



Pliny the Elder's Health Tips

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Martok

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This is about Pliny the Elder. He was a naturalist and author as well as naval and army commander of the early Roman Empire. During his lifetime he wrote a bunch of books, including a 37-volume encyclopedia called *Naturalis Historia*. (That means Natural History.)

He mentions goats hundreds of times in his encyclopedia. Here are some things he said. Aren't you glad he isn't your doctor? I'm glad I wasn't a goat back then!

Cures for Babies

"The brain of a she-goat, passed through a golden ring, is given drop by drop by the Magi to babies, before they are fed with milk, to guard them from epilepsy and other diseases of babies. Restless babies, especially girls, are quietened by an amulet of goat's dung wrapped in a piece of cloth."

Cures for Snakebite

"The fumes of the burning horns or hair of a she-goat will repel serpents, they say: the ashes, too, of the horns, used either internally or externally, are thought to be an antidote to their poison...persons who find that they are recovering but slowly from injuries inflicted by a serpent, will find their health more speedily re-established by frequenting the stalls where goats are kept. Those, however, whose object is a more assured remedy, attach immediately to the wound the paunch of a she-goat killed for the purpose, dung and all. Others, again, use the flesh of a kid just killed, and fumigate it with the singed hair, the smell of which has the effect of repelling serpents."

Dental Hygiene

"It is, considered...a very efficacious remedy to wash the teeth with goats' milk, or bull's gall. The pastern-bones of a she-goat just killed, reduced to ashes, and indeed, to avoid the necessity for repetition, of any other four-footed beast reared in the farmyard, are considered to make an excellent dentifrice."

Cures for a Stiff Neck

"For the painful cramp, attended with inflexibility, to which people give the name of 'opisthotony,' the urine of a she-goat, injected into the ears, is found very useful; as also a liniment made of the dung of that animal, mixed with bulbs."

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