

Folk Medicine/Cultural Health Practices of African Americans FACTSHEET

African Americans commonly use home remedies to manage their health. Remedies are manufactured from herbs, plants, animal, and mineral substances ¹.

“Folk home remedies are defined as any health practices (exclusive of over-the-counter pharmaceutical drugs) used at home before seeking professional health care assistance”¹.



Remedies: Drinking water or cider vinegar to reduce blood pressure or cleanse a body from illness. Epsom salts for relief of indigestion.⁴ Spices, herbal medicines, teas, honey, lemons for bronchitis and other items for other chronic illness. Spiritual practices such as prayer or use of a spiritual healer can also be considered a home remedies or complementary alternative medicine.⁵

Beliefs

Some believe illness or disease is a consequence of bad luck, poverty, unemployment or fate ³. Others believe that disease or illness come from natural or unnatural illness causes.

Natural illnesses: Occurs due to **exposure to the environment like cold air and then pneumonia develops.**

Unnatural illnesses: Can be a punishment from God or from a casted spell and include diseases like cancer. ².

Many cultural and ethnic groups use folk medicine or practices along with Western medicine. Patients may see a doctor only when home remedies have failed.^{2,4}

Why the use of Folk medicine or practices ?

- Cultural tradition
- Distrust of the medical system
- Discriminatory practices and unfair treatment in American health care facilities

TIPS

- ✚ Assess your patients for use of cultural or folklore practices
- ✚ Ensure they are not engaging in a practice that is harmful or interfering with the care plan
- ✚ Assess whether it is efficacious (beneficial) neutral (no effect but no harm) or dysfunctional (may cause harm)
- ✚ Educate your patient on remedy dangers
- ✚ If home remedies are found to be efficacious or neutral, they may be kept at the patient's bedside

References and Resources

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