

Remedies We'd Rather Forget

These remedies are shared for fun
and are not recommended for use.

Lithuanian Spell-Weavers

WHEN MY younger brother, Jerry, was afflicted with several warts on his hand, my Aunt Mary and Aunt Beulah used a Lithuanian remedy that was part faith, maybe some science and a little magic.

You had to work with a partner on a dark night with a full moon. First, an onion was cut side to side, and the bottom half was carried outside with an old washrag, preferably with several holes in it.

The afflicted person stood with his or her back to the moon, and the partner handed over the onion, the heart of which was rubbed over the warts. The onion was then wrapped in the washrag, and the afflicted person was to throw the entire package over his or her left shoulder with the right hand.

Then, the afflicted person—my aunts were dead serious that this condition must be met—was to return to the house without ever looking back. Looking back would break the spell.

Within 3 weeks, my brother's warts were gone.

—Brian Budy, Libertyville, Illinois

Bleaching a Rash

I WAS VISITING my in-laws for a dinner party, in the mid-1960s, and I had poison ivy on my hands.

At that time, my father-in-law was the superintendent of schools in our district, and one of the dinner guests was my former high school chemistry teacher.

When the chemistry teacher saw my hands, he asked me, “What is the most powerful household oxidizing agent you know of?”

“Clorox,” I replied.

“Correct,” he said. “Break the blisters, apply Clorox and the rash will be gone.” And it soon was!

—Paul Himmelsbach, Port St. Lucie, Florida

Salt for Your Sore?

WE LIVED close to Fouke, Arkansas, and in about 1930, when I would have been 3, I stepped on some broken glass with a bare foot. Unfortunately, there was no doctor in Fouke.

My dad, Charley La Fayette, took me into the kitchen, mixed some soot from the cookstove with some lard and put it on the injured foot, wrapping the foot in a rag. The next day, he unwrapped my foot and soaked it in water with Epsom salts. He then loaded a piece of meat with salt and wrapped it onto my foot with a rag.

Dad would take the meat off every day and soak my foot the same way again and again. Finally, he heated cornmeal and tied that in a rag onto my foot. He tried to keep the cornmeal warm until it was time to stop doctoring my foot.

Anyway, my foot healed without the benefit of stitches. Sometimes, the foot is still tender around the big toe, but there’s no scar.

—Lucille Murdoch, Idabel, Oklahoma