

Traditional medicine around the world

1 Work with a partner. What do you know about traditional medicine? Look at the words in the top row and match them to the illnesses you think they might help cure in the row below.

lemon juice spinach leaves honey olive oil cold water
hiccups dry cough earache toothache mosquito bite

2a Read the health page in a magazine. Then answer the questions at the end.



Teen health watch

Did you know that carrots can help you see in the dark? You might think it's an "old wives' remedy", but it's true! Carrots contain something called beta-carotene which is important for healthy eyes.

And carrots aren't the only food that can be useful for your health. People in the UK use honey to help sore throats and in Germany they often use tomato juice to relieve sunburnt skin. In the US, they eat chicken soup to cure a cold and Native Americans put garlic on bee stings.

In fact, many of the medicines that doctors use today actually come from 'old wives' remedies' like these. Here are some examples from around the world.

In my country, a drug called artemisinin, which comes from the sweet wormwood plant, has become one of the most effective cures for malaria in the world. Scientists first learnt about it in the 1980s, but it's been used in Chinese medicine for a very long time.

At first, people didn't believe the drug would work, but now doctors use it all over the world.



Chinese sweet wormwood plant

The Ancient Egyptians believed that the aloe vera plant could cure all sorts of health problems, like burns, wounds and high temperatures. That was thousands of years ago, but even today, people know about the healing properties of aloe vera and use it in hundreds of medicines to treat different problems.



aloe vera plant

My sister sometimes takes a bath in green tea leaves because it apparently gives you softer skin and can lower blood pressure. In Japan, we believe in the health benefits of the green tea plant!



green tea plant

In Costa Rica, we can choose to visit either a traditional doctor or a modern doctor depending on our illness. When my mum suffered from *nervios*, a condition of anxiety, she chose to go to the traditional clinic because the doctors there understood her illness and knew how to treat it using our traditional ways. But there are also lots of clinics in my country where people go for more modern medicines.

So it seems traditional remedies are very popular in some parts of the world, sometimes even more popular than modern medicine. For example, 80% of the population in Africa and Asia still prefer using traditional medicine according to reports.

Do you know any traditional medicines from your country? Do you have any traditional family cures? Post a comment below and tell us about it.

2b Read the health page again and match the ailments and the remedy. Then write the country of origin for each remedy.

Ailment	Remedy
1 I've got sunburn.	a Have a bath in some tea leaves.
2 I've got a cold.	b Rub some tomato juice on your skin.
3 My throat hurts.	c Here's some cream with aloe vera in it.
4 I've got a wound on my leg.	d Have a bowl of chicken soup.
5 I've got high blood pressure.	e Drink some honey in hot water.

Country

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2c Match the sentence halves.

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| 1 Lots of the medicine used today | a comes from the Chinese sweet wormwood plant. |
| 2 Carrots contain a substance | b you have a bee sting. |
| 3 Garlic can help you if | c use both traditional and modern medicines. |
| 4 An effective drug for malaria | d which is important for your eyes. |
| 5 Countries with a dual system of medical care | e comes from traditional medicine. |

Gateway to culture

3a Work with a partner or in a small group. Read the opinions and decide if you agree or disagree with them. Tell each other why.

1 “ I think all these home cures are crazy! We don't need old medicine in the modern world. ”

2 “ Lots of traditional cures are cultural – we use them because they make us feel part of our families and traditions. I think they're an important part of our history! ”

3 “ Without many of these ideas we wouldn't have modern medicine at all. ”

4 “ I think medicine like this is all in your head. People believe it will work and so it works! ”

PROJECT

3b You are going to work on a project about how traditional medicines are used in your culture and around the world. Read the questions and prepare your project research.

- 1 Work in groups. Brainstorm a list of traditional remedies that come from your country.
- 2 Choose one and research its benefits, and make notes on the following points:
 - where it comes from
 - why people use it and how long people have used it
 - how it helps people
 - whether it is used in other countries

3c When you have done your research, write a post about the remedy for the magazine's health page. Use your notes to help explain it. If possible, include information on how it has helped people around the world.