Old Wives’ Tales

Old Wives’ Tales are traditional ideas and beliefs. They have existed for a long time and a lot of people think that they are true. But should we believe them? Here, we look for the truth behind five popular Old Wives’ Tales.

I. ‘You shouldn’t go outside with wet hair in winter. You’ll catch a cold.’

If you went outside with wet hair in winter, you’d probably feel cold and miserable, but you certainly wouldn’t catch a cold. Cold weather and wet hair don’t cause colds. You catch a cold from a virus. Colds are common in winter because we stay inside more, so we have more direct contact with viruses.
2. ‘You should eat carrots. They help you see at night.’

![Carrot characters]

**Well, yes and no.** You should eat carrots because they are good for you. They have a lot of fibre, minerals and vitamins. They contain Vitamin A, in particular, which is essential for healthy eyes. But most experts agree that carrots don’t help you see in the dark.

3. ‘You shouldn’t eat when you have a high temperature.’

![Person eating]

**A lot of people think that you should only drink liquids when you have a high temperature.** This isn’t true! A fever is a sign that your body is fighting an infection. You need energy to fight off the infection and you should try to eat normally.
4. ‘You shouldn’t sit very near to the TV. It will hurt your eyes.’

Here’s the good news, modern TVs don’t hurt your eyes! The belief comes from the 1960s. In 1967 an electrical company made some TVs that were extremely radioactive. Modern TVs are not radioactive! If you sat very near to a TV all day, you’d probably get tired eyes or a headache, but you wouldn’t hurt your eyes permanently.

5. ‘You should drink warm milk before bedtime. It helps you go to sleep.’

Well, yes and no. Milk contains two substances that help promote sleep. But the quantity of these substances in one cup of milk is very small and it wouldn’t help you go to sleep faster. Even so, warm milk can help us relax because we associate the drink with our family and home. So drink up!