever.

To cure a cold, take a very hot shower, and then wrap yourself in a sheet soaked in ice water.

Warm lemonade with honey is a good cure for a cold.

Wearing a wreath of garlic around the neck prevents colds.

**Medical Folklore (FA 01 490)**

Soothe a cough by putting a few drops of kerosene on a sugar cube and sucking it.

To bring up mucus, take equal parts honey, lemon juice and glycerin. Mix well until warm before administering.

**Folk Medicine As Collected From My Parents and Grandparents (FA 01 587)**

Cough and cold remedies:

Quarter cup of honey in a small sauce pan with a quarter cup of sliced yellow onions. Bring mixture to a slight boil and maintain it for about two minutes, stirring constantly. Pour through cheese cloth or a sieve to remove onion pieces. Allow to cool before taking. Store in a covered jar.

Make aloe vera juice by taking the large leaves of the aloe plant and cutting them into pieces. Place the pieces and allow to steep in a quart bottle of water left covered in the fridge. Pour the water off into a cup and refill the bottle with new water. Keep drinking until symptoms reside. Add fresh aloe as needed.
Folk Medicine (FA 01 619)

Raspberry leaves boiled in water for ten minutes then left to steep for an hour form a great liquid medicine for flus.

Hot honey with milk and lemon juice can be used as a base for a pepper, garlic, and cinnamon cold and flu cure.

Natural Folk Medicine (FA 01 653)

For chest colds in babies, goose grease may be rubbed on chest, under arms and on the bottom of the feet.

Mullen leaf, boiled and made into syrup, suppresses coughs.

For whooping cough, slice a turnip, sprinkle sugar on it, then let it stand until it turns to syrup.

Folk Medicine: Home Remedies and Preventive Medicine (FA 01 803)

It helps to sweat flu out by bathing in very hot water, then sleeping with a lot of blankets.

Folk Medicine (FA 01 822)

Occasionally, during the first half of the twentieth century, parents would hang a bag of asafetida around the neck of their child if the child went to a school where many children were sick with colds. Apparently it was somewhat beneficial because the pungent odor caused children to keep some distance from each other and thus prevented the spread of germs. Asafetida was also prescribed to people suffering from hypochondria.

For a cough some mothers would insist that their children drank melted butter.

Folk Medicine (FA 01 846)

A good cure for a fever is a boiled pine tree top.

Folk Health Beliefs Related To Hot and Cold In Different Countries (FA 01 1409)

Another young woman from Brazil was baffled when her American roommates ate cold drinks while they had colds. Her tradition stated that cold things must be avoided to ensure healing from a cold.
A German young woman was baffled by the practices that her American companions on her mission would use to cure a cold. In Germany, they would squeeze the juice of a lemon, add hot water, and then drink it. Her companions were always making her chicken soup, orange juice, and suggesting she take antibiotics. She also said that in Germany, there was a lot of lore about keeping the kidneys and bladder warm to prevent infection. People had suggested to her that she refrain from sitting on cold sidewalks, wearing jeans or riding a bike in cold weather. Motorcyclists wear a special belt to keep their kidneys warm.

Westwood, Virlie V. “The Fruit Of Her Hands”: Folk Medicine Of Mormon Women In Utah County (Utah) From 1900 To 1950s (FA 01 2047)

Lemon and flaxseed are good for colds and whooping cough. A lemonade, made with two tablespoons of seed and the juice of two lemons as well as water and sugar to taste, will help cure a cold, while a cough syrup can be made with one lemon in slices mixed with half a pint of flax-seed, two ounces of honey and a quart of water simmered for four hours and strained. A dose is one tablespoonful four times a day as well as a dose after each coughing fit.

A head cold can be cured by wrapping green tea leaves in a cold wet cloth and placing them on the eyes and forehead.

For a cold, take one teacup full of white sugar and add the same amount of rain water, a small onion cut into pieces and boil them down to syrup.

Cold air will help cure a child of croup, but the child should never be over exposed. Wrapping a child completely except for the face will allow them to breathe cold air without freezing.

I’m Sick in the 21st Century: Medicinal Foods Alternatives to Professional Care (FA 01 2681)

For stomach flus, drink 7Up and eat chicken noodle soup.

Why Folk Cures Continue to be an Important Part of American Folklore (FA 01 3032)

Garlic prevents colds.

