Vaccines, vitamins, microwaves and other health myths. Do they do it right or do it wrong? premium

February 09, 2019 446

Vera Novais

They spread at the speed of a rumor and have become the convictions of those who think they perceive health very much, but have no idea what you are saying. In a book, surgeon Nina Shapiro puts the points on the is.

"Once I was asked if taking the tonsils [in the back of the mouth] and the adenoids [in the nasal cavities] was going to make the child no longer have children in the future," says Nina Shapiro . Needless to say, one thing is not related to the other, but this type of doubts - and the many other misinformation she hears in the consultations - prompted the American surgeon to write her first book on myths in the area of health. "I felt that this book really had to be written. In recent years, the market for health myths has exploded and a book needs to be put in place, "he tells the Observer.

Nina Shapiro has more than 20 years of experience in clinical and academic medicine, but only in the last five years has she begun to realize the number of myths and misconceptions that existed in science and health. What worries her is that, over the years, these **myths have become increasingly prevalent, in an increasingly rapid way** . The myth that vaccines cause autism was one of the first to reach the limelight 21 years ago. It was unmasked as a fraud after 12 years, but the damage was done, as seen by the outbreak of vaccine-preventable diseases - starting with measles.

"Part of what has happened is due to the overload of fast information on the Internet, including social networks, message platforms or *chat* groups , where information is confused with misinterpreted views or data," says the Observer. book "Does well or does evil?", edited by the Author's Club, and released last week in Portugal. Another of the issues raised by Nina Shapiro is growing distrust in science and government-funded agencies - at least in the United States.

Despite the excess of information there are still people who make decisions based on incomplete or completely wrong information. The doctor gives examples: parents who give children nuts because they are healthy, but they do not know that they risk choking; pregnant women who still believe that microwaves cause a cleft palate; the fever of wanting everything free of gluten, until now (which, by the way, should not even have to say on the label); or the myths that still haunt the vaccines, related to potential toxic components and the onset of autism.

> "I'll be honest: sometimes the patients get on my nerves with the questions that start with" Believe in ...? " Then I want to interrupt them and question them: "In the Easter Bunny? In ghosts? In the tooth fairy? " These are all beliefs. But medicine is not a belief. I practice it on the basis of evidence. "
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> "Is it good or bad?", Nina Shapiro

