

## General: Old Wives Tales – Fact or Fiction?

Everybody probably knows a handful of health related sayings handed that have been handed down through the generations. You know the kind of thing – carrots help you see in the dark, eating fish makes you brainy, watching too much television will give you square eyes etc.

Whilst many of these old wives tales are simply a lot of nonsense, scientific research has shown others to be far nearer the mark. For example, a recent study carried out at the Cardiff Common Cold Centre (part of Cardiff University) has shown that Mum was right when she told you to wrap up warmly otherwise you would catch a cold. The researchers found that you can indeed catch a cold by getting cold. They split a group of 180 volunteers into two and asked the one half to put their feet into icy water for twenty minutes. The control group was not exposed to the cold in the same way. Within 5 days, 29% of the exposed group developed a cold, compared with only 9% of the control group.

The idea that carrots can help your eyesight also has a sound scientific basis. Carrots are a good source of

vitamin A, which plays an essential role in growth, development and vision.

Fish as brain food has also made the leap from old wives' adage to scientific fact. Researchers have now shown that the Omega 3 fatty oils found in fish help to keep the memory area of the brain in good working order.

As for watching too much television, well it won't, of course, give you square eyes but a survey has shown that two thirds of workers who use screens all day regularly leave work with bad headaches and over half suffered from tired or strained eyes.

So in the future, it may just be wise to listen a little more closely to what our mothers have to say!

Reference:-

Jonathon Duffy BBC News Magazine 15/11/2005