Alternative Medicine: Folklore Cures and Home Remedies (FA 01 3432)
Colloidal sliver, poured in tiny amounts into the nostrils, will burn the sinuses out until no head cold may presume to stay.

**The Nutritional Remedies of Arline Hardy Heaton (FA 01 4508)**

For colds, take three thousand milligrams of vitamin C all at once along with some zinc.

**Digestion**

**Medical Folklore (FA 01 4)**

*Laxative*

Take 1 ½ tsp. – 1 Tbs. castor oil. Chase it with juice or water.

**Medical Folklore (FA 01 490)**

Peppermint tea is good for nausea and diarrhea. Place 8-10 drops of peppermint oil in very hot water and drink slowly. It may be sweetened without ruining the effects.

**Folk Medicine (FA 01 619)**

For “Montezuma’s Revenge” some Americans ate a “bimbo bread” brand bun to successfully restore themselves to a natural state. Mexicans suggested eating the fruit of the prickly pear cactus and drinking the juice, then sitting under the shade of the tree. One sensible person suggested avoiding the ailment in the first place by not drinking tap water whilst in Mexico.

**Natural Folk Medicine (FA 01 653)**

Yarrow plants dried and brewed into tea will help relieve diarrhea.

Steeped blackberry leaves, either dried or fresh, will stop diarrhea.

May apple root tea will flush out the stomach, and should be taken in two tablespoon a day increments.

**Folk Medicine in Wasatch County (FA 01 707)**
A garlic enema is helpful to keep the colon and intestines clear.

To cure dysentery, take a mixture of cloves and honey.

For an upset stomach, take a glass of water with a teaspoon of baking soda in it. If you need to throw up, it will help you to do so. If not, it will help calm your stomach.

**Folk Medicine (FA 01 846)**

Tea made from young pine needles will cure bowel trouble. Maple sap can be used as a laxative. For indigestion, drink alfalfa tea, eat pine rosin, eat salt, drink salty water, or soda water.

**I’m Sick in the 21st Century: Medicinal Foods Alternatives to Professional Care (FA 01 2681)**

For nausea, drink Gatorade.

**Alternative Medicine: Folklore Cures and Home Remedies (FA 01 3432)**

A daily glass of juiced carrots will keep the digestive system in excellent working order, but may turn the skin orange.

**The Nutritional Remedies of Arline Hardy Heaton (FA 01 4508)**

Take away apple juice from children who have diarrhea.

**General**

**Medical Folklore (FA 01 4)**

*Germ Killer*

Burn a piece of sulfur to fumigate after sickness. Burn in a metal container and leave the house for a few hours until it is completely through burning. Afterward the house will feel and smell fresh.

*Worms*

Mix together one spoonful of sugar and turpentine to get rid of worms.
Medical Folklore (FA 01 490)

For sprains, soak a brown paper bag in vinegar and wrap around the sprained portion, then wrap with a clean cloth. Alternatively apply cold packs to get swelling down, and then apply heat to encourage healing and relieve pain.

Folk Medicine As Collected From My Parents and Grandparents (FA 01 587)

For a general cure all, steep sagebrush in rapidly boiling water and drink the tea with honey and lemon followed by warm water. Afterwards, avoid too much activity and rest quietly. The tea will remove impurities from the body.

A potato poultice, made of mashed potatoes in a muslin cloth, applied hot, will cure anything on the body.

Folk Medicine (FA 01 619)

A woman in northern Sweden who was ready to give birth was observed jumping up and down, running around on a hardwood floor, then drinking tea to calm down for the birth. She explained that the baby needed to be born on a hardwood floor to ensure strength. Jumping would bring the baby head first, and running would make the birth come easier.

One woman was told by her maid in the midst of bearing her child to put a knife under her bed to cut the pain in half.

The surest way of getting pregnant is to eat bleu cheese and thyme every day for two weeks.

Natural Folk Medicine (FA 01 653)

Hop tea drank at bed time helps induce sleep.

Baking soda can be added to a mustard plaster to negate the skin burning effects without rendering the medicine ineffectual.

Sassafras tea may be drunk as a blood thinner.

Boiled onion juice cures colic in babies.
When there are particles in the eye, flax seed oil can be applied to the eye to flush it out without irritating it.