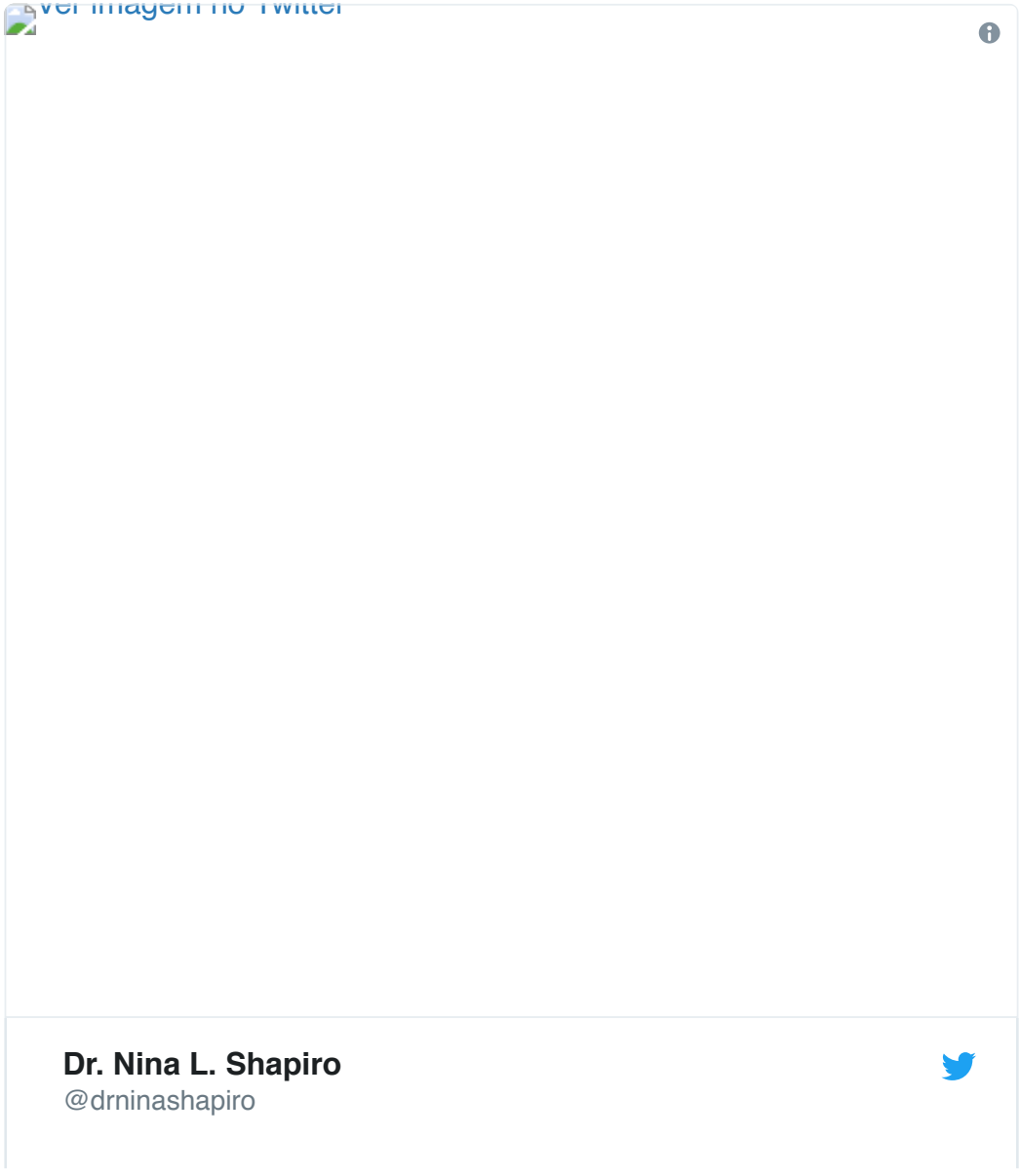
Information is much, but not all good

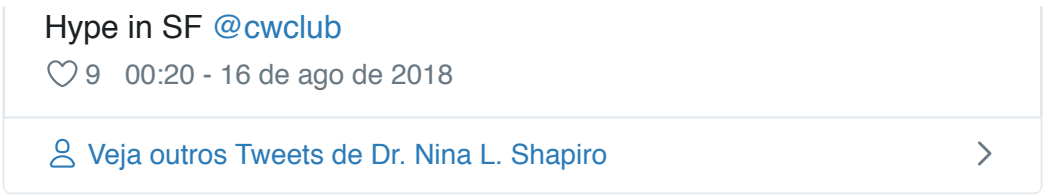
"I find health-related myths everywhere," says the surgeon. In consultations with patients, in conversations with family and friends, at parties and events, wherever. "Although I hate talking about stereotypes, people who talk about myths tend to be very conscientious about health and have some knowledge of health and well-being." The problem is when they are convinced that what little they know is a lot. This problem has also been identified by a team of American researchers: **the extreme opponents of science are the ones who know less about it, but think they are the ones who know best** , they concluded. The results of this research, this time focused on beliefs about genetically modified foods, were published in the journal Nature Human Behavior.

"Access to information is overwhelming. Patients ask questions that are more focused, more informed, more pertinent, and know the details about medical care that many doctors of the past did not know, "writes the author in the book. "But this knowledge can be distorted." The worst, it goes on, is that although universities have access to scientific articles, **many physicians only have access to the same information as patients** . If they are not judgmental, they may incur

the same mistakes, warns the professor at the University of California, Los Angeles.

The doctor tells the Observer that it is constantly being questioned by the patients in the consultations. "I used to get really upset, especially when I knew the information was ridiculous." Then he gradually changed the approach. First, many of these myths are more related to wellness, like *spas* : they do not have much scientific evidence, but people say they feel better. Later, and on matters really related to health, Nina Shapiro **learned that responding negatively only distances people** . "Now I begin to dig up some questions to see how far they go with the information they have and with the thought process. Then I can address every absurd question. "





Parents worry about the wrong things

Nina Shapiro is a pediatric surgeon and otolaryngologist, ie, treats ear, nose and throat disorders of children, often small children, and often undergoing surgery. And, of course, there are situations that mark it. "I will never forget a 15-month-old baby I treated a few years ago," he wrote in the book. The baby had a flat cough and the parents went to the pediatrician, but when he recommended having an x-ray, they did not accept it, they did not want to subject the baby to radiation. They only did it a week later, when the cough got worse.

