

Standard (Simple) Herbal Remedies

Infusions & Decoctions - An infusion is basically an herbal tea made with a specific herb to help an ailment. It is simple to prepare and can be quite comforting!

Prepare by adding 1 to 2 teaspoons of a dried herb (or 2 to 4 teaspoons of a fresh herb) to one cup of boiling water. Infuse (steep) for 10 minutes before straining. If left too long, the infusion can become bitter. A teapot works best.

Alternatively, if you are preparing a bark or seed, follow the same directions as above, except add herbs to cold water and bring the mixture to a gentle boil. Keep covered and simmer for approximately 10 minutes.

A standard dosage is one cup up to three times per day. Never prepare an infusion or decoction more than 24 hours in advance. Infusions can be served hot or cold, but in the case of a cold or flu, work better when hot.

Suggested herbs and their uses:

Agrimony (leaves, flowers) - diarrhea, sore throat (gargled), digestion

Lady's Mantle (leaves) - diarrhea, heavy menstruation

Lemon Balm (leaves) - anxiety, circulation (mixed with peppermint), colds, flu

Chamomile (flowers) - anxiety, headache, painful menstruation, restlessness, teething problems, allergy symptoms, digestion (after meals), morning sickness

Rosemary (leaves, flowers) - depression, muscle relaxant, digestion, menstrual cramps, nerves, antiseptic

St. John's Wart (flowers) - depression, PMS, stomach ulcers, rheumatism, nerves and nerve related disorders, menopause, digestion

Caraway (seeds) - flatulence, stomach cramps, menstrual pain, labour pains

Fennel (sprigs, roots) - flatulence, digestion, congestion

Peppermint (leaves) - flatulence, bloat, circulation (mixed with lemon balm), digestion, nerves (calming), sinus congestion

Ginger (root) - flatulence

Feverfew - painful menstruation, migraine relief, anti-inflammatory, digestion

Sage - sore throat (gargled)

Lavender - insect bites

Thyme - colds, flu

Tinctures - A tincture is an alcoholic extraction of an herb. The alcohol acts as a preservative and allows the tincture to be used for up to 2 years. Any part of the plant may be used. Standard dosage is 15 drops three times daily.

Place 4 ounces of a dried herb in a glass jar with a tight fitting lid and add 2 cups of vodka. Leave for 2 weeks, shaking occasionally, then strain through a cloth into a brown glass bottle (or any coloured glass bottle). Keep tightly closed.

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Chamomile - anxiety, headache, painful menstruation, restlessness, teething problems, allergy symptoms, digestion (after meals), morning sickness

Rosemary - depression, muscle relaxer, digestion, menstrual cramps, nerves, antiseptic

St. John's Wort - depression, PMS, stomach ulcers, rheumatism, nerves and nerve related disorders, menopause, digestion

Caraway - flatulence, stomach cramps, menstrual pain, labour pains

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Feverfew - painful menstruation, migraine relief, anti-inflammatory, digestion

Lavender - insect bites

Syrup - Made with sugar, which acts as a preservative, syrups are great for cough mixtures and diffuse the bitter taste of some herbs used for this purpose. The standard dosage is 1 teaspoon three times a day.

Prepare 2 cups of an infusion or decoction of the required herb. Strain and add 1 3/4 cup brown sugar (or honey and sugar mixture). Heat gently until the sugar dissolves. Pour into a clean glass bottle and seal. Store in the refrigerator.

Suggested herbs and their uses:

See Infusions and Decoctions

Oil Infusions - For external use only! They can be prepared hot or cold.

Hot method - fill a jar with fresh herbs and cover with olive oil, sunflower oil, or almond oil. Place the jar up to the neck in a saucepan of water and bring to a medium temperature. Simmer for up to 3 hours. Strain through cheesecloth into a brown glass bottle (any coloured glass will do).

Cold method - Follow the same methods, except place the oil on a sunny windowsill instead of heating. The process can be repeated with the strained infusion and a fresh supply of herbs if you want to make a stronger oil.

Suggested herbs and their uses:

Any sweet or savory smelling herb such as lavender, evening primrose, chamomile, hibiscus, rosehips, calendula (marigold), peppermint, etc. can be used. Oils can be added to soaps, lotions, creams, lip balms, shampoos, etc. There are plenty of all natural recipes out there that can provide all sorts of uses for oil infusions and essential oils.

Lavender oil applied at the temples help relieve a headache.

St. John's Wort oil can be used topically for wounds, sunburns, burns, and scars.