Jimson weed leaves make a good poultice to draw out various kind of poison.

**Folk Medicine: Home Remedies and Preventive Medicine (FA 01 803)**

To kill lice, mix together oil and turpentine and saturate scalp with it. Wrap the head with a towel and wait an hour before washing the solution out.

To stop the seven year itch in its tracks, mix a combination of sulfur and lard, spread it over the entire body and let it sit for twenty four hours to assure all the eggs the mites left in the body are dead.

**Folk Medicine (FA 01 822)**

Sometimes when a woman had trouble with labor, she would be given an enema with a small amount of turpentine in it.

**Folk Medicine (FA 01 846)**

Heartburn can be alleviated by peppermint or wintergreen.

**Westwood, Virlie V. “The Fruit Of Her Hands”: Folk Medicine Of Mormon Women In Utah County (Utah) From 1900 To 1950s (FA 01 2047)**

To cure jaundice, take the twigs or leaves of a peach tree, bruise them and cover them with cold water. Drink a fourth of a teacup full of this drink three times a day.

A German man would rub his wife’s legs with wire brushes after she had a miscarriage to get the blood back to her heart.

**Why Folk Cures Continue to be an Important Part of American Folklore (FA 01 3032)**

Chamomile promotes sleep.

**Alternative Medicine: Folklore Cures and Home Remedies (FA 01 3432)**

Drink one ounce of freshly juiced wheatgrass to strengthen immune system.
Zinc is good for prostate health.

Lecithin is good for broken bones and blood vessels, as well as brain injuries. One grandmother apparently recommended Lecithin for most things, and her grandchildren were cured of things like seizures and fainting.

Some boys get Osgood’s Schlatter when they are growing, which makes their knees and legs completely crippled. Usually, doctors will put casts on for about five weeks. To speed the heeling, selenium and vitamin E help a lot.

For mononucleosis, a health food store worker recommended ten thousand milligrams of vitamin C and a stool softener, because vitamin C kills viruses, and stool softener encourages cleaning out the digestive system.

For relaxation, vitamin B50 calms and soothes the nerves.

**Hiccups**

*The Use of Medical Folklore in Modern Times (FA 01 366)*

Take a spoonful of sugar and place it in your mouth, dissolve it, and by that time your hiccups are gone.

Get a glass of ice-cold water, cover the top with a clean dishtowel, and drink the water through the dishtowel and your hiccups will go away.

Blow into a paper bag, breathe from the paper bag several times and the hiccups will go away.

*Home Medical Practices And Disease Prevention Advice (FA 01 682)*

For hiccups, a cardiologist suggested that holding the right arm above the head and drinking an entire glass of water slowly and rhythmically would cure them.

Eating a tablespoon of pure white sugar will also cure hiccups.
Folk Medicine (FA 01 822)

To cure hiccups, blow into a paper bag, attempting to pop it with just breath.

Curing the Unwelcome Hiccups (FA 01 2051)

Drink water from the spout of the sink through a straw.

Hold a small paper cup between two pinky fingers while using thumbs to plug ears.

Drink warm water.

Drink a glass of water, but swallow upside down.

Take a drink of water, let it sit for a bit, then swallow.

Eat a spoonful of sugar.

Drink a tall glass of milk.

Eat peanut butter.

Chew on an antacid.

Scare the hiccups away.

Offer the person with hiccups fifty dollars if they will hiccup five more times.

Blow out all air in the lungs, slowly breathe in again while stretching. Lift arms into the air and slowly breathe out as they fall again.

Do not breathe.

Breathe deeply into a paper bag.

The person with hiccups must stand on their head.

Try concentrating really hard on the next hiccup, it will never come.

“An Apple a Day Keeps the Doctor Away”: Folk Cures in Today’s Society (FA 01 2053)
To cure hiccups, attempt to move a pencil in a semi-circle with one hand without allowing the point to slip.

To cure hiccups drink a cup of water from the opposite side of the glass.

**Hiccup Cures (FA 01 3097)**

Do a headstand and drink a glass of milk out of a straw.

Punch them in the stomach.

Drink a spoonful of vinegar.

Imagine that you are at a picnic. You sit down on a blanket and pick up a huge slice of watermelon. As you bring it to your mouth to take a bite, your hiccups are gone.

Think of as many bald men as you can.

