Medicinal Herbs
Grow Them, Harvest Them and Use Them

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Disclaimer: Use common sense and consult your doctor if symptoms persist
Co-Factors of Dis-ease
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From the view of Naturopathic Health dis-ease is understood to develop in the body through a progression of factors, each of which can be addressed in many ways. The goal for restoring health is to: nourish, cleanse, de-toxify and rebuild. Categories leading to illness include:

1. NEGLECT
   a. Improper nutrition
   b. Lack of exercise
   c. Negative thought patterns, such as:
      1.) Worry
      2.) Fear
      3.) Anger
      4.) Shame
      5.) Self victimization
      6.) Depression

2. TRAUMA
   Stress seems to be a way of life for many. This takes a toll on the adrenal glands and thus the entire endocrine system. Major traumas include: death of a loved one, getting fired, separation or divorce, re-location to a new town or region, et cetera. Even seemingly positive changes such as: marriage, pregnancy and birth, a new job and others factors can stress the body. Several at once can magnify stress.

3. CONGESTION
   a. Digestive/elimination
   b. Respiratory
   c. Circulatory
   d. Mental

4. METALS AND CHEMICALS
   These will accumulate in the body and build up for a lifetime, settling especially in the liver, right kidney and fatty tissues.

5. FUNGUS, BACTERIA, VIRUS

6. PARASITES

7. MIASMS This means a genetic predisposition toward a disease.
Humans have used herbs since the beginning of our time on Earth. Today, scientific research is extensive for the use of herbs in complementary care and prevention of dis-ease. Many herbaceous plants have a thousand of more phyto (plant) chemicals! Thru the study of plant chemistry, their properties or actions can be understood. A good resource for the pursuit of such knowledge is Medicinal Herbalism, the Science and Practice of Herbal Medicine, by David Hoffman.

The traditional preparations listed below are very easy to make. The real art in making them, though, is in the growing, harvesting and collecting of at the right time of day, month or season. The explanations below will help you better understand how herbs can be prepared by you. A wonderful resource book for making your own preparations is The Herbal Medicine-Maker's Handbook, by James Greene. Get it!

**Beverage or Herbal Tea:** Technically, the correct use of the word “tea” is reserved for beverages made from the tea plant. We all say herb tea. But we are wrong. Instead, the medicinal term infusion means herbs steeped into water for drinking. Water infusions can be made with either fresh or dried herbs, and are the oldest form of herbal medicine. (See infusions and decoctions for further details.)

**Decoction:** This preparation is used when the herbs are tough or hard, such as roots, bark or nuts. The herb is infused into a liquid, usually water; then simmered for 15-30 minutes on a low heat. *Do not boil and use a non-metal pan.* (See infusions for more.)

**Capsules:** These are used to deliver herbs in their dry form. The self life of capsules is often short, compared to tinctures.

**Herbal bath:** Herbal preparations are added to a bath to enhance skin stimulation, absorb herbal components or enhance the organism in general. Fresh or dried herbs can be infused first and strained. Or, a few drops of bath-safe essential oils can be used.
**Liniments:** For external use only, liniments are thinner than salve and can be rubbed on the skin. They can be decanted in a base of oil, alcohol or vinegar. Liniments usually draw, warm, dry, disinfest or soothe an area. They are often used for: wounds, bruises, sprains, sunburns or sore muscles and ligaments.

**Infusion:** The medicinal term infusion technically means herbs steeped in water or liquid. This prep is mostly for hot “tea”; beverage or medicinal. *Use a non-metal pot.*

- **For hot “tea”** – Heat the water to almost a boil. Remove the pan from the heat; add the dried or fresh herbs. Allow to infuse for 5-10 minutes.
- **For sun “tea”** – In a glass jar, add fresh or dried herbs and cover them with water and a lid. Set in a sunny spot for several hours. NOTE: if you leave it too long, spoilage can occur. Strain off the water and chill.

**Salves, Ointments or Balms:** These are semi-solid liquids which can be rubbed onto the skin. Usually fresh or dried herbs are infused into oil by heating it at a very low temperature. When kept in the refrigerator, salves can retain their potency for several years. Many types of oils can be used including: olive, coconut, almond, sesame or sheep tallow. Bee’s wax is usually added at the end to thicken. *Vaseline and other petroleum jellies are not recommended. Fixed oils offer a no-heat method.*

**Tinctures:** The term tincture refers to a preparation made by macerating (soaking) herbs into some type of solvent which will effectively preserve their quality for years; also to kill parasites, bacteria, the growth of yeast and mold. Vodka makes an excellent solvent (menstruum). Also, non-distilled vinegar offers another fine base, especially for herbs that taste good with the vinegar flavor, such as garlic.

