

# Surprising Uses for Your Stuff

When you're in a pinch, try these expert-suggested remedies—using things you already have around the house!



## Skin Solutions

“**Super glue** is good for repairing small cracks in dry, thick skin, like on the fingertips or the heel. Just be careful not to bond your fingers together! The glue falls off after a few days, but feel free to reapply it as needed. Do not use it on wounds.”

—Wen

“**Honey** is a great first-aid ointment. It's a natural [antibacterial product]. ... That's why honey has such a long shelf life.”

—Brouhard

“**Vegetable shortening** [is] good for use on dry skin: easily spread, inexpensive, hypoallergenic and odor-free. Just apply thinly to affected areas and rub in.” (Not for the face; it may cause pimples.)

—Wen

“After peeling a **cucumber**, rub the inside of the peels on your face to soften and hydrate your skin.”

—Spencer

“**Duct tape** for warts—you may

have heard of this one. It works especially well for those stubborn, bottom-of-the-foot warts.

“What you do is cut out a piece of duct tape just the size of the wart and stick it on there. Leave it alone until it comes off by itself—often a week or more. Repeat if necessary. You can shower as usual; just don't scrub the tape off. It suffocates the wart.

“Don't cut a piece bigger than the wart or you'll suffocate normal skin too and end up with dead, white, prune skin where you don't want it.”

—Spencer

## Patient, Heal Thyself

“Placing a **teabag** ... where a tooth was removed can promote accelerated healing. The tannic acid in the tea is the contributing factor.”

—Knecht

“Tired of thick, yellow toenails? Use **Vicks VapoRub**. Apply a small amount to the nails every night at bedtime. It will take four to 10 months, but the nail will most

likely return to normal, without you spending a ton of money or taking medicines that can irritate your liver. You do need to remove the nail polish from your nail before applying the VapoRub.”

—Grimes

“For stuffy nose/sinus conditions, a quick aid is shredded, peeled **horseradish**. A few short inhales of freshly ground horseradish will clear the sinuses. Be careful not to use too much or breathe in too strongly; you may get a tearful surprise.

“Use a closable container to get multiple uses from the ground product. The vapors will diminish with time and exposure to air.”

—Bryan

“You can use a glass of **milk** to preserve a totally knocked-out tooth—not just a cracked piece. Time is of the essence, but it is possible for a dentist to place the tooth back into the socket. Find the knocked-out tooth and put it in milk to keep it moist. Be careful not to touch the root. Get to the dentist immediately.”

—Gross

“The fiber in **apples** is a natural cleanser and removes/reduces film build-up on teeth.” (They’re not a substitute for brushing, just a good option if you can’t.)

—Gross

## Make Your Own Gym

### ARM WORK:

**Broomstick:** modified pull-ups. Rest the stick on the seats of two chairs. Lie underneath it with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Pull your chest up to it. —Williamson

**Couch arms:** pushups. “The farther back you step, the harder it is!” —Ricupero

**Doorway:** pushups. “Put one hand on each side.” —Vita

**Coffee table, chair, ottoman or bed:** triceps dips. —Vita

### MULTI-USE:

**Chair:** pushups, knee lifts. (Seated, lift knees to chest. Targets stomach and core). —Dimmick

**Wall:** 90-degree squat holds and pushups. —Fox

**Soccer ball or basketball:** Use for pushups; pass back and forth or toss against the wall to work the chest; hold overhead while performing crunches; dribble to get the heart rate up. —Fox

### FREE WEIGHTS:

**Plastic bottles filled with water:** 1 gallon is about 8 pounds. —Rubenstein

**Large bag of dog food:** Carry it up stairs. —Rubenstein

**Sock filled with sand, beans or rice:** Tie around ankle for leg lifts or glute kickbacks. —Fox

**Tennis ball:** Squeeze for grip strength. —Fox

### STRETCHING AND MASSAGE:

**Towel:** “Wrap around foot to stretch calves or hamstrings. Hold overhead

in both hands for overhead stretch.” Then bend to the side, lowering one arm and reaching the other over your head. Reverse to stretch the other side. —Fox