**Hospital**

**Four Functions Of Medical Folklore (FA 01 154)**

*Man in a White Coat (FA 01 154)*

There was this physician who died and went to heaven. St. Peter met him at the pearly gates and issued him his harp, robe, and wings, and he told him “Now there’s one thing you have to know. You’re just like everybody else up here now, and you don’t have any special privileges. No more of this heading for the front of the line and everything, you have to wait just like everybody else.”

So the physician was walking around on a cloud and he heard this whistle blow and everybody started lining up. He figured it was a food line or something and he might as well get in it. He had been waiting a while when, all of the sudden, he saw this guy in a white coat with a black bag and a light on his forehead rush past everybody to the front of the line.

The doctor wanted to know what was going on, so he turned to the guy standing next to him and asked who it was who had gone to the front of the line like that.
The man answered, “Oh, that’s God. He thinks he’s a doctor.”

**Lab Work** *(FA 01 154)*

A medical school student was in a lab during his pre-med days. His class was looking at their blood under microscopes. His friend was really having trouble finding all the different cells he was supposed to find so he finally called the lab instructor over to look at his slide. The instructor looked at it for a minute, kind of gulped, and said, "I think we better send this upstairs for analysis.”

When the results came back, the friend found out that he had leukemia, and he had discovered it himself, by looking at his own blood under a microscope.

**Cranial Nerve Mnemonics** *(FA 01 154)*

“One old Olympus’ Towering Tops, A Finn and German Viewed Some Hops.” (Cranial Nerves: Olfactory, Optic, Oculomotor, Trochlear, Trigeminal, Abducens, Facial, Auditory, Glossopharyngeal, Vagus, Spinal accessory, Hypoglossal)

“NAVEL” (Nerve, Artery, Vein, Empty space, Ligament)

**Urine Testing** *(FA 01 154)*

There was one patient who was an addict with chronic kidney stones. He was supposed to strain his urine whenever he went to the bathroom, to see if he passed any stones. He was quite the complainer, and was always asking for pain relief shots, which the doctors gave him, even though they did not think his pain was as bad as he said it was.

One day he passed a huge stone, so the doctor was going to give him another shot, but the resident decided to send the stone up to the lab for analysis. As it turned out, the guy had gone up the hall to find a gravel ash tray, and put the rock in his urine sample to get more drugs.

**Eiffel Tower in a Snow Storm** *(FA 01 154)*

There was one time when an intern was doing a proctological examination. It was a big deal, so the resident, head resident, and head proctologist were all there. The intern started laughing during the middle of the examination and could not stop laughing for a very long time. Finally, he could speak through his laughter, and he said, “I see the Eiffel Tower in a snowstorm.” Nobody believed him at
first, but that was exactly what he saw. The patient had a plastic paper weight with a little Eiffel
tower in the midst of a glitter snow storm.

_Death Certificate (FA 01 154)_

Every time there is a death, a doctor must to sign a death certificate. One time, a man decided to
commit suicide by jumping in front of a train. He was completely cut in half, but because of official
rules, a doctor had to officially declare him dead. After the doctor went to the site and signed the
paper, many of his colleagues teased him about which half of the body he examined.

_Group Running (FA 01 154)_

There was one doctor who always ran up and down the stairs. He was in really great shape, so all of
the people who followed him on rounds had to run to keep up with him. One day, when the doctor
was racing his residents up the stairs, one resident got ahead of the pack and ran into a closet,
thinking it was a patient’s room. The fifteen people in the pack were going so fast that they all ended
up piling into the closet together.

_Medical Malpractice (FA 01 154)_

One time a resident defibrillated a patient who was lying in a metal bed. The patient was electrocuted
and the resident was fired.

_Vaseline (FA 01 154)_

What happened to the lady who didn’t know the difference between Vaseline and putty?

Her windows fell out.

_Apple Cider (FA 01 154)_

A doctor was in the hospital, and a nurse came by to take a urine specimen from him. She left the
bottle with him and told him that she would be back in a few minutes to collect it.

Well, the doctor had just had some visitors, and they had brought him a jug of apple cider, so the
doctor decided to play a trick on the nurse. He filled up the bottle with cider. The nurse returned a
few minutes later, and he asked her how she thought the specimen looked.
The nurse looked at it and it seemed okay to her. But the doctor took it and held it up to the light. “Looks a little cloudy to me,” he said. “Let’s run it through again.” And he drank it.