**Poultices:** Poultices and fomentations offer a way to utilize moisture and warmth to relax tissue, relieve pain, relieve congestion; or other purposes. Powered or chopped fresh materials can be put into a white, cotton sock and tied at the top. This is placed in hot water, kneaded until hot all the way though, then placed on the affected area.

**Herbs to collect from your garden...or nearby**

- **Flowers** – calendula, chamomile, echinacea, elder, lavender, mullein, rose
- **Leaves, tops or stems** – bay, blackberry, burdock, chickweed, cleavers, comfrey, dill, echinacea, fennel, lemon balm, mugwort, mullein, nettle, oregano, peppermint, plantain, sage, St, John’s wort, Stevia, thyme, willow, yarrow
- **Fruit, seeds or nuts** – burdock seeds, cayenne peppers, echinacea seeds, plantain seeds, walnut (the green hull)
- **Roots, tubers or rhizomes** – burdock, dandelion, comfrey, echinacea, garlic, ginger, horseradish, garlic, goldenseal, valerian, yellow dock
Stocking Your Herbal First Aid Kit

Created by: Deborah Lee, Herbal Educator

It is handy to keep a first aid kit in the cabinet. In addition to the regular band-aids, large sterile bandages, gauge, antiseptic wet wipes, ace bandage, scissors, tweezers and hydrogen peroxide; here are some ideas for herbal additions.

1.) **Echinacea** – This is often best in tincture form. Use it at the first sign of colds, flu, virus and infections. 1-2 droppers full in a glass of water can stop early symptoms in 5-10 minutes. If you wait until you are really sick, you may need 2-3 droppers, 3 or more times a day until you feel better. Echinacea strengthens the immune system.

2.) **Oregano Essential Oil** – Oregano has terrific antibiotic, anti-viral and antiseptic effects in addition to anti-fungal and anti-parasite properties. Fresh oregano leaves can be infused into milk to make tea. The most effective form (and best in a kit) is to get the essential oil. Use oregano oil at the first sign of food poisoning or for diarrhea. It is also effective for sinus infections, flu, virus, Candida fungus and parasites. I try to never leave town without it, and recommend getting ADP (oregano oil tablets) by Biotics Research Company. (Get through Four Winds Farm or local chiropractor.)

3.) **Healing Salve** – Usually in a comfrey base, a good salve (or ointment) can be used to help heal cuts, wounds, stings and various skin irritations. Often yarrow or other astringent herb is added. Refrigerate for long term use.

4.) **Tiger Balm** – (Red) This ointment contains eucalyptus and other herbs which make it an excellent external treatment for either sore muscles or strained nerves. Rubbed on the chest during a cold, the balm has an opening and clearing effect.

5.) **Aloe Vera** – Get a gel or ointment. The whole leaf is fine. Simply slice the leaf and apply directly. Aloe is effective for minor burns, sunburn and wounds.

6.) **Lavender Essential Oil** - Get therapeutic or high-grade quality. Lavender essential oil has over 40 major uses including: minor burns or sunburns, insect bites, headaches, stress and general skin problems. It is remarkable for burns, applied immediately.

7.) **Tea Tree Oil** – This is an essential oil from the Melaluca tree. Like lavender, tea tree oil has dozens of important uses including externally for: wounds, ringworm, sore throat,
poison ivy and rashes, et cetera. Also, add a few drops to water for a sore throat gargle or an antiseptic mouth wash.

8.) **Garlic** – Garlic helps kill about any systemic nuisance. Take the raw clove internally with food. It has: anti-fungal, anti-biotic, anti-microbial, anti-viral, parasiticide and numerous other actions. If you eat it raw, do so with a little food. Using a few drops of garlic oil in the ear is recommended for ear infections.

9.) **Black Willow** – Use either tincture or tablets for headache and muscle ache.

10.) **Valerian Root** – In either tincture or tablet form, this herb is an excellent sedative, nervine, analgesic or sleep aid.

11.) **Umeboshi Concentrate** – Found in a very small bottle at many health food stores, this plum concentrate has been used in Japanese for centuries. The syrup helps to rapidly alkalinize the pH of the body. It is reported as useful for: gout, tummy aches, a hand-over, colds, flu and sore throat.

12.) **Green Clay Powder (or other clay)** – Use as a poultice for: a rash, insect bites, poison ivy or splinters. It makes a great as a cosmetic facial mask, too!

13.) **Digestive Bitters Formula** – to aid digestion after a meal. Other items for the same effect include: papaya-based, digestive enzymes or peppermint essential oil (add a few drops to water). Dandelion tincture is also effective as a digestive bitter (plus a strong (diuretic, liver and cardiac tonic and general tonic; rich in vitamin A, potassium).

14.) **Rhus tox** – This common homeopathic formula is used for poison ivy and many other ailments. You would ask for it at a health food store. (Get a potency that is 30x or stronger.)