**Tennis ball:** Sit or lie on it and slowly roll it back and forth over tight muscle areas. Try the feet, calves, hamstrings and rear. For the upper back, “when you find the areas of greatest tension ... rest your body-weight over the ball so that it digs into the tense spot” for 30 to 60 seconds. Don’t roll directly on the spine. —Kerbel

**Two tennis balls:** Put them in a sock with a knot tied between. Place on the wall or floor. Position your lower or upper back on them with the knot where your spine is. (It shouldn’t press on the spine.) Use them for a roller massage. —Dimmick

## Two ways to make a quick splint:

**With a pillow:** Wrap it around the injury. “You can use some sort of cloth—anything from an ace bandage to a pillowcase to a bed sheet—to secure the pillow above and below the injury.”

—Lynch

**With a cardboard box:** “Bend the cardboard into a tray, and set the arm or leg into it. Wrap or tape it into place.”

—Brouhard

“Make sure the victim can wiggle her fingers or toes before and after splinting her broken bone,” Brouhard cautions.

Lynch says only consider a do-it-yourself splint “if there’s no difficulty breathing or further life threats, including excessive bleeding.” The pillow splint won’t provide full support, he says, but could help relieve pain.

## The Experts

**Rod Brouhard, EMT-P**, paramedic, Modesto, Calif.; About.com’s Guide to First Aid

**Dennis Bryan R.Ph., M.B.A., FAPhA**, pharmacist, WBC Pharmacies Inc., Chicago, Ill.

**Sara Dimmick, NSCA-CSCS**, personal trainer, triathlon coach and owner, Physical Equilibrium, New York City, with online triathlon and marathon coaching at [www.physeq.com](http://www.physeq.com)

**Becky Fox, ACE-CPT/GFI**, personal trainer and owner, Fox Fitness, Knoxville, Tenn., and online at [www.foxfitness.com](http://www.foxfitness.com)

**Jill Grimes, M.D.**, board-certified family doctor, Austin, Texas; author, *Seductive Delusions: How everyday people catch STDs*

**Jeffrey Gross, D.D.S., FAGD**, board-certified general and cosmetic dentist, A Healthy Smile, Eastlake, Ohio

**Yudi Kerbel, NASM-CPT**, personal trainer, Performance University, Baltimore, Md.

**Alex Knecht, CRDTS**, board-certified dentist, Clear Creek Dental, Fort Collins, Colo.; dental expert, JustAnswer, [www.justanswer.com](http://www.justanswer.com)

**Brian Lynch, NYS EMT-B (first lieutenant)**, Congers-Valley Cottage Volunteer Ambulance Corps, Congers, N.Y.

**Jennifer Ricupero, AFAA-CPT**, fitness and recreation manager, Green Mountain at Fox Run women’s health retreat, Ludlow, Vt.

**Irv Rubenstein, Ph.D., ACSM-CPT, NSCA-CSCS, ACE-CPT**, personal trainer and owner, STEPS, Nashville, Tenn.

**Peggy Spencer, M.D.**, board-certified family doctor, University of New Mexico Student Health And Counseling center; co-author, *50 Ways to Leave Your 40s*

**James B. Towry, D.O.**, board-certified dermatologist, Jonesboro, Ark.

**Lynn Pesce Vita, NASM-CPT**, fitness trainer, PumpOne online training, [www.pumpone.com](http://www.pumpone.com)

**Stanley Wen, M.D.**, board-certified family doctor, Sage Health Family Medicine, Goodyear, Ariz.

**Becky Williamson, M.S., ACSM-HFI/CPT, AAHFRP-PRCS**, fitness trainer and president, lifeSport Fitness, San Jose, Calif., specializing in Baby Boomer fitness