*Elephant Joke (FA 01 154)*

What is the difference between a saloon and an elephant flatus?

One is a bar room, and the other goes “bar-ROOM.”

*BYU Health Center Stories or Is This Medicine? (FA 01 617)*

People distrust those who seem to have all the answers. Doctors, worshiped by some, are distrusted by others purely because of the blind faith that many perceive their peers to put in them. To those who have experienced malpractice and had their feelings edified by the mistakes of their doctors, there is a vindictive pleasure in sharing and disseminating information about the imperfections of doctors.

*The Health Center*

*Cast (FA 01 617)*

A young lady cracked her femur while skiing. She went to the health center and the nurse came in to put a cast on her. The cast was so thick that she could not get her legs together, so her roommates peeled it off and took her to a different health center, where they told her that she only needed a splint.

*Eye (FA 01 617)*

Another time, she went to the health center to get a cut stitched near her eye. The nurse warned her not to allow the doctor to stitch on her face, because he was not very good at stitching. She went somewhere else instead.

*Blood Count (FA 01 617)*

During yet another trip, she thought she was having an appendicitis attack, so the health center took a white blood cell count. They came back, informing her that she was indeed having an attack, and that she would need an immediate operation. They sent her to the hospital, where the surgeon felt her appendix from the outside and told her that she was fine. When she was sent home, it turned out
that the health center had mistaken her white blood cell test with that of a young gentleman who was in the midst of an extreme appendicitis attack, but he had gotten sent home.

*Prescription (FA 01 617)*

One young lady went to the health center because she had an infection. The doctor prescribed her a type of penicillin, and told her to just keep taking the pills until the bottle was empty. As she began taking the medicine a rash broke out on her skin.

She went back to the health center, concerned, and was dismissed by the nurse on duty. Her rash worsened, because she continued taking the medication, and when she went back with a huge rash, the nurse told her she was having an allergic reaction to the pills and that she should have stopped taking them as soon as the rash appeared.

*Identity (FA 01 617)*

One young man went in for a special pre-marital examination. When he was finished, the doctor called in his fiancé, but when the young lady came in, it was not a woman he knew. It turned out that the nurse had sent him to the wrong appointment, and both she and the doctor had failed to make sure he was the person he said he was.

*Fraud (FA 01 617)*

One young lady claims that the health center allowed her to fill up a fake prescription, because they were too disorganized to realize that none of their doctors had signed off on it. She also said that the doctors had forced her to accept a shot of cortisone because it was a ‘miracle drug’ despite the fact that she told them that she was allergic to it. In the same trip, they took x-rays even after she told them that she had already had too much radiation from her many medical exams.

*Polio (FA 01 617)*

One girl went to the health center because her legs hurt so badly that she could hardly walk. Every time the clinician touched them, she screamed in pain, and he recommended her to a specialist because he believed that she had polio. She cried all that night and called her parents to tell them, and then she went to the specialist. She had shin splints.

*Flu (FA 01 617)*
A different girl went to the health center multiple times because she felt so sick. They sent her home each time with a flu diagnosis. She ended up getting too sick to stay in school, so she dropped out and went home. She visited her home doctor and was diagnosed with leukemia. She died a month later.

Folk Legends Related To the Medical Field (FA 01 1180)

Balloons (FA 01 1180)

The public relations director at a hospital was called in to write up a human interest piece on a patient. He had just undergone surgery and did not wish to use the bird respirator typically used to clear out lungs. The doctor, willing to cater to the patient’s needs, suggested that he blow up balloons instead. The public relations director brought balloons and explained the situation to the patient, who seemed excited about the alternate task.

The next morning, the public relations director came up to the room, seeing that it was completely filled with blown up balloons. The man admitted that he had blown up only two and then it became too difficult, so his wife blew up the rest. The public relations director never ended up writing the story.

Interpreter (FA 01 1180)

A patient came into the hospital, unable to speak any English at a time when none of the interpreters were in. The house supervisor went to call up one of the interpreters to come in to help the patient, when one of the members of the psych ward overheard her. He announced that he was fluent in Spanish and was willing to help, and she thought there would be no harm as long as he was a benign patient. After consulting his primary care giver, who told her he was harmless, she brought the psych patient down to the emergency room to ask the patient what was wrong.