15.) **Herbal Insect Repellent**. Purchase, or make your oil with 1 oz. of peanut oil and 10 to 20 each of several high-grade essential oils such as: pennyroyal, cedar wood, eucalyptus, tea tree or citronella.

16.) **Herbal Lip Balm**. There are several good brands. Or make your own.

17.) **Rescue Remedy** – This flower essence formula is commonly found at health food stores. It is helpful for shock, trauma or situations when you feel upset.

18.) **Herbal Cough Drops** – Many health food areas have a good herbal throat lozenge for a cough or sore throat.

The above list offers a few suggestions for first aid. Select the ones that meet your needs. You can slowly add a few items, as the need occurs. **Note: Use common sense and consult your doctor if symptoms persist.**
Master Formula

Deborah Lee, Herbal Educator

This is a great tonic! The term ‘master formula’ has been used by several herbalists. It is not always made in exactly the same way. Various combinations of herbs might be included to make a mixture similar to the one given below. In Latin American countries, these herbs have traditionally been used in a pickling mixture with vegetables. The pickled flavor is hot and delicious; and usually eaten with a meal. Before electricity (and refrigeration) the anti-bacterial, anti-parasite and anti-microbial properties of this popular dish were especially important. It is both appetizing and medicinal. Pickled tonics have kept people around the world healthy for thousands of years. This particular 5-herb blend has medicinal actions that are broad reaching, both individually and synergistically. Let’s look at some of the medicinal actions of each one:

1. Garlic - acts as effective anti-biotic, anti-viral, anti-microbial, anti-fungal, anti-yeast, vermifuge (for worms), parasiticide (for internal parasites), immune-stimulant and an aphrodisiac. Wow. There’s more. Garlic helps to lower the LDL cholesterol and is hypotensive (helping to lower elevated blood pressure).

2. Ginger - is a digestive stimulant that has a pungent, warming effect by increasing peripheral circulation out to the fingers and toes. A digestive aid, ginger helps relieve nausea, morning sickness and motion sickness; as well as gastric and intestinal pain. The herb further combats flatulence and bloating, and serves as an anti-spasmodic to the digestive tract. A diaphoretic, ginger dilates capillaries and increases perspiration in feverish conditions, thus offering elimination of toxins through the skin. It acts as an anti-inflammatory for rheumatism and other types of painful swelling. This is due in large part to rubefacient (or warming) actions that increase blood flow to the skin, or other localized areas.

3. Cayenne - (containing capsicum) offers a great tonic to the circulatory and digestive systems. Cayenne pepper strengthens the heart, arteries, capillaries, blood flow and peripheral circulation. With cayenne you can have both a warm heart, and warm feet. That’s a win/win! (For extra warmth, a little cayenne powder can be sprinkled in the socks for more rubefacient effects). As a nervine (nerve stimulant), cayenne strengthens the nerves and helps with peripheral neuropathy (helpful in diabetes and other conditions). The stimulating effects of cayenne are far reaching. In the elderly or infirm, cayenne is especially helpful in clearing out mucous and warding off colds. And last mentioned,
cayenne’s astringent properties help stop, or reduce, certain types of internal bleeding. Its styptic actions can stop external bleeding.

4. Horseradish – More than just a condiment, the pungent horseradish has been utilized through-out history for internal and external medicine. The chief constituent is mustard oil, a rubefacient and stimulant. An immune stimulant, horseradish is high in anti-oxidant properties that protect the immune system from internal attack by “free and radical cells”. Horseradish is a warming and tonifying anti-inflammatory for many types of pain. A potent diuretic, the pungent root is dispersive in its over-all effects.

5. White Onions – have smaller doses of garlic’s antibacterial and antifungal components. They are helpful to inhibit blood clotting, and they have phyto-nutrients that lower the harmful LDL cholesterol, while aiding the helpful HDL cholesterol. Onions increase the production of high-density lipoproteins, which in turn are believed to help clear the arteries of fatty deposits.

Here’s the recipe:

   1/2 gallon - pure, naturally fermented (un-distilled) Apple Cider Vinegar
   1 cup - chopped white onions
   1 cup - garlic cloves
   1 cup - chopped horseradish root
   1 cup - chopped ginger root
   1 cup - cayenne peppers*

Sterilize a glass gallon jar and add the vinegar. Puree all the ingredients in a food processor and add them to the jar. Seal with a tight lid and allow this “to infuse” for at least 2 weeks, ideally during the waxing moon and through the full moon. Shake the jar several times daily. Next, strain the liquid through a sieve and squeeze. Store this infusion in the refrigerator, and give the spent items to your compost pile.

- Instead of cayenne peppers, some herbalists use habanera peppers (which are extremely hot), other people prefer jalapeño. A lot of this is personal preference and availability. I sometimes use ¾ cup of cayenne, plus 2 or 3 habanera peppers.
- It’s OK to use less of some items and more of others.

NOTE: Make a smaller batch by adjusting the ingredients accordingly.