At that time, they discovered that the child had a piece of cashew to obstruct one of his lungs and had to be operated on. But the parents did not want to, they feared the risks of the surgery. By the time they finally came in, it had been several days, the baby's condition had worsened, and the surgery was more risky with each passing day. All this would have been avoided - X-rays, surgery and near death - if the parents had followed the recommendation **not to give dry fruits to children under five** . But what shocked the doctor was the question that followed: the family wanted to know if they could continue to give them these nuts because they were a source of protein.

"I will never forget that day," he tells the Observer. A healthy and well-groomed child nearly died unnecessarily because parents "were having confused information access to what was healthy and not." Because they were vegetarians, they wanted to give protein and omega-3s to children, but they were unaware of the risk of choking. In addition, they also did not vaccinate children, "which was also a potential risk." **"It was on that day that I decided to write the book," he says.**

> "In the US, every five days, a child chokes on food, but few people realize this unless they work in my area. Most of these children are less than five years old and the most frequent danger of suffocation comes from nuts. "
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> "Is it good or bad?", Nina Shapiro

On lists of inverted priorities and **notions of risk** , Nina Shapiro gives more examples in the book: "At my children's school, for example, I often hear parents worried, to the point of obsession, with handwashing. Of course, it's important, do not get me wrong. However, these parents do not vaccinate their children. " These are the same parents who "participate in demonstrations in favor of banning any kind of plastic or styrofoam, while driving a SUV [high-octane car]," he continues. "Some people worry about not eating foods that are not organic and that have artificial colors, but send text messages while driving and occasionally forget to wear seat belts."

Trust or not trust medicine

The doctor confirms that she sees in people a growing tendency to distrust science and medicine, but then **trust easily any celebrity who makes health and well-being suggestions that are not without foundation** and may even be risky - actress Gwyneth Paltrow has been a good example of this, with the lawsuit over the vaginal cleansing eggs (which she has recommended and that have no scientific evidence) to be one of the last controversial cases.

"These non-medical 'influencers' often sell products like supplements, crystals, and expensive clothes. The lifestyle (and beauty) of these

celebrities is seductive and people feel they might look or live as well as celebrities if they buy their products, "he tells the Observer.

On the other side are claims such as "doctor-recommended," "clinically proven," or "studies demonstrate," that so many people trust and can both have as much meaning as none at all. As a rule, it is companies that take advantage of medical language and research that exists (albeit remotely related) to exaggerate the arguments for product promotion. " **True studies do not apply these arguments to the results** , given that in medicine, nothing is clinically definitively proven, even if a large study says it was," the doctor wrote.

For Nina Shapiro, however, **one of the biggest problems comes when doctors or health professionals themselves disclose information or practices that are not science-based** . "This is more disconcerting than anyone else spreading myths," he tells the Observer. "Doctors take an oath not to harm. And spreading false information is to cause harm, "he continues. "Many of us in medicine and science are trying to put a stop to it, but it is not an easy task."

Médicos querem pseudoterapia fora dos consultórios

A Ordem dos Médicos e a congénere espanhola assinaram uma declaração conjunta com 10 recomendações para políticos, autoridades de saúde, médicos e media sobre as pseudoterapias.

Por Vera Novais

Ler artigo Partilhar artigo

Is it good or bad after all?

The Observer has chosen **seven** food and health **myths** you can find in Nina Shapiro's book, which she also writes regularly for Forbes

magazine.

Do energy drinks have the same effect?

They are common in gyms, among students and even in shopping for those who need to feel more energetic, but **Nina Shapiro says that "sports drinks, protein ribs and energy bars are just conjectures"**. And it explains: from the mouth go to the stomach and then to the intestine; part is eliminated in the faeces, another part in the urine, and very little actually reaches the organs. That is why people, after surgery, do not ingest liquids to restore the balance of fluids and minerals, but receive them directly into the blood. "When someone receives intravenous fluids, the contents enter directly into the vascular system, passing from the veins to the arteries through the heart, and then into the other organs of the body, where fluid and electrolyte absorption takes place. Some blood vessels go to the kidneys, which filter the dispensable fluids and electrolytes, which we then expel through the urine. "

Does using the microwaves cause the cleft palate in babies?

The cleft palate is called the situation where the upper lip did not attach to the roof of the mouth before birth and left a void in the middle of the face. "It is proven that prenatal taking of folic acid supplements substantially reduces the risk of this anomaly; however, **a broad genetic component remains that has little to do, or nothing at all, with the mother's exposure to microwaves or the intake of supplements, "** the doctor writes. Still, and without knowing why, there are several groups to argue that it is the exposure of pregnant women to microwaves (appliances) that increases the likelihood of the baby being born with a cleft palate.

Are vaccines toxic?

