Opening extract from

Why Eating Bogeys is Good for You

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Is eating bogeys bad for you?

According to statistics, only 3 per cent of people eat their own bogeys. I say *only* because, if I'm honest, I've always eaten mine and I've often caught my sons having a quick nibble too. Are we really that unusual or, as I suspect, are most people just too embarrassed to own up?

Well, all that may change if an Austrian doctor named Dr Friedrich Bischinger has his way. He says that people who pick their noses are healthier, happier and probably better in tune with their bodies than people who don't.

At this point, I should mention that the main risk of picking your nose is not the dirt you might find there but the dirt you might introduce, which could subsequently enter your body. So, if you're going to pick your nose, make sure you do it with clean fingers.

Having issued a health warning, let me now return to Dr Bischinger, who says, 'With the finger you can get to places you just can't reach with a handkerchief, keeping your nose far cleaner. And eating the dry remains of what you pull out is a great way of strengthening the body's immune system. Medically, it makes great sense and is a perfectly natural thing to do. In terms of the immune system, the nose is a filter in which a great deal of bacteria is collected, and when this mixture arrives in the intestines, it works just like a medicine. I would recommend a new approach where children

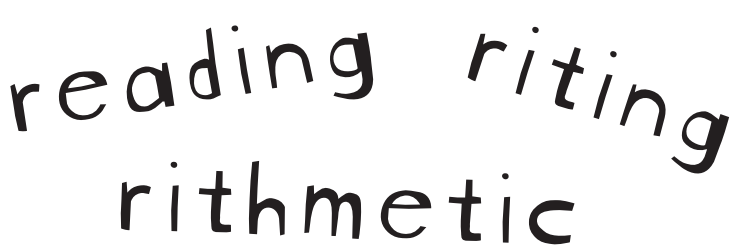
are *encouraged* to pick their nose. It is a completely natural response and medically a good idea as well.'

So there you have it: you *can* eat your own bogeys. But don't tell Mum and Dad I said so.

NB: However, you shouldn't eat your own earwax. This isn't good stuff.

How did Reading, Writing and Arithmetic come to be known as 'the three Rs', when only one begins with R?

Fair question – especially as you'd expect something to do with education to be correct. The dictionary defines the three Rs as an 'expression for reading, (w)riting, and (a)rithmetic – the fundamentals of an education'. In fact, it turns out to have been coined for real (but in error) by Sir William Curtis, an early-19th-century Lord Mayor of London, at the end of a speech in favour of elementary education. Sir William was bad at spelling, and genuinely thought all three words started with the letter R!



Is it true that one human year equals seven dog years?

Sort of, but it's misleading, because there's no way that a 14-year-old dog is like a 98-year-old human. How many 98-year-olds do you know who can chase after balls and return sticks?

That's why dog experts have devised another way of equating human years with dog years. What they say is that the first dog year equals 21 human years, and every subsequent dog year equals just four human years.

This produces the following table:

DOG AGE	HUMAN EQUIVALENT
1	21
2	25
3	29
4	33
5	37
6	41
7	45
8	49
9	53
10	57
11	61
12	65
13	69
14	73

That looks more sensible, though I still don't know many 73-year-olds who can chase after balls and return sticks . . .

Rivers flow into the sea, so how come rivers are freshwater but the sea is saltwater?

I think about this question every time I take my boat down the river Arun into the sea: is there a point where the water goes from fresh to salty? If the harbour entrance were not so choppy (because of the sea hitting the walls) and there weren't so many people around, I'd like to take some samples and see for myself. Fortunately, thanks to geographer Joe Finlay, it isn't necessary.

'The sea is salty because for over three billion years it has taken salty minerals from the earth's crust. As a result, there is a huge quantity of salt left in the water – so much that if all the seas in the world dried up, the amount of salt left behind would be enough to build a wall of salt round the equator 150 miles high and one mile thick.'

OK, I've got that, but what about the river water flowing into it?

'The rivers are made up of rainwater, which is fresh, and river water only *becomes* salty once it flows into the sea. At the point where the river is closest to the sea – at the estuary – the water is more "brackish", or saltier. The important thing to remember is that rivers flow into seas – and not the other way round.'