

Stumbling Down the Road to Health



In every era, people chase the shining ideal of long life and perfect health—but sometimes the tools they use harm more than help. From poisonous pills to deadly drinking water, the next best thing has often been anything but. Choose the correct answers for the questions below:

1. Calomel, made popular by physician and patriot Dr. Benjamin Rush in the late 18th century, was perhaps the most commonly prescribed medicine through the first half of the 19th century. In the 1850s, it was recognized that the most important ingredient, which induced salivation and vomiting, poisoned patients over the long run. What was that ingredient?

- Arsenic
- Mercury
- Strychnine
- Iodine

2. Starting in the 1930s, shoe stores commonly measured children's feet with a new machine. This machine promised to ensure precise fitting of shoes, allowing children's feet room to grow properly. The machines were banned in the 1950s, however, because they used what to measure the feet?

- Sonic vibrations
- X-rays
- Radar
- Adjustable forceps

3. In the 1920s and 1930s, manufacturers of consumer goods identified a new "rejuvenating" and "reinvigorating" ingredient that they added to face cream, lipstick, sunburn cream, toothpaste, and chocolate. Most of these products were made in Europe and imported into the U.S., but they were all eventually banned as health risks. What ingredient caused concern?

- Radium
- Hydrochloric acid
- Human growth hormone
- Citric acid

4. Beginning in 1870, General Augustus J. Pleasanton (1808-1894) publicly promoted bathing in light of a specific color. Pleasanton and his advocates believed the light was a panacea which would cure most ailments and give people supernormal physical and mental powers. From 1875 to 1877, replacing clear glass windowpanes with glass panes tinted this color became a national craze. What color was it?

- Red
- Green
- Blue
- Yellow

5. From 1952 to 1956, manufacturer P. Lorillard sold its brand of Kent cigarettes with special "Micronite" filters. The filters were made of cellulose, acetate, and a third ingredient, intended to increase the cigarettes' ability to deliver less harmful smoke. Instead, this ingredient caused its own health concerns, leading Lorillard to discontinue its use. What was the ingredient?

- Asbestos
- Pulped creosote
- Diatomaceous earth
- Activated charcoal

6. From the 1860s and well into the 20th century, special belts were marketed to men. Designed to be worn around the waist (some with downward extensions), they were supposed to rejuvenate men who felt "weak" in some way. Magnets were sewn into the first belts, but by the 1880s, many belts used something else that aimed to "rejuvenate the flesh." What was it?

- Quartz crystals
- Patterned arrays of tiny steel needles
- Glass disc insulators
- Electrical current

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