Creams & Ointments - A cream is a blend of oil, beeswax and water. Melt 2 ounces beeswax in a double boiler. Add 1 cup olive oil or other vegetable oil and blend. Add 2 ounces herb. For lighter cream, add a little water, mixing well. Simmer 20 minutes, mixing well. Add a drop of tincture of benzoin as a preservative (optional - found at most herbal, aromatherapy, and all natural stores - it's a balsamic resin obtained from the bark of styrax trees). Strain through cheesecloths into sterilized jars.

An ointment is made the same way as a cream. Unlike creams, ointments do not penetrate the skin; they cover and protect it. Melt petroleum jelly in a double boiler and add plenty of herbs, making sure that the melted petroleum jelly covers the herbs. Simmer until the herbs are crisp. More herbs can be added for a stronger ointment. Strain into jars while hot.

Suggested herbs and their uses:

Calendula (petals from marigolds) is ideal for minor burns.

Agrimony is ideal for minor cuts or wounds.

Chamomile - skin ulcers, wounds or burns.

St. John's Wort (oil) - wounds, sunburns, burns, post-operative scars

Other herbs and their uses:

Lavender - potpourris, teas (infusions), oils, soaps, creams. Lavender attracts hummingbirds, butterflies and bees. Crushed lavender leaves can be rubbed on the skin to repel mosquitoes.

Lemon Balm - can also be used as an infusion as a refreshing skin toner and in rinse water for clothes. A strong infusion makes a great rinse for oily hair. Use as a facial steam for dry skin.

Chamomile - good for baths and feet. Lightens already fair hair and is good for the complexion.

Rosemary - as an infusion, can be used as a toner and astringent. Mixed with shampoo, it can strengthen hair. As a rinse, it lightens blond hair and conditions and tones all hair. Added to a bath, rosemary can strengthen and refresh especially after an illness.

Sage - used as a hair rinse, it can enhance dark hair.

Some Simple Recipes

Herbal Bath Vinegar

Mix lavender, lady's mantle leaves, and rose petals with cider vinegar and allow to sit for 2-4 weeks. Can be used as a facial tonic or bath additive.

Herbal Facial Steam

Add a couple of handfuls of lady's mantle mixed with lavender to several cups of boiling water and use it as a facial steam. Bring it to a boil and stir with a wooden spoon. Tent your head with a towel at least 18 inches above a bowl with the mixture. Gently dry your face with a soft towel; follow with a moisturizer.

Also, can use lemon balm for dry skin.

Chamomile Cleansing Milk

Pour 1 cup of warm milk in a bowl - the milk must be kept warm throughout, but must never boil and a skin cannot form on the milk. Place the bowl over a saucepan of hot water.

Add 3 tablespoons of fresh chamomile flowers. Stir gently from time to time. Infuse until the milk smells strongly of chamomile. Strain into glass jars.

Good for oily skin. Keep refrigerated.

Calendula Salve (for minor cuts and burns)

2-3 cups calendula petals

1 cup olive oil

1/4 cup (2 oz.) beeswax

Mix the calendula petals and olive oil; make calendula oil following above instructions using the hot method. Allow oil to cool to the point where petals can be strained from oil through a cheesecloth. Twist cheesecloth with oily petals into a bundle and tie with string.

Put the bundle in a mesh strainer; using a wooden spoon, press the oil out of the petals over a bowl with already strained oil. Return oil to pot and warm it up. At the same time, melt beeswax over a double boiler. It is important that the oil and wax be similar in temperature. When oil and wax are close in temperature, pour the wax into the oil. When completely mixed, remove from heat.

Pour into clean jars and allow to cool. Cover and tighten jars. Label and store away from direct sunlight and heat.

Horehound Candy (for sore throats)

Follow the above instructions for making syrup, using an infusion of horehound and mixing it with brown sugar. Bring to a boil. Remove from heat and stir rapidly until mixture has cooled down. Return to heat and bring to a boil. Repeat process until mixture has become thick like a paste. Pour or spoon onto a baking sheet or baking pan lined with waxed paper/parchment paper. Spread out to about 1/2 - 1 inch thickness. Allow to harden and cut into small pieces.

Horehound candy is like a lozenge. Allow to slowly dissolve in your mouth; for minor sore or dry throats.

Hair Rinses

Add a tea bag or loose leaf tea of your herb of choice to a large mouth glass jar and fill with boiling water and cover. Steep for up to 30 minutes. Apply the rinse after shampooing, rub into scalp and leave the rinse in hair.

