

Quick Guide to Herbal Preparations



DISCLAIMER: These pages are presented solely for informational and educational purposes only and not presented as any form of medical or health advice whatsoever. No claims are made as to the efficacy or safety or any herbs nor for any historical use or herbal treatment. In no way can the information provided here-in be taken as a substitute for standard, legal or medical practices of any state or country. Always consult a doctor or other properly qualified health practitioner, especially if you are pregnant or taking any form of medication. Proper professional treatment of any condition will require individual consultation with the appropriate health professional.

Quick Guide to Herbal Preparations

Although herbs are natural substances, this does not mean that they are all harmless. The chemical properties of a given herb can help or heal one condition, but can harm or aggravate another. **Do your research. Herbs are very powerful and must be respected and used responsibly.** Use the herb or herbs that are best suited to the purpose you have in mind and then use the most appropriate preparation method to derive the most benefit from that herb. When used responsibly, herbs can be a powerful ally in your overall health and well-being.

Capsules

Capsules provide ease of use and convenience. Many herbs have a bitter taste. While this is often the medicinal value in the herb, it makes swallowing them unpleasant. Use all natural gelatin capsules to encapsulate powdered herbs. Capsules can be used to take herbs quickly and pleasantly; however, assimilation of the herb may not be as effective as with a tea or tincture.

Decoctions

This is a preparation made by boiling herbal substances in water for a considerable period of time, usually about 30 minutes. Hard materials such as pieces of roots, bark, seeds, etc. are usually prepared in this way as they require longer subjection to heat in order to extract their active constituents. Generally 1 ounce of herb is placed in 1 pint of cold water. The container is then covered and the solution allowed to boil for one-half hour. It is then strained, cooled and ready for use. However, since some of the water evaporates while boiling, many herbalists prefer to use 1 ½ pints of water so that when the boiling period has ended, the decoction measures approximately 1 pint. Use a glass, ceramic, or porcelain container to prepare your herbs. Metal pots can alter the herbal properties. Never use aluminum.

Fomentation or Compress

Dip cloth, generally linen or muslin, in an infusion or decoction, wring it out, and apply locally. If desired, the compress can be held in place with a bandage or plastic wrap. Fomentations can be either hot or cold and are generally milder than poultices.

DISCLAIMER: These pages are presented solely for informational and educational purposes only and are not presented as any form of medical or health advice whatsoever. No claims are made as to the efficacy or safety or any herbs nor for any historical use or herbal treatment. In no way can the information provided here-in be taken as a substitute for standard, legal or medical practices of any state or country. Always consult a doctor or other properly qualified health practitioner, especially if you are pregnant or taking any form of medication. Proper professional treatment of any condition will require individual consultation with the appropriate health professional.

Quick Guide to Herbal Preparations

Infusions or Teas Infusions are generally prepared with 1 ounce of the herbal material to 1 pint of water. However, some plants contain very active herbal constituents, and less herb material is sufficient. Infusions can be made with either dried or fresh herbs. Bring the water to a boil and pour over the herb, in a covered container, let the solution steep (stand) for 15 minutes (stirring occasionally). When the steeping has ended, strain the infusion and it is ready for use. Smaller servings can be prepared by applying 1 cup of boiling water to 1 teaspoon of herb and allowing to steep. Sometimes a little honey is added to make the infusion more palatable. **INFUSIONS ARE NEVER ALLOWED TO BOIL.** Use a glass, ceramic, or porcelain container to prepare your herbs. Metal pots can alter the herbal properties. Never use aluminum. Infusions may be drunk hot, which is normally the best case for medicinal teas, or drunken cold with ice.