"Vaccines are no more toxic to the body nor a greater burden to the immune system than the current exposures of daily life , **"** the doctor notes in the book. "Babies are daily exposed to millions of

bacteria and viruses - starting at the time of birth." And there's nothing you can do (or should) do about it because it's even good that the immune system is put to the test with these exposures.

Some of the components used in vaccines - such as thimerosal (ethylmercury) and formaldehyde to prevent contamination in some vaccines, or aluminum to increase efficiency in some cases - are constantly in the sights of those who reject vaccination. Therefore, Nina Shapiro decided to explain the real risks of each of these components. The mercury molecule that can cause cerebral palsy, developmental delays and other disorders in children is not the same as that used in vaccines. And the concentration of mercury is higher in some fish than it ever was in vaccines. Regarding aluminum and formaldehyde, although toxic in large quantities, the concentration in vaccines is much lower than that to which we are exposed in nature.**"One pear contains 60 times more formaldehyde than a vaccine."**

Anti-vacinação entre as 10 maiores ameaças à saúde

Na lista da Organização Mundial de Saúde contam-se também bactérias resistentes a antibióticos, poluição e alterações climáticas ou doenças como ébola, dengue e VIH.

Por Vera Novais

Ler artigo Partilhar artigo

Is okra a good food against cancer?

The cooking salt is composed of two atoms: chlorine and sodium. When combined, they appear harmless (except for high consumption and hypertension), but when separated they can be fatal: chlorine is used as a pool disinfectant and sodium, in contact with water, can cause a laboratory to explode. Nina Shapiro uses the example to say that not everything that is bad in the laboratory, continues to be outside of it.

And all this to get to another point: not everything that works in the laboratory will work in the human body. Thus, **"only because a substance present in okra has been found to abrogate human breast cancer cells *in vitro* (in a glass Petri dish), this does not mean that okra is a proven cancer drug . "**

What is natural is good?

There are words to which a negative connotation is automatically attributed, either as a chemical or as an additive, but at the opposite extreme one is blindly reliant on what is said to be natural or biological. But neither are so bad, nor are the others so good. **"To assume that natural and biological is equal to 'safe' is unfortunate; the natural ingredients can also be toxic,** "warns the author in the book. "Poison ivy is natural and, ultimately, we do not think of wiping it on the skin." Moreover, the FDA has no regulation on the use of these terms.

Do We Need To Take Vitamin Supplements?

"I take a multivitamin every day. And vitamin C. When I have a cold, I lose my head and I take two vitamins C. And I even take vitamin D and calcium when I'm standing there , " confesses Nina Shapiro, joining all Americans (about half of adults in the United States) who regularly take a multivitamin, or other vitamin or mineral supplement. The doctor, who is also only human, reveals however why he does it: by the placebo effect (it is not a real drug, but people feel as if it were). Scientifically, he knows that he does nothing, but feels "healthier". "However, I will not take exaggerated doses of anything and will never rely on vitamin supplements to support true nutritional health or well-being."

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University have shown that the money Americans spend on vitamin supplements would be better spent on real sources of vitamins such as fruits, vegetables, healthy carbohydrates and dairy products, says the author. Furthermore, research has shown that

multivitamins do not reduce the risk of cancer or heart disease and do not reduce the risk of mental decline - whether slow thinking or memory loss . Worse, supplementation in beta-carotene and vitamin E in particular may even be harmful, significantly increasing the risk of cancer.

Is bottled water better than tap water?

"Bottled water costs two thousand times more than tap water," writes the surgeon. " **The irony is that most of the bottled water is from the faucet, just less healthy , based on studies that show that some harmful chemicals in the plastic can contaminate it."** And this if we think about direct health alone. Indirectly, all the plastic

that contaminates the environment will ultimately affect us as well. In fact, we are already eating microplastics just because we eat fish caught on the high seas.

In addition, there are still two other disadvantages of bottled water, says Nina Shapiro: it is not subject to the same type of control and inspection as tap water; and eliminates, in the filtration, the fluorides, important in the prevention of the caries infantile. "As with most deficits in a new market, the bottled water industry has found a new angle and has begun selling 'fluoride-bottled water' as if this were a bonus, with labeling directed at children," he says, referring to the solution found by the companies.

When she wrote the book, Nina Shapiro focused on the topics that were most relevant at the time, but which would remain on the agenda even after the book was published. Shortly after writing the book, the wellness industry has exploded and the author regrets not writing more about it. Are you interested in writing another book? "Clear. Stay tuned. "

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