

## Time to Take Your Medicine?

When I was a kid, it seemed I was forever coming down with bronchitis, a sinus infection, or some other upper respiratory illness each of which involved coughing, sneezing, wheezing -- and plenty of snot. When it came to "snotty-nosed kids," I was the poster child! My pediatrician seemed to have two "go to" medicines he would prescribe for just such occasions. I don't remember their names -- I just knew them as the *red medicine* and the *yellow medicine*.

It is no surprise to me that many kids grow up with drug problems today. Many of the medicines doctors prescribe for kids have delicious flavors like grape, cherry, raspberry or bubble-gum. Consequently kids grow up with the mistaken impression that medicines are just another type of dessert or candy to be taken and enjoyed whenever and wherever. I can assure you, there was never any danger I would have any desire to ingest the *red medicine* or *yellow medicine* at any time other than when I was sick -- and then only at gunpoint or if I was approaching death.

The *red medicine* tasted bad. I remember my mother trying various tricks to get me to swallow the 1-2 teaspoonfuls twice daily. Drinking water after taking this medicine just would not cut it -- the taste lingered. Orange juice seemed to be the best thing to almost neutralize the horrible taste of this red liquid... but even then, the orange juice sort of "averaged" with the *red medicine* to create its own new flavor -- a red-med-flavored-OJ after-taste. I would gag for a while, but finally I would recover. *Red medicine* was bad, but as I discovered, there are worse things.

There are no words I can use to adequately describe the taste of the *yellow medicine*. If there are words to describe this taste, I'm pretty sure they should not be spoken aloud anywhere near children or small pets. I remember having to summon all the internal willpower I could muster to choke down the *yellow medicine*. I cried -- I screamed -- I rolled around on the floor in protest! My mother was patient and would always outlast me, and I would finally resign myself to take my medicine (probably after she gave me a series of ultimatums). I remember -- after balking several times -- haltingly allowing the spoonful of yellow liquid offered from my mother's loving hand to enter my mouth and feeling the immediate urge to vomit. I gagged! I choked!

I often wondered why the cure was worse than the disease -- I mean, bronchitis (or the disease of the week) was not nearly as bad as the *yellow medicine*! I also wondered if this was the genius behind the *yellow medicine* -- that it really wasn't a medicine at all -- just a sort of foul-tasting concoction created by doctors to cause your body to force the disease out so that you would not have to continue being subjected to this horrible "cure." I found out in later years there is a medicine called Syrup of Ipecac -- used to induce vomiting -- and I wondered at times if this syrup had a yellow color?

As bad as these medicines tasted, somehow I survived into adulthood. And I suppose the *red medicine* and *yellow medicine* must have served their purposes. Today I only occasionally get upper-respiratory sicknesses and rarely get bronchitis. But more than that, I think taking these nasty-tasting medicines in childhood helped prepare me for bigger challenges I would face later in life.

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From time to time, we come upon situations where we have no choice but to buckle down and “take our medicine” in order to get through a situation -- and hopefully to find healing on the other side. When facing these kinds of trials, I often remember the *red medicine* and *yellow medicine* -- and I know “I can do this!” Then I pour a tall glass of orange juice, close my eyes, open my mouth, take my medicine, and hope for the best!

For those taking your medicine today -- I know sometimes it tastes absolutely terrible. But my prayer for you is healing and better days on the other side!

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