Ointments or Salves Ointments and salves are often used for external applications such as localized injuries, burns or cuts. Pour 3 ounces of oil, (olive, sunflower, safflower, etc.), into a Pyrex or stainless steel pan. Add 3 ounces of fat (cocoa butter, lanolin or lard) into the pan and mix. Add 1 pint of infusion or decoction liquid based on what is appropriate for the herb(s) chosen. Simmer until the water has evaporated. Stiffen the mixture with beeswax to your desired consistency if necessary. Melt in slowly. After the mixture is removed from the heat, add a little vitamin E oil or a drop of tincture of benzoin for each ounce of liquid as a preservative. Pour into the container you will store it in. The mixture will stiffen as it cools.

Another easy method to make a salve or ointment is to take approximately eight parts of vegetable shortening and two parts herb. Heat on low heat and stir occasionally for 20 minutes. Let cool, strain into a wide-mouth glass or porcelain container.

Pestos Pestos provide a means to preserve the antioxidant value in herbs and soften cell walls making minerals more bio-available when eating herbs. Add 2 – 4 cloves of coarsely chopped garlic to ½ cup of extra virgin olive oil. Add a sprinkle of sea salt and a large handful of prepared herb leaves and blend. Add more herbs or oil as desired. Blend well and pack the mixture into a tall thin jar. Leave room at the top of the jar to fill with additional olive oil. Close the jar and refrigerate. The mixture will last up to 2 years in the refrigerator or up to 5 years in the freezer.

DISCLAIMER: These pages are presented solely for informational and educational purposes only and not presented as any form of medical or health advice whatsoever. No claims are made as to the efficacy or safety or any herbs nor for any historical use or herbal treatment. In no way can the information provided here-in be taken as a substitute for standard, legal or medical practices of any state or country. Always consult a doctor or other properly qualified health practitioner, especially if you are pregnant or taking any form of medication. Proper professional treatment of any condition will require individual consultation with the appropriate health professional.

Quick Guide to Herbal Preparations

Poultices and Plasters

Poultices are used to apply moist heat to draw or soothe. Fresh leaves of a particular herb are bruised by chopping and mashing and steeped in boiling water (only enough to moisten) for a short time. The leaves are then spread between two pieces of cloth and applied as hot as possible, then, covered with a dry cloth to retain heat. A second poultice is prepared while the first one is still being used. It replaces the first poultice the moment it begins to lose heat. The powdered herb of a plant may be substituted for the fresh leaves. Use enough of the powdered herb to make a paste. The paste is then spread between two pieces of cloth, applied and renewed, several times.

Syrups

Boil tea for 20 minutes, add 1 ounce glycerin, and seal in bottles, as you would fruit. Or, pour 1 ¼ cups of boiling water onto 3 oz of crushed herbs and allow the mixture to get cold. Strain the infusion and then re-heat until warm and add ½ cup of sugar. When the sugar has dissolved, bring the mixture to a boil and gently simmer until it is a syrup consistency. Allow to cool a bit before bottling.

Tinctures

Tinctures are concentrated herbal preparations that are made with pure or diluted alcohol - brandy, vodka, or preferably gin. **DO NOT USE RUBBING ALCOHOL for tinctures.** Tinctures are used because some herbs will not yield their properties to water alone, or may be rendered useless by application of heat. In some situations, herbs will more readily impart their active principles when prepared as a tincture. Usually, 4 ounces of water and 12 ounces of alcohol are mixed with 1 ounce of the powdered herb. The mixture is allowed to steep (stand) for 2 weeks. The bottle should be shaken thoroughly every night. After the 2 weeks, the clear liquid is strained off carefully, so as not to disturb the sediment using muslin or linen. The sediment is discarded. The tincture is then bottled for use in a dark glass bottle, filling to the top so as to eliminate air.

Vinegars

Herbal vinegars help extract the mineral properties of herbs and make them more bio-available. Any part of the plant can be used for herbal vinegars, the roots, leaves, stalks, flowers, or fruit. To create an herbal vinegar, fill any size jar to the top with finely chopped, fresh aromatic herbs. Add room-temperature apple cider vinegar to the jar until it is full. Cover the jar with a plastic screw-on lid, a cork, or with several layers of wax paper or plastic secured with a rubber band. Do not use a metal lid as the vinegar will