When he got there, the psych patient began speaking loud, slow English with hand gestures at the non-English speaking patient. It was apparent that he did not, in fact, know another language. The house supervisor sent him back to the psych ward and called a real interpreter.

Adenoids (FA 01 1180)

A young boy went to get his tonsils and adenoids removed. His parents decided to also have the boy circumcised while under anesthesia. When relating his experience to his friends, he said, “The tonsils
aren’t too bad, but don’t let them mess with your adenoids.” His friend did not realize that adenoids were also in the throat until an anatomy class in college.

Visitor (FA 01 1180)

One city hospital had a frequent visitor in the town drunk. He would stay in the same room each time he came in to dry out, and screech about the snakes under the bed and spiders on the wall. The nurses interpreted his comments as delirium, since there were no signs of small wild life in his room.

One day, he got moved into a new room and he immediately started to shout about the skunk under his bed. The nurses left him to scream himself out until morning, when they were surprised to discover a live skunk, slinking casually out of the room when they opened the door.

Deliverer (FA 01 1180)

One doctor from long ago practiced medicine in a rural area and had to make house calls. Traditionally, when he delivered a baby during the night, he would ask the husband to hold the lantern while he did everything else. One night, the husband of a particular patient fainted while holding the lantern. The physician had to deliver the baby while stamping out the fire started in the rug.

Sterile (FA 01 1180)

An administrative assistant needed the signature of one of the doctors for some paperwork. She went to find him and discovered that he was in an IV cage preparing medicine. The assistant worried that she should not be in such a delicate area, she stopped before she actually reached the physician and asked, “Are you sterile?” Not missing a beat, he replied, “I’ll say not, I have six kids.”

Medical Folklore: The Stories the Patients Never Hear (FA 01 1210)

Sigmoidoscopy (FA 01 1210)

An elderly patient came to see the doctor about a sigmoidoscopy. She was given a prescription enema to take home in preparation for her appointment. When she came in, the doctor asked her if the material had worked or not. “No, it hasn’t” she replied, “It might be because I had such difficulties sucking the material through the small straw that was in the bottle.”
Underwear (FA 01 1210)

An on call group got sent to a woman’s house because she was bleeding. When they went in through the kitchen door, there were huge puddles of blood all over the room and no patient in sight. They followed the trail of blood and found the patient unconscious in the living room. They searched her body for wounds and only found a small cut on her ankle.

They pressure dressed it and brought her back to the hospital. They estimated that she had lost about a third of her blood, and the doctor in charge was exceedingly skeptical of the report, especially since the cut was less than a quarter inch long. Still, the lab work supported their inference. It turned out that she was taking her stockings off and she gouged herself with her fingernails, accidentally getting an artery. She nearly died. However, the part that was most upsetting to her was that a whole bunch of firemen and paramedics had seen her in her underwear.

Orange Juice (FA 01 1210)

At a particular hospital, it is tradition to give the first medical technician student going through the urinalysis a sample of orange juice for their “unknown urine.” One particular student had heard of the tradition and was determined not to be tricked. Sure enough, when she got her sample, she could tell by looking at it that it was orange juice. She told the staff that she knew it was orange juice but they repeatedly denied it. Frustrated, she drank a big gulp of the orange juice while everyone stood and watched horrified. Then they told her that the sample was half orange juice, and half urine.

Phlebotomist (FA 01 1210)

A phlebotomist told a story about a woman who came into the hospital. He and his group were supposed to draw blood from her, but she weighed about ninety pounds and they could not find a vein on her. Eventually, they put a line in to draw her blood. As they were talking to her, she told them that she wanted to be a phlebotomist.

They were a bit bemused by this fact, considering that she was HIV positive. After asking her why she would be a good phlebotomist, she told them that she could find a vein anywhere on anyone, and she used to charge twenty dollars to find a vein to give drugs to her friends.

Criminal Negligence (FA 01 1210)
One nurse tried to sue the hospital she worked at because of their negligence in treating blood-borne pathogens. The hospital she worked at trained nurses to recap needles after they used them, and she had been treating a known AIDS patient, and after she gave him medicine, she tried to recap the needle with the cap she had been keeping in her mouth and accidentally stuck her lip. She contracted AIDS, but she lost her lawsuit.

