

Home Health Remedies: Fact vs. Fiction

by Matt Sheehan

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Home health remedies

There are two home health remedies getting major exposure on social media platforms like TikTok. One is a mix of onion and honey, and another is a combination of garlic and honey. Ashley Simper, manager of Dietetic Services with OSF HealthCare, sifts through the research to explain what is fact vs. fiction.

Onion and honey remedy

TikTok user HealthwellnessAB, shared a “homemade cough syrup” using chopped onion and honey. Since being posted in early September, the video has garnered over 4 million views. The concoction starts with one layer of chopped onion, topped with one

teaspoon of honey. The layering of honey and onion is repeated three times. Once the concoction is made, it's recommended to keep it stored in the fridge for up to two weeks.

“There are no clinical trials that show a direct correlation between eating red onion, or red onion extract, and reducing the symptoms of a cough. There are a lot of great things in red onion, but it's not directly linked to the reduction of the cough,” Simper adds.

Garlic and honey remedy

Another TikTok user, The Homesteading Hebrew, posted a TikTok claiming the “garlic & raw organic honey is all you need!” With this concoction, you chop up the garlic and place it in a jar. You then pour the honey directly on top of the garlic, mix it together and put the lid on. The video has gotten nearly 250,000 likes and 3.7 million views. The video claims that garlic can act as an antiviral and antibacterial remedy, that it can fight colds and flu, remove heavy metals, lowers blood pressure and fights infection.

Simper says this remedy has much more promise than the onion/honey mixture.

“When you ingest garlic on a regular basis, you can lower overall total cholesterol, triglycerides, blood pressure and it can help prevent the onset of a cold,” Simper says. “But it can't treat a cold. The research has found that when people are taking garlic regularly and have been exposed to some heavy metals, down the road, they show there are fewer heavy metals in their body if they're consuming garlic regularly. These studies were done with garlic tablets or supplements, they're not done with eating garlic.”

“The compound in garlic with health benefits is called allicin. The research supports the amount of allicin equal to one clove of garlic has these health benefits. If you ask me, I think it'd be pretty difficult to get in a clove of garlic a day. That's why these garlic supplements are where they're finding these benefits.”

Simper says the nutrition benefits of garlic won't be seen overnight.

“You should be taking the garlic supplements for three months or more before you can actually prevent a cold,” Simper says. “You would want to be taking it consistently in order to see that prevention.”

Caution for those on blood thinners

“Eating garlic, in large amounts, can thin your blood. So, we wouldn't want anyone to consume too much garlic who is on a prescribed blood thinner,” Simper says.

Babies should not consume honey

“There is a risk of botulism -- a rare but serious illness caused by a toxin that attacks the body’s nerves -- in honey. We don’t want anyone under the age of 12 months to consume it,” Simper says. “The recommended dose for those age 12 months and up until age 18, is ½ teaspoon to two teaspoons. For adults, the research shows a tablespoon of honey.”

Raw vs. commercialized honey: Does it matter?

“In terms of using honey for the cough suppressant, it really shouldn’t matter whether you choose raw or the commercial, pasteurized honey. There’s no significant difference in the nutritional value there,” Simper says. “When it comes to the fermenting of the garlic, when you mix the honey and garlic together, they want you to have the raw honey because it has the yeast still in it. The yeast is what helps the fermentation process.”

The bottom line

Simper says while both these mixtures seem to have promise in boosting your health, when it comes to the onion/honey combination, the honey is the main source of beneficial nutrition.

“In honey, the antimicrobial and antioxidant properties are what have been linked in research to show the decreased inflammation of the throat,” Simper says.

“The research supports the reduction of cold symptoms when you have honey. It’s not going to prevent or treat a cold, but it can reduce the severity of a cough,” Simper says. “In 14 clinical trials, it has shown to reduce the severity and frequency of cough better than an antihistamine like Benadryl and just as good as a cough suppressant like Robitussin.

“What people need to keep in mind is these studies with the garlic were done with garlic supplements, so you can’t isolate this concoction to having the health benefits. It certainly is not going to hurt anybody, there’s not really any significant side effects to consuming these, except what we mentioned already,” Simper says.

“I would encourage people to eat more onion and garlic in their diets, in addition to a variety of other healthful foods like fruits, vegetables and whole grains. We know that isolated foods aren’t what’s going to give you all of these disease-fighting properties,” Simper says. “It’s the variety of foods in the diet that have all the vitamins, minerals and antioxidants and you need to eat them regularly in order to fight disease.”

Key takeaways:

- While the onion/honey concoction has no research showing direct relief to ailments, having both honey and onions in your diet is beneficial.
- Ingesting garlic supplements on a consistent basis can lower overall total cholesterol, triglycerides, blood pressure and it can help prevent the onset of a cold.
- Having a variety of fruits, vegetables and whole grains in your diet is beneficial.

As fall rolls in, colds and viruses become more common. People head to their local pharmacy or doctor's offices for routine vaccines, and sick patients hope for treatments to relieve what ails them.

But some social media videos are offering different options, some that can be done from the comfort of your own home and don't require any prescriptions or visits to the doctor.