

# Arthritis myth



**YOUR  
HEALTH**

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**Q** My husband cracks his knuckles all the time. It makes a sudden popping noise. I told him his joints will get arthritis.

There is no scientific basis for this belief. Arthritis does not develop because of knuckle cracking. I agree that the sound is unpleasant but it is simply the noise created by the collapse of tiny gas bubbles in the joint fluid.

Arthritis occurs due to advancing age, genetics, prior injuries and certain medical conditions, such as autoimmune diseases, not because someone cracks their knuckles.

## A drink a day

**Q** I drink 180ml of brandy every day. I read it is good for your health.

One drink is 45ml of brandy, not the 180ml that you are consuming. Also, "one drink a day is good for health" is a myth that has been scientifically debunked.

Resveratrol, a compound found in red wine (not brandy), acts against pathogens, including bacteria and fungi. It is an antioxidant and has antitumor properties, and is considered a potential candidate for the prevention and treatment of several types of cancer. However, if taken as wine, its beneficial properties are overshadowed by the alcohol content, which impairs the communication between brain cells. Long-term drinking can damage the dendrites and this cellular damage leads to cognitive and behavioural changes.

The good news is that if drinking is stopped and a healthy lifestyle (without smoking) is followed, the brain can over time repair itself to some extent.

## Steam safe

**Q** I was told that sweating removes toxins from the body. I am considering joining a gym with a steam room.

The high temperature in steam rooms does indeed cause sweating. However, it is essential to understand that sweat is approximately 99 per cent water and 1 per cent other substances. This 1 per

cent includes salts like sodium and chloride, as well as trace amounts of minerals, urea and proteins, but not toxins.

The liver and kidneys primarily handle detoxification. Sweat's sole function is regulating body temperature, not facilitating weight loss or removing harmful toxins.

## Weight plateau

**Q** I exercise regularly but I feel bored, and my fitness level and weight have plateaued.

Regular exercise requires willpower and dedication. When you do the same workout every day, the body becomes acclimatised and stops responding. That's why you need to mix things up.

Adding HIIT (high-intensity interval training) is an excellent way to boost the effectiveness of your routine. It challenges the body, improves

stamina and increases calorie burn even after you finish exercising.

Also, remember that muscle needs to be built and maintained for good balance, posture and efficient calorie utilisation. Strength training combined with varied workouts helps break plateaus and keeps you motivated.



## Blood pressure

**Q** I check my blood pressure on an automatic machine at home, and it is usually around 120/80. I am taking Telmisartan 40mg daily. However, when I go to the doctor, the blood pressure recorded on a manual machine shoots up to 165/95. He suggested starting Amlodipine but after beginning the medication, I developed swelling in my feet, which I now realise is a side effect.

Blood pressure can rise at a doctor's clinic because of white-coat hypertension, where anxiety or stress temporarily elevates the reading. Your home readings of 120/80 are normal, so the higher clinic value may not reflect your usual pressure.

Amlodipine can cause ankle and foot swelling by widening blood vessels. This allows fluid to pool in the lower limbs. The swelling is a known side effect and improves only if the dose is reduced or the drug is changed.

You could check the blood pressure while sitting, standing and lying down at home over a period of time and show the results to your doctor so that he or she can decide on the medication.

The writer has a family practice at Vellore and is the author of *Staying Healthy in Modern India*. If you have any questions on health issues, please write to [yourhealthgm@yahoo.co.in](mailto:yourhealthgm@yahoo.co.in)