*Pants (FA 01 1210)*

Sometimes when women come in to give birth, the baby is really fast, and they have a precipitous delivery. One of these women made the mistake of wearing pants the day that she ended up giving birth, and the baby came out in her pants. The doctors had the confusing task of getting her pants off her and the baby out of them, so they could take care of it.

*Spanish Medical Interpreter Folklore (FA 01 4256)*

One translator told a woman that the doctor would be taking her “organ” out, meaning her gall bladder. She was horrified, and so was the woman who had been cleaning the room. Later the translator found out that there was a colloquialism of referring to the entire reproductive system.

*Going to the Doctor Folklore (FA 01 4340)*

One young boy was wearing pants that were too big, so he had a straight pin holding them up. He was chasing chickens, and the straight pin was falling out, so he stuck the pin in his mouth and ended up accidentally swallowing it. He was too embarrassed to tell anyone, so he kept it to himself for a week, hoping it would go away. Unfortunately, the pain did not go away, so he told his mom that he had swallowed a sewing pin. She did not initially believe him, but eventually took him to the hospital. The doctor took an x-ray and saw the pin in his throat. The doctor used a magnet to pull the pin out.

*The Pre-Med to M.D. Transition: Medical School Folklore (FA 01 4504)*

*Ceremony (FA 01 4504)*

A White Coat Ceremony is a medical school ritual. Newly Graduated students walk across the graduation stage to receive a white lab coat and stethoscope after taking the Hippocratic Oath in front of all their family and friends.
Night Shift *(FA 01 4504)*

One young wife of a medical student went into labor while her husband was on a night shift. She called him to tell him that she was in labor, and he asked her if she was sure, because if he took that night off, he would have to make it up the next day, so if she was not in labor he might miss the actual labor. She was not sure if she was in labor, so she decided to just stay home and see what happened. By the time he got home, she was dilated to eight centimeters.

Tie *(FA 01 4504)*

Surgeons wear scrubs in the hospital, while internal medicine practitioners wear nice clothes and ties. One day, an internist went to a birthday party for a surgeon, where he was the only internist there. The surgeons started teasing him because he had to wear a tie, and things escalated until a surgeon grabbed a pair of scissors and cut off his tie so he could look like a surgeon. The internist thought for a moment, then left the room and came back with another tie on.

The surgeon cut it off again, and again the internist came back with a new tie. The surgeon cut it off, and this went on another few times while surgeons got more and more confused. They thought maybe he was just stupid, until the surgeon recognized the tie that the internist showed up because it was his tie. Looking back on all the ties he had cut, the surgeon realized that the internist had been taking ties out of his locker, and he had been cutting his own ties.

Hot and Cold

**Home Medical Practices and Disease Prevention Advice (FA 01 682)**

In certain cultures sitting on cold stone benches are said to cause kidney problems. While yet others say they cause hemorrhoids.

**Folk-Health Beliefs Related To Hot and Cold In Different Countries (FA 01 1409)**

A young woman from Brazil, after ironing her clothes, asked her American companion to open the refrigerator door for her. The companion, noting that her hands were empty, told her she could open it herself. Then she explained that she wanted to avoid thermal shock, caused by touching something
very hot and very cold in quick succession. The results would leave her face twisted and deformed, possibly for life.

A Canadian woman told her daughter that she must wear thick, heavy underwear that came down to her knees and keep herself warm or else she would have feminine problems when she grew up. Her husband told their daughter not to take a hot shower and then go outside into the cold air. He thought it would guarantee that she would get pneumonia.

In Italy, it was believed that drinking cold water was not healthy, so water at restaurants would never come with ice, and tourists who asked for ice in their water would be looked at strangely. They also believed that sickness was caused by getting caught in a draft.

In Japan, during the summer, many lose their appetite because of the heat. It is called Natsubatte, or summer exhaustion.

In Russia, no one sits on the sidewalks, because it causes sterility. They were not scared of the cold though. In Siberia it was common to go outside, get completely soaked in water, and stand in the cold to catch a chill. Old men also do “banyas” which involves sitting in a hot steam room for a time, then running outside in the snow.

In Samoa, it is traditional to stop working when the sun is very hot, because if the sun beats down on the head, it causes the brain to go crazy.