

Stovetop remedies

TUSCALOOSA - Got a cough you just can't shake?

Then get you sum' hog hoofs. Boil 'em down into a tea, guzzle it down and say goodbye to your whooping cough.

"Hog hoof tea" is one of more than 20 home remedies that 77-year-old Duncanville native Willie Cannon has used to cure what ails her, her nine children, 27 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren for the past seven decades.

"When my mother died when I was 6, my daddy would use these remedies on us," Cannon said. She and her nine siblings grew up on her father's farm off Alabama Highway 69 in Duncanville.

"We couldn't afford to see a doctor when we were sick, so we pretty much used what we had," she said.

And that meant using anything to treat everything.

Some of the more peculiar home remedies that Cannon listed out of the book she keeps on them, include: Wrapping dry cow manure in a rag, boiling it down into a tea and drinking it to cure pneumonia. Rubbing axle grease from a wagon wheel on sores to heal them and keep infection out. Wearing a cast made from a mixture of clay (mud) and vinegar to heal a broken limb. Putting human breast milk or syrup diluted with water in your eyes to cure pink eye. Putting crumbled pieces of a burnt newspaper into the hollow of your teeth to numb toothaches. Gurgling and then swallowing a spoonful of sugar mixed with kerosene to cure a sore throat. Rubbing chimney soot into an open wound to stop the bleeding. Sitting on a bucket of burning chicken feathers so the smoke makes contact with your exposed hemorrhoids to heal them.

"Burning chicken feathers for hemorrhoids is a good 'un," Cannon said with a laugh.

While not many doctors would likely recommend any of Cannon's conceivably risky home remedies, some of her recipes do have merit.

Dwight Rice, a licensed naturopathic physician who runs a naturopathic clinic and wellness center called "Health Unlimited" in Huntsville, said some of Cannon's home remedies may work. But he doesn't suggest that anyone try them, because they haven't been medically proven.

"I'm not disputing the breast milk [for pink eye home remedy], because it might work," Rice said. "What I'd do, though, is use the juice from a white potato, because that has been known to get rid of pink eye."

As far as using chimney soot to staunch a wound, Rice said he had heard that many times.

"If we were out in the country, it may fly," he said. "But I would want to verify that, and instead of using soot, use the best charcoal I could get."

Though charcoal may work, Rice recommends rubbing aloe vera juice and chamomile on the wound first, then applying a mixture of Laveria, comfrey root and goldenseal root.

Rice wasn't too keen on Cannon's other home remedies, but grateful they were around to get people through. Naturopathy, a school of medical practice that uses herbs and other alternative treatments to assist the body's innate capacity to heal naturally from sickness and injury without the use of drugs or surgery, has common roots with home remedies.

"Back in the day, herbalists would plant herbs all along the underground railroad so that escaped slaves could pick them and cure whatever sickness they had without slowing down their escape," Rice said.

"To bring this up to date, our great grandparents would go out and get these herbs with certain looks and use them in home remedies to help keep us healthy. Unfortunately, as we've gotten older, we've totally bought into the medical route.

"But, for those of us who believe that God made bitter herbs to heal the body, we still use them to make miracles."

The natural path

Books on naturopathy, "Women's Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine" by Tori Hudson and "The New Naturopathic Diet: A Guide to Managing Weight, Preventing Illness & Achieving Optimum Health" by Penny Kendall-Reed and Stephen Reed, are lining the shelves at bookstores.

Celebrities such as Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson are endorsing the dietary part of the naturopathic lifestyle, and more and more naturopathic and alternative medicine clinics, as well as herbal supplement and natural food stores are branching out from the primarily large metropolitan cities where they started, to more rural areas of the country, such as West Alabama.

In November, Sarita Elizabeth Cox, a nationally licensed naturopathic physician and acupuncturist who practiced in Santa Cruz, Calif., opened a practice in Tuscaloosa at 2123 Ninth St., Suite 208.

Cox said she started her practice in Tuscaloosa because she felt there was a great need for professional holistic health care in the area, and as far as she knows, no other professionally licensed naturopathic doctor practices in the city.

"I think [naturopathic medicine] is becoming more popular because people are seeking more organic, therapeutic medicine with less side effects and dangers, and people are interested in doing more self-care," Cox said.