Optional - add cider vinegar to tepid infusion before pouring onto hair.

Chamomile - Natural blonde highlights

Calendula - Auburn and red-highlights, dry hair

Rosemary - Warm highlights in darker hair; stimulates hair growth, scalp, dandruff, oily hair

Nettle - Dandruff, circulation, hair growth, dry hair

Sage - Darkens hair, dry hair

Yarrow - Oily hair

Basil - Hair growth

Peppermint - Hair growth

Simple Melt & Pour Soap (No Lye)

Glycerin soap dates back to 1889 when the process of recovering glycerin from soap was discovered. Prior to this, glycerin was produced mainly through the candle making industry (animal fat). Glycerin is used in many things, but it is also used for making clear soaps. Glycerin soaps are good moisturizers for the skin. The process for recovering glycerin is quite complicated; melt and pour glycerin based soap can be purchased from any craft store such as Michaels.

Lye is still important in most soaps - without it you would have liquid soap. The process of making lye, however, can be difficult and takes practice. Most melt and pour soaps have already gone through the process that turns lye into soap. This recipe makes soap without using lye, simplifying the process. Lye soap is heartier and will last longer; glycerin soap dissolves quickly but is better for your skin.

6 ounces melt and pour soap (glycerin, olive oil, coconut oil)

2 tablespoons olive oil (if not using olive oil soap base)

15 drops essential oil (your choice - see above methods for oil making)

Molds for soap (not aluminum)

Microwave

Double boiler

Microwave safe bowl

Cut the soap base into small pieces. If melting in microwave, gently melt 10 seconds at a time, stirring between heating. If you are using a double boiler, gently stir over medium heat. Don't let the mixture boil.

When base is melted, quickly stir in olive oil and essential oil. If you are using a soap base already with olive oil, it isn't necessary to use the olive oil.

When mixed together, pour into molds. Unmold when the soap has cooled down.

Resources

<http://www.gardenguides.com> - general herbal information, including cultivating, harvesting, and instructions for use.

<http://www.aromatherapy-at-home.com> - information regarding essential oils.

<http://hubpages.com/hub/what-you-need-to-prepare-homemade-essential-oils>

Farmer, Fannie Merrit. The Boston Cooking-School Cookbook. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1896. Page 448.

- Horehound Candy Recipe, syrups

Parkinson, Eleanor. Complete Confectioner. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1864 (1849). Page 27.

- Horehound Candy Recipe, other candies, lozenges

<http://www.localharvest.org> - hair rinses

<http://herbgardens.about.com> - hair rinses

<http://lifeinsugarhollow.blogspot.com/2007/08/recipe-simple-calendula-salve.html> - Calendula Salve Recipe

<http://www.ehow.com> - How to Make Olive Oil Soap (any soap) without Lye

<http://www.eaudrey.com/glycerin.htm> - Various glycerin based soap recipes using lavender, chamomile, etc.

<http://www.eaudrey.com> - various historic publications on home remedies, etiquette, and dress. Includes publications from 1880 on decorum and the art of perfumery published in 1867.

Hill, Tony. The Spice Lover's Guide to Herbs & Spices. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004.

Culpeper, Nicholas. Culpeper's Complete Herbal & English Physician. Illinois: Meyer Books, 1944. (Original date of publication - 1814).

Author Unknown. The Cook Not Mad. Watertown, NY: Knowlton & Rice, 1831. Page 61 - Balms, Mint and other teas.

Cameron, Jim. Good For What Ails You: Self-Help Remedies from 19th Century Canada. Burnstown, Ontario: The General Store Publishing House, 1995.

Campbell, Lillian & Yvonne Kemp. Great-Grandma's Health Suggestions From Late 1800's. Just A Thought Publications, 1992.

The Garden Club of Toronto. Plants of Pioneer and Early Days in Ontario. Toronto: Paragon Press Limited, 1977.

Erichsen-Brown, Charlotte. Herbs in Ontario: How to Grow and Use Fifty Herbs. Aurora: Breezy Creeks Press, 1975.

Nature's Pharmacy: A Doctor's Medicinal Garden at Black Creek Pioneer Village. Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

Campbell, Dorothy L. Indian and Pioneer Uses of Native Plants Growing at Doon Pioneer Village. Waterloo County: Waterloo Historical Society, 1964.

Oliver, N.T. Lee's Priceless Recipes. Ottawa: Algrove Publishing Limited, 1998. (Originally published in 1895).