



Old Wives' Tales

Dispelling the Myths

While many old wives are quite wise, the tales that we credit them with often have no truth to them at all. In some cases, the myth is dispelled by modern science. For others, common sense is enough.

The Tale

The Truth

A fast prenatal heartbeat means the baby is a girl; a slow heartbeat means it's a boy.

The heart rate is the same for girls and boys. Heart rate may increase after the fetus moves.

If your pregnant belly is protruding and low, it's a girl.

A low, protruding belly is caused by weak abdominal muscles.

Taking castor oil will induce labor.

Castor oil may help you have a bowel movement, but it won't make you go into labor.

A fat baby is a healthy baby.

Unfortunately, fat babies often turn out to be fat adults. Too much fat is unhealthy for anyone.

Solid foods will help a baby sleep through the night.

There's no scientific proof. It's always best to check with your doctor before adding solids to your baby's diet.

Flashbulbs are dangerous to your baby.

Taking flash-pictures of your baby is perfectly safe.

Air conditioning is harmful for a baby.

Babies are not harmed by normal air-conditioned temperatures. In fact, it can help prevent your baby from getting overheated.

Teething causes high fever.

A high temperature, especially one above 101° F, is caused by illness or infection. Call your doctor.

Wearing shoes will help a baby walk sooner.

The opposite is true. If you keep your baby barefoot, her muscles are allowed to strengthen, helping her learn to walk more quickly.

Getting teeth late means there's something wrong.

Each child develops differently, depending on many factors, including heredity.

It's bad luck to give a baby a haircut before 1 year of age.

Luck and hair don't have any bearing on one another.

A baby who's frightened by strangers at about 4 to 6 months will feel insecure and unloved.

A baby frightened by strangers at 4 to 6 months is reacting normally for her age.

If a baby stands too soon, it will cause him to be bowlegged.

If your baby is standing, he's ready. The muscles will develop and strengthen as they need to.

