

BELIEVE IT

Mother knows best... most of the time. Shantila Lee debunks

some of beauty's biggest OLD WIVES' TALES, from the

HALF-TRUTHS to the science-backed real deals

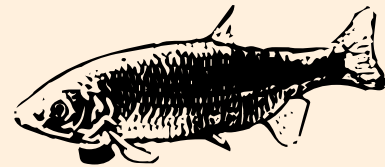
OR NOT

We've all been the recipients of century-old beauty advice, passed down through generations of women until it lands on us. Some of it is very sensible (coconut oil does loads of good for your hair) and some is just plain wrong (lemon juice will not "melt off" dark skin for a fairer, whiter you). As children we had no choice but to buy it wholesale, which usually led to scrubbing our faces with cold water and bar soap (again, wrong!). To once and for all sort out the legit from the lore, we looked to skin and hair experts for the scientific low-down. As it turns out, some old wives' tales aren't myths after all.



SHAVED HAIR GROWS BACK THICKER, COARSER AND DARKER

There's always that moment of hesitance the first time you shave your legs, your older sister warning you that once you start, you're doomed to manly, bristly leg hairs for the rest of your life. Science says otherwise. "Shaving your body hair doesn't make it grow darker or thicker," says Los Angeles dermatologist Dr. Jessica Wu. "Your hair is dead, and shaving it doesn't affect the living part of the hair, which is the follicle that sits deep under the skin." It's the follicle that determines the thickness of your hair. "It's a common belief because when hairs grow out naturally, they taper at a sharp point, so they look thinner," says Dr. Wu. "Shaving hair cuts it at a blunt angle so hairs look thicker."



EATING MORE FISH CURES ECZEMA

Some of us remember a cousin or sibling with eczema being force-fed copious amounts of steamed fish, and according to Dr Natasha Turner, naturopathic doctor, author and founder of the Clear Medicine Wellness Boutique in Toronto, Canada, fish oil is indeed the shiznit for defence against eczema. "In one study, people taking fish oil equal to 1.8 g of EPA (which has been shown to reduce inflammation and rejuvenate the skin) experienced significant reduction in symptoms of eczema after 12 weeks." If you're not eating enough oily fish like sardines and salmon, also consider taking fish oil supplements. Gayla and John Kirschmann, nutritional researchers and authors of *The Nutrition Almanac*, estimate that a seven ounce fillet of salmon provides four grams of Omega-3 oil, which fits the daily requirement. The takeaway here: eating a salmon fillet a day keeps the skin doctor away.



BRUSH YOUR HAIR 100 TIMES A DAY FOR SHINE

Most of us watched Marcia Brady on *The Brady Bunch* carefully brushing her hair while counting to a hundred before bed, the obvious secret to her shiny, lustrous mane. As it turns out, Marcia was a little overzealous. "One hundred strokes is too much," says Christopher Mackin, a trichologist at the Gil Ferrer Salon in NYC. "You'll do more damage than good." Light brushing is good, but going OTT causes breakage, fall out and split ends. Victoria Sherrow, in her book *The Encyclopaedia of Hair*, says the practice dates as far back as the Victorian era. "The purpose of the brushing may have been to get rid of lice nits more than to improve the hair's appearance." Enough said.



DON'T MOISTURISE IF YOUR SKIN IS OILY

This is a cautionary tale long-headed by oily skin sufferers, inspiring fear that adding more moisture onto already oily skin is damning yourself to swimming in a hell pit of acne and blemishes. So wrong. "By skipping the moisturiser, your skin will dry out and in turn rebound with more oil production, which can actually cause more breakouts," says Dr. Eric Schweiger, founder of the Schweiger Dermatology Group in New York. The truth is that having balanced, well-moisturised skin is the real secret to banishing excess oil. Aside from sticking to light, gel-based moisturisers, Dallas-based aesthetician Renée Rouleau suggests looking out for oil ingredients that don't clog pores: "The 'safe' oils are hydrogenated vegetable, safflower, jojoba, soybean, sunflower seed and macadamia nut oils," says Rouleau.

"By skipping the moisturiser, your skin will dry out and in turn rebound with more oil production..."



VASELINE MAKES YOUR LASHES GROW

This one is a half-truth that even Beyoncé reportedly subscribes to. According to dermatologist Dr. Victor Rueckl, all Vaseline does is moisturise the lashes. "[Moisturising] will help them be less brittle, but only if eyelash dryness is actually a problem for you. Vaseline has no ability to grow your lashes," states Dr. Rueckl. Natalie Bell, editor-in-chief of *futurederm.com*, explains: "Much like your hair and skin, your eyelashes benefit from conditioning. Keeping your eyelashes moisturised will stop them from breaking so easily and allow them to grow longer". The bottom line: don't toss that tub of Vaseline, but don't sit around waiting for your lashes to lengthen. Get a lash serum instead.

WASH YOUR HAIR IN RAINWATER DURING THE FULL MOON FOR SOFTNESS

Just reading this tickles. London-based hair and scalp expert Philip Kingsley says while rainwater has its benefits, this is a *really* old wives' tale. "Rainwater is soft, it has no hardness like the water you get through your tap in many areas," he says. "Before modern shampoos, it would have helped hair to stay soft and shiny. But now good shampoos work regardless of hard water." Also consider how rainwater today is packed with pollution and contaminants. As far as the full moon theory goes, while several legends tell of the enhancing effects it has on hair, including cutting your hair during a full moon for thicker regrowth, it has never been scientifically proven.

TOOTHPASTE ZAPS SPOTS AND ACNE

Generations of teens suffering from acne blowouts have kept a tube of toothpaste handy. Rouleau says there are ingredients in toothpaste that could help with blemishes: "Sodium lauryl sulfate, a detergent-based, cleansing agent; calcium carbonate, a chalk that could offer mild oil and bacteria-reducing action; and hydrated silica, a dehydrating ingredient." But other derms say it can also cause bad reactions. "What it really does is irritate and cause redness and peeling," says dermatologist Dr. Neal Schultz. So while the pimple may disappear along with the irritation, toothpaste is not a treatment for acne – proper skincare like benzoyl peroxide and salicylic acid always does the trick.

