

## Doctor Busts TikTok Health Myths

In an era where social media platforms play a vital role in shaping public opinions, addressing the alarming spread of misinformation surrounding health on TikTok is important. This widely popular video-sharing platform has become a hub for discussions about health trends. However, video creators who are not medical professionals, are contributing to an influx of myths. This can be particularly troubling for young people who may be getting most of their health information online.

Many of the health claims are exaggerated and often incorrect. Dr Babak Ashrafi, a general practitioner from Superdrug Online Doctor has shared expert advice on some of the trending myths.

### [Natural tracking methods are just as effective as hormonal birth control methods](#)

One prevalent myth is the belief that natural tracking methods are equally as effective as hormonal birth control. The University of Delaware published a study in 'Health Communication', revealing that influencers are creating potentially harmful content favouring natural contraceptive methods, while neglecting proven information about the benefits of hormonal birth control.<sup>1</sup> This recent trend discourages women from using contraceptive methods, with over 100 million videos under the hashtag #naturalbirthcontrol.

Dr Babak Ashrafi comments, "It is crucial to recognise that the decision to use or not use birth control is a deeply personal one, and the conversation should encourage informed choices, rather than basing it on fears. Please consult a professional about your different contraception options by heading into a Superdrug store and speaking with a pharmacist."

### **Raw Potato Juice to cure strep throat**

Another myth circling the internet was that 'if you juice a potato and drink it, it cures strep throat right away.' Influencers have shared videos showcasing this supposed remedy, stating anecdotal evidence of its effectiveness.

Dr Babak Ashrafi explains, "Using potato juice to cure strep throat is scientifically baseless and potentially harmful. Strep throat is caused by bacteria and requires appropriate medical treatment, such as antibiotics, to ensure the bacterial infection is dead. It's essential to consult with qualified healthcare professionals for treatment."

### ['Proffee' - Combining protein into coffee drinks to provide energy boost](#)

A recent trend has gone viral on TikTok, advocating the combination of coffee and protein powder as an energy-boosting concoction. However, healthcare professionals are urging caution against blindly following this trend.

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<sup>1</sup> [Emily J. Pfender & M. Marie Devlin \(2023\) What Do Social Media Influencers Say About Birth Control? A Content Analysis of YouTube Vlogs About Birth Control, Health Communication.](#)

Dr Babak Ashrafi comments, “Although a quick energy fix may be tempting, mixing coffee and protein powder may not be suitable for everyone, as the caffeine in coffee can interfere with nutrient absorption, potentially causing digestive issues. It is important to remember that health choices should be based on individual needs and evidence. [Vitamin B12](#) provides a source of energy so I would recommend taking this supplement to help with energy levels.”

### [Crushed up Ibuprofen helps acne](#)

A concerning TikTok myth has been circulating, suggesting that crushing up ibuprofen and applying it as a topical solution, can effectively treat acne. This trend has gained significant traction, with videos reaching up to tens of millions of views. The claim proposes the anti-inflammatory properties of ibuprofen can reduce redness and swelling associated with breakouts.

Dr Babak Ashrafi explains, “Crushed ibuprofen may cause skin irritation or allergic reactions. Furthermore, applying non-prescription medications in unconventional ways could lead to unintended complications. It is crucial to use medications for their intended purpose and consult with healthcare professionals for safe and effective acne treatments.”

“Despite many myths circulating on TikTok, it is essential to acknowledge that this platform is valuable for raising awareness and conversations about health and well-being. Users can benefit from diverse perspectives and personal experiences shared.”

Superdrug Online Doctor has provided a few ways to distinguish reliable information from misinformation:

1. Be wary of shocking claims or miracle cures without scientific backing. Pay attention to the tone and language used, as misinformation can lean towards extremes.
2. Look for transparency in content creators, including disclosure of their qualifications.
3. Look for verified accounts such as health professional Dr Karan Rajan (@dr.karanr) or recognisable healthcare organisations.
4. Be cautious of personal stories presented as facts. Individual experiences may not necessarily apply to everyone.

This way, users can responsibly navigate the platform, using its potential for positive health discussions.

Superdrug is committed to encouraging an environment that is open and understanding around health. Superdrug Online Doctor provides doctor care whenever you need it, anywhere in the UK. For more information please visit: <https://onlinedoctor.superdrug.com/>

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