Rice, who's been practicing naturopathy for 15 years, agreed with Cox, saying more people are turning to a naturopathic lifestyle because its benefits far outweigh the sacrifice and self-discipline it takes to live it.

"When people ask me how do I feel since I started living this lifestyle, I tell them great," Rice said. "I never get sick anymore. Every day is a high. You can walk up and down the steps with no aches and pains. You feel wonderful. It's the best lifestyle you could ever ask for.

"Living this way is more of a conscious lifestyle because you choose how to positively input the earth and you know everything you're putting in your body. It's hard, but there's great rewards."

Rice said he believes that drugs and the non-organic foods are part of why Americans are in such poor health.

"There's no need for people to be dying the way we are today," Rice said. "People just need to detoxify their bodies."

Rice said living a naturopathic lifestyle not only consists of using "natural cures," but exercise and eating healthy.

"Eating organic fruits, vegetables, nuts and grains. Drinking healthy water, eating soy products instead of meat, exercising every day, it's the whole complete wheel," Rice said. "You have to do everything you can to stay healthy in 2007."

And it's not always easy. Rice said in fact, it's probably the hardest decision a person will have to ever make.

Kiersten Ellis, a 24-year-old sales clerk at Manna Grocery and Deli Grocery on McFarland Boulevard, said her choice to go "all natural" wasn't one she made just to benefit herself, but also to benefit the land.

"I use all natural body care products like soap, lotions, shampoos, because they don't have harmful pesticides," Ellis said. "They're all pure and natural. I know my decision will benefit future generations and make a healthier environment.

"Organic food is grown without pesticides and with eco-friendly farming techniques. They're better for your body and build soil as opposed to monocropping [the use of land for growing only one type of crop] or high industry farming that uses chemicals that cause cancer and strips the soil of nutrients."

But choosing to eat only organic foods can be expensive.

Organic products can sometimes even cost two to three times as much as regular products.

The medical view

Dr. Alan Blum, a University of Alabama College of Community Health Sciences professor and the Gerald Leon Wallace Endowed Chair in family

medicine, said naturopathic medicines aren't usually recommended by family doctors, at least not initially, because they aren't as studied as prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

"The difference between what we prescribe and these herbal supplements and remedies is that they haven't gone through the amount of study that the products we use have," Blum said.

"If you look at the bottle of some of these products, it may say it isn't FDA [Food and Drug Administration] approved."

Blum said naturopathic doctors and family doctors have different philosophies, and agreements on treatments between the two types of practitioners are uncommon.

"Family doctors are allopathic physicians [medical doctors who treat disease and injury using counteractive methods]," Blum said. "Naturopathy is a more recent vintage with people using herbal medicine.

"[Naturopaths] don't like drugs or surgery, but they hide behind the word natural. As if what we do isn't natural. We get hit with this reputation that we just want to give someone a drug."

Blum said technically, anyone could practice as a naturopath.

He said naturopathy is licensed in only 14 states in the United States, and Alabama isn't one of them.

"The bottom line is anyone who looks at only a sole form of health treatment is at risk for not having every opportunity to heal," Blum said. "Medical school trained physicians have to be very open minded.

"A conventionally trained physician who never goes to a health food store, or goes to a chiropractor, is overly dismissive. I say the same for a naturopathic doctor.

"But, I would take the view of a conventional physician over that of a naturopath, because we look at medicines the FDA approves, which are studied and may help you, as opposed to a naturopath who may just dismiss all FDA approved drugs."

Cannon's way

As a child, Cannon said she never visited a doctor and she still turned out fine.

At age 77, she's vibrant and feels good about herself, and even recommends that people try her lifestyle.

"When we were growing up, you didn't hear of people having all this high blood pressure and cancer, etc," Cannon said.

"I do believe some of this stuff would help people today. I still use some of these [remedies] now, but I do go to the doctor for some things since I became old. I don't know any remedies that treats high blood pressure."

Reach Jamon Smith at jamon.smith@tuscaloosaneews.com or 205-722-0204.

About the Author

From www.tuscaloosaneews.com:

This page gives helpful tricks that will help to get rid of pink eye, as well as provide information as to how you get pink eye in the first place.

A natural home remedy for pink eye. Advice and simple treatments using herbs, essential oils and natural ingredients. Quick home remedy.

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