

# Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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## “Medical Myths Need Clarification”

Medical myths are unbelievably common and have been handed down from generation to generation. These fantasies and old wives' tales need to be debunked and clarified. Many have been repeated so many times that they have taken on an air of truth. But, let's look at five of the most common myths. Myth one: 'Eggs are bad for the heart'. New research suggests there is no link between eating lots of eggs and cholesterol imbalance or increased risk of heart problems and type 2 diabetes. People who eat more than seven eggs per week have increased LDL-C, or "bad" cholesterol, but this is almost always matched by a similar increase of HDL-C, which has protective properties. The evidence suggests that eating even as many as two eggs every day is safe and has either neutral or slightly beneficial effects on risk factors for heart disease and type 2 diabetes. According to the CDC, eggs are one of the "most nutritious and economical foods" that nature can offer us. Myth two: 'Drink eight glasses of water per day'. The CDC is unambiguous in this matter, stating that "drinking enough water every day is good for overall health." And they note that there are no guidelines on how much water we should be drinking daily. The recommended daily amount of water is eight 8-ounce glasses, which equals 2.5 liters, straight from the faucet. But this figure does not take into account the amount of water we get from other drinks or foods at all. A 2002 study traced the eight 8-ounce glasses of water per day claim—known colloquially as "8x8"—back to the misinterpretation of a single paragraph in a government report from 1945. Some says the blame should be on manufacturers of bottled water for perpetuating the myth in their marketing. Myth three: 'You can catch a cold by being cold'. People are generally more aware that you catch cold not from being outside in poor weather, but from a virus. We become infected with cold viruses, known as "rhinoviruses," through physical contact or being in the same space as infected people. Myth four: 'Cracking your joints can lead to arthritis'. Several studies report that individuals who crack their joints are at nearly the same risk of getting arthritis as those who have never cracked their joints. So, no, cracking your knuckles will not increase your risk of arthritis. Myth five: 'Deodorant can cause breast cancer'. Nearly all of the studies that have tested this link have found little evidence to support the claim that deodorant can cause breast cancer.

In the America that I love, many health myths have arisen. Please rely on modern scientific methods for the truth.

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