

MYTH CONCEPTIONS

“Common knowledge” is frequently wrong. Here are some examples of things that many people believe but, according to our sources, just aren't true.

Myth: St. Patrick was Irish.

Truth: The patron saint of Ireland was actually born in Scotland in the late 4th century. When he was a teenager, Palladius (his real name) was kidnapped and sold into slavery in Ireland. Six years later, he escaped and went back to Scotland, where he joined a monastery. As an adult, Palladius returned to Ireland as a missionary, where he lived for 40 years, dying in A.D. 461 (And he didn't drive away any snakes—there weren't any.)

Myth: Jogging will wear out your knees.

Truth: Quite the opposite, actually. According to an 18-year study by Stanford University (from 1984 to 2002), running and jogging on a regular basis will make your knees stronger and your joints better lubricated. So if you go jogging and your knees hurt, most likely it's because you're out of shape or there's a preexisting problem that you're aggravating.

Myth: Greco-Roman architecture and statues were white.

Truth: They may look white now, but ancient traces of pigment have been detected on many of these structures, leading archeologists to believe that buildings like the famed Parthenon were probably *very* colorfully and elaborately painted.

Myth: Florida's Everglades is a giant swamp.

Truth: The Everglades is actually a very slow-moving river, 60 miles wide and 100 miles long. It flows from Lake Okeechobee and lets out in the Florida Bay.

Myth: The phrase “up to par” means a task has been performed satisfactorily, but not great—more like “average.”

Fact: In golf, where this phrase comes from, *par* refers to the score an expert golfer should achieve on a hole. So if you perform a task

Vitamin D is the only vitamin that is a hormone.

“up to par,” it technically means you’ve done it perfectly, without making a single error—which is a lot better than “average.”

Myth: The popular Christmas carol contains the yuletide phrase “God rest you, merry gentleman.”

Truth: The comma is in the wrong place. The original phrase, which dates to the 1400s, was “God rest you merry, gentlemen.” The phrase “God rest you merry” uses *rest* not in the sense of “relaxing,” but more like the phrase *rest assured*. So in essence, the song is saying, “May God keep you merry, gentlemen.”

Myth: Searing meat seals in the juices.

Truth: If searing truly did create a seal, the fluid inside would boil and your steak would pop like a big piece of popcorn. Browning (or searing) the outside of your meat in a pan before baking it actually removes some of the moisture, which makes the meat a little bit drier...but also a lot tastier.

Myth: Buddha was fat.

Truth: He was thin. The man who we know today as Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, lived 2,500 years ago in India. No pictures of him exist, but he was said to be “tall and slender.” Other men after him have also been given the title *Buddha*, which means “one who has achieved a state of perfect enlightenment.” The portlier version, known as the “laughing Buddha,” was a 10th-century A.D. Chinese folk hero known as Budai.

Myth: In Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, when Juliet stands on the balcony and asks, “Wherefore art thou, Romeo?” she is looking for him.

Truth: In Elizabethan times, *wherefore* meant “why,” so Juliet was asking, “Why are you Romeo?” She was lamenting the fact that he came from a rival family, forcing them to keep their love a secret.

Myth: You “sweat out toxins” when you exercise.

Truth: Sweat’s one-and-only duty is to cool off the body. As such, it’s made up of water and trace minerals. Toxins are processed through the liver and kidneys and then excreted during what you are most likely doing right now.

The first airplane to fly across the United States took 49 days to do it.