

#6. Sitting too close to the TV will damage your eyes

Time to stop harping on the kids for standing directly in front of the tube—unless they’re blocking your view! There is no evidence to suggest that standing too close ruins your vision. However the eye can tire, resulting in eye strain, eyes that burn or water, or headaches. It is suggested that when watching TV, have enough light in the room and give your eyes a break by refocusing your gaze during commercials to prevent eye strain. Similarly, when using the computer, take frequent breaks by looking away from the screen regularly, ensuring that there is no glare on the monitor, and performing eye exercises.

#7. You should always stretch before exercising

It was once believed that stretching before starting any type of exercise “warmed up” the muscles, making them ready for exercise, reducing the probability of injury, decreasing muscle soreness, and increasing flexibility. Much research has challenged this theory. Stretching prior to exercise or sports was



shown to make no difference in the incidence of injuries nor level of soreness post-exercise. Placing a stretch on a cold muscle may actually cause the muscle to contract and become more tense. For the most part, it is agreed that beginning exercise with a light jog or sport-specific warm up is preferable. Stretching for most people feels good and increases flexibility, so if you want to continue this practice, post-exercise is best.

#8. Feed a cold, starve a fever

Colds and fevers are generally caused by viruses. Whether or not you eat won’t affect their seven to ten day course in your body. However, it is important to drink lots of fluids as our immune system uses fluids to fight off the virus that has infected our healthy cells. Drinking fluids also helps to thin mucus and loosen chest or nasal congestion.

#9. It will take seven years for gum to be digested or pass through your system

Maybe a gum tree will sprout in there while it’s hanging out? This myth is completely false; gum is just like any other food. It travels through our intestines and is expelled with our stool. As gum doesn’t break down in our body, it does take a few days to be expelled versus regular food which normally travels through our intestinal tract in about 24 hours. The exception to this might occur if a very small child were to swallow a huge wad of gum. There is a chance that the gum would cause an intestinal obstruction or in severe cases, require surgery for its removal.

#10. Shaving causes hair to grow back faster, darker or coarser

Perhaps this is why seven-blade razors are on their way? Or perhaps you can already buy them? This myth was actually refuted back in 1928 when researchers compared hair growth in areas of shaved versus unshaved patches on people. No difference was noted. A similar study was performed in the U.S. more recently with the same results. It’s likely that we perceive our hair grows back faster, thicker and/or darker, as the new hair emerges with a blunt edge that makes it appear thicker than it actually is (unshaven hair has fine, tapered ends). As well, the sun naturally bleaches our hair, so the longer the exposure, the lighter it becomes.

#11. Cell phone use leads to cancer

There has been much controversy over the use of cell phones and a link to cancer in the brain. One recent news release stated “The WHO/International Agency for Research on Cancer has classified radio frequency electromagnetic fields as possibly carcinogenic to humans, based on an increased risk for glioma, a malignant type of brain cancer, associated with wireless phone use.” So what do you do? Cell phones have become an integral part of our daily lives. Worldwide, an estimated five billion people use cell phones and it is estimated that at

least 78 per cent of Canadian households have a cell phone. It seems best to put the WHO statement into perspective, and make an informed decision as to whether or not you continue to use your cell phone.

First, the WHO category “2B or possibly carcinogenic,” is used when there is inadequate evidence of cancer-causing effects to humans, but sufficient evidence in animals; it places radiofrequency electromagnetic fields like those emitted from cell phones alongside things such as picked vegetables, coffee, lead, certain food dyes and working as a firefighter or dry cleaner.

Second, with the significant increase in cell phone use over the past 20 plus years, and an incredible number of users globally, it is reassuring to note that there has not been a reported increase in brain tumours or other problems.

Finally, if given the above information you remain concerned with the possible health risks associated with cell phone use, consider texting, email, or using a hands-free headset that is directly connected to your cell phone; it does not use radiofrequency radiation. Bluetooth technology does use RF radiation and thus may carry risk of exposure; according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there have been no studies that have looked at the effect of using this technology.

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Please contact Erin at ekeefe@staff.nstu.ca to provide your NSTU email address. The **Be_Well@nstu.ca** list will provide information about the EIP and other wellness topics.