



📷 Dr Michael Tam reckons groceries are good for eating, not for curing. Picture: Jonathan Ng

NSW

# Medical myths: Duct tape useless on warts despite what 'Dr Google' says

JACK MORPHET, The Daily Telegraph  
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DUCT tape has joined a grocery bag bulging with common products whose supposed healing powers have been outed as medical myths.

The ubiquitous, usually grey, tape sits beside apple cider vinegar, cranberry juice, yoghurt and orange juice as a modern-day folk remedy.

Dr Google is full of the powers of duct tape — complete with step-by-step instructions — to magically get rid of that most unsightly of skin complaints, the wart.



📷 Dr Michael Tam: “If you try sticking a piece of duct tape over the wart, it’s easy to associate the wart’s disappearance with the treatment.” Picture: Jonathan Ng

But a new study says while the tape has many mundane building and repair usages, it joins mashed bananas and potato skins in doing nothing to remove warts.

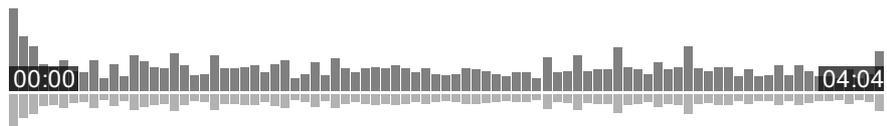
Sticking duct tape over warts supposedly starves them of sunlight and oxygen.

Dr Michael Tam, a general practitioner and senior lecturer at the University of NSW, said sufferers regularly conflated the disappearance of warts with “magic healing powers of duct tape”.

In a warts-and-all submission to journal *Medical Observer*, Dr Tam concluded there’s no evidence to suggest duct tape is more effective than placebos.

As with so many fictitious fixes, people who subscribe to the unlikely solution would have come good naturally.

“Without any treatment at all, one-third of all warts will be gone in three months and 70 per cent will be gone within two years,” Dr Tam said.



## COMMON HEALTH QUACKERY

### 1. Sticking duct tape over warts does not make them go away faster

● The only study to find duct tape had a "modest benefit" also involved weekly soakings and scrubbing with a pumice stone. Further studies have failed to demonstrate duct tape has any benefit curing warts. Most warts clear up by themselves.



### 2. Cranberries do not cure nor prevent urinary tract infections

● Cranberry juice and capsules were prescribed to prevent and treat urinary tract infections for decades, but that stopped in 2012. Cranberry juice may flush bacteria from the body, but it's no more effective than water.

### 3. Yoghurt will not cure vaginal thrush

● Studies show neither yoghurt nor probiotic suppositories support claims that good bacteria – lactobacillus – help to fight off the fungus that causes vaginal thrush. However, some women find yoghurt has a cool, soothing effect, which may be grounds to use it.

### 4. Mixing drinks does not worsen a hangover

● A 2008 study found one standard drink of vodka, beer or wine contributes equally to the likelihood



and severity of a hangover, even if you mix your drinks. The most important factors contributing to a hangover are the amount of alcohol and how quickly it is consumed.

### 5. Milk thistle does not treat chronic hepatitis B

● The milk thistle herb is commonly marketed as a treatment for liver disease, but the only trials have been small and flawed. Based on all the evidence available, there's a strong possibility it does nothing at all.



### 6. There's no evidence aspirin prevents deep vein thrombosis (DVT) on long-haul flights

● There has been only one study to test this myth. In a 2002 study of 249 people at high-risk of DVT who took a long flight, those who took aspirin before and after flying were fractionally less likely to have a clot. Calf muscle exercises and compression stockings are considered more effective.

### ALREADY BUSTED ...

– Piles/haemorrhoids cannot be contracted from sitting on cold concrete

– Taking vitamin C on a regular basis, regardless of dose, will not stave off the common cold

– Paracetamol (Panadol) does not dull acute lower back pain or reduce recovery time



“If you try sticking a piece of duct tape over the wart, it’s easy to associate the wart’s disappearance with the treatment.”

Apple cider vinegar has become a popular cure-all spruiked by naturopaths and wellness bloggers for warts, but it’s another bogus remedy.

Dr Tam, the head of the GP unit at medical research organisation The Ingham Institute, debunked other furrphies alleging groceries can cure embarrassing ailments.

One-third of women contract a urinary tract infection (UTI) and Dr Tam, like many medicos, used to prescribe cranberries on a weekly basis under the mistaken belief the tart fruit contained chemicals that stopped bacteria sticking to the bladder.

But drinking water has the same effect as guzzling cranberry juice when trying to ease the nasty stinging or burning felt passing urine.

“For someone older I used to prescribe cranberry capsules in the hope it would reduce likelihood of recurrent UTIs,” he said.

“For most people it won’t hurt, but best evidence suggests it doesn’t work.”

Another irritation of the reproductive region that has women reaching for the fridge is vaginal thrush.

Cold yoghurt may soothe the itch, but don’t expect the “good bacteria” to tackle an overgrowth of yeast.

“Yoghurt is cold and while it might be a bit messy, it will soothe itchy and uncomfortable thrush but it’s not a cure,” Dr Tam said.

And as for the 70 per cent of revellers susceptible to bad hangovers, sticking to one type of alcoholic beverage won’t help.

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According to the medical myth buster, starting on beer or wine and moving to spirits doesn't conjure a toxic cocktail but it does make it harder to keep track of just how many drinks you've had.

Former Australian GP of the Year and current Australian Medical Association (NSW) vice-president Dr Kean-Seng Lim said Googling health symptoms could have dangerous consequences.

Not only does the search engine throw up all sorts of pseudoscience but delaying effective treatment could aggravate symptoms, he said.

Dr Lim conceded Google will most likely turn up accurate medical literature, but “the tricky part is trying to work out what information is reliable. Google has good information available but it also perpetuates myths, which could mean you get sicker if it delays effective treatment.”

The west Sydney family doctor likened internet-based self-diagnosis to “using a chainsaw without training; it's asking for trouble”.

“I have no problems if patients Google treatments of their condition, but they need to discuss it with a doctor,” he said.

Other medical myths include taking vitamin C, such as fresh orange juice, on a regular basis to stave off the common cold and sitting on cold concrete leading to piles.