

Something in the Medicine

The Vicks Company makes a fine line of syrups, salves and potions designed to make one feel much better, even if they still are nothing but living snotrags for a short time.

Together, they can do much more than their intended purposes and creators thought. I wrote to the Vicks Company to express my personal satisfaction with their products, a long time ago before another multibillion, multinational corporation purchased them.

They responded with a nice letter, and a week and a half later, with a box containing large-sized bottles of all of their products and smaller ones of new products on their way to grocery stores, department stores and phamarcies near me.

I was introduced to the first of Vicks' products in an unusual way. I had my first asthmatic attack at age 11. I had no clue as to what was happening to me, except that my throat now was making a large, loud hasping sound and that I was having problems breathing.

My Scoutmaster, Douglas Lovett (we called him "Lovett to leave it!" for some reason...I guess it was because "Leave it to Beaver" was on and he looked like a grown-up "Beaver Cleaver") took out a Vicks' VaporRub nose inhaler from his pocket. He then cleaned it with a cloth, and then told me to suck on this white object designed for insertion into one's snotty nose.

"I ain't doing that!" I screamed. "Gross!"

"Then keep on hacking, okay, Mike??" He wasn't going to force me into doing it, but rather to shame me... I took the object and before I placed it in my mouth, he reminded me "It's clean. I didn't even use it today!"

I placed the cylinder into my mouth and started sucking. The vapors - - whatever Vicks uses -- started to fill my lungs, and almost immediately I stopped hasping. I could feel the coolness as I continued to suck down the menthol into my lungs. Lovett then held my nose shut, pinching them as tightly as he could as he told me what he was doing. "Hold your breath for a minute, okay? The stuff has to stay down there, not come out!"

I took over holding my nose shut, looking at the other Boy Scouts surrounding me, trying to find out what was going on and why I had this white thing shoved into my mouth. Was it an initiation? Was it a sexual ploy? Was it just plain weird??

A minute passed, and my Scoutmaster told me to remove the tube and un-pinch my nose. I gladly gave him back the tube and he said, "Aw, keep it. You might need it again some other time." The first chance I got, I threw that sucker away!

But, thanks to a Scoutmaster who also was a medic in an infantry unit - and a fellow asthmatic - as well as to the Vicks Company, I felt much better!

I would chew Vicks' cough drops -- the cherry ones are the best -- as if they were candies. My favorite winter treat is to have a hot mug of coffee and chew up two cherry drops. Then I would drink the coffee...ahhhh...the cool feeling of winter in the bottom of my throat!! I really enjoyed the triangular-shaped tablets in this manner -- a cheap thrill for under a buck!

Every time I would get a chest cold, my mother would apply VaporRub to my chest and tell me to get a tee shirt and put it in the dryer for ten minutes and then put it on. After I placed the warm tee-shirt on against my cooling skin -- thanks again to whatever the Vicks company places into their product -- she would apply a little of the VaporRub against my top lip, next to my nostrils, and tell me to go to bed. "And cover up good and warm," she would say.

The next morning, I would wake up having to empty my body from every opening I could empty on my own but I would feel so much better. The shirt would remain on until I took a shower and then it would be soaked, rung out, and later washed with the other clothing.

My youngest son once had a severe cold - one of the worst I've ever seen in a child. My wife scolded me about putting VaporRub on his chest. "You don't know what you're doing!" she explained.

The primary care physician earlier was too busy to see AJ. He simply said "Look, give him some Tylenol, keep him warm and call me in the morning if things don't get better! Or bring him into the emergency room!" We couldn't afford the emergency room prices, so to me, the VaporRub was going to work -- it had to work. "It can't hurt and besides, Millie...it works for me, remember??"

I had her to apply that VaporRub stuff onto my chest the week before (which is probably where AJ got his cold from!) which eventually became the start of some interesting sexual play between wife and husband. It worked, and partly because of the sex play and partly because of the ingredients in the VaporRub, my cold went away and I felt several times better! (Just be careful where you put that stuff, though!!)

The VaporRub, a warmed shirt (warmed by an iron, for at the time we didn't have a dryer), and having him bundled up and me rocking him (and me) to sleep worked for AJ. He woke up in the morning, drenched, his body emptied out from all directions (good thing for blankets!) but feeling so much better, he started to babble for the first time.

Perhaps the most interesting of all of the Vicks products, is the syrup called "Formula 44". In various "concentrations", Formula 44 will make one cough, keep one from coughing, allow one to rest without having to wipe or blow their noses, or allow for unlimited amount of mucus to form. Each one has an associated letter to it - D, M, C, and S - that tells the consumer what it will do, kinda. Formula 44-D is the best.

That's the one that works TOO well.

I had my current wife -- my girlfriend at the time -- to go out and get a bottle when I was too ill to get to the store and purchase it myself. I had her to write it down because she couldn't remember the numbers.

"You take 22, right??" She could hear the sigh over the phone. "Hell, I don't know what all of that stuff you take is...Geezo, Mike...its only cough syrup!"

"No, it's 44-D. Formula 44-D", I told her. "Vicks makes it."

One dose of the elixir puts an end to hacking coughs, dries up the sinuses, and makes it easy to handle noises. It is non-narcotic, so it is safe to use more often than the bottle says, even without a doctor's confirmation. However, if you are a male and you are taking this medication, beware of something that the Vicks Company does NOT tell you about:

In the words of my wife, "It makes your wee-wee soft and unusable in it's intended purposes."

In other words, it makes one temporary inpotent. At least it does me!

Sure enough, within 24 hours of taking the medicine, there was no getting anything from me. One of the ingredients -- don't ask me, I'm not a chemist and can't even play one on TV; I just know that it's SOMETHING IN THE MEDICINE and not in me -- inhibits the brain's chemistry and tells everything to "slow down".

"You really can't do it, can you?" my gal inquired the evening after I took my first dose of Formula 44. "No", I responded, half-embarrassed and half-surprised. Normally, all it took was for her to come into the bedroom in one of her gowns, and I'm "off to the races." Because I was so ill, I expected a little "assistance" in getting ready to "run". Even with the assistance...nothing.

"I'm going to have to remember this," she giggled, "when I don't want you to bother me, I'll just slip a little of this into your coffee and..."

"Don't you dare!!" I yelled. "It's bad enough I'm not feeling well!!!"

Twenty-four hours after the last dose, I'm back to normal in all ways possible. Even better, according to the mate. For some additional reason, and again don't quote me on this, the medicine makes one's blood flow a little better. Viagra in a bottle ...only time-delayed! The opposite occurred...I couldn't "turn it off" once she got it going!

The Vicks Company does make a lot of products that helps men and women enjoy life a little better. Of course, they also make products like Nyquil and Dayquil that are nothing more than liquor in a small container. As a former residence hall director, I had to remove the Dayquil from "gimme boxes" given to each new resident in my hall. Not because the product doesn't work; if used as directed on the container, it does make it easier for one to go about their daily living while suffering from a cold or the flu.

It also, if taken in larger quantities, can make a person drunker than a skunk; and because not everyone is ill at the same time, the incidences of abuse of the product are high. So we removed the opportunity for abuse. I did let the Vicks Company know about that too, and they rewarded me by sending me a case of Nyquil and Dayquil.

I gave it away to a health clinic downtown. I did, however, keep the free coupons good for a future purchase of Vicks VaporRub and Formula 44 (my choice of 'flavor'). One may never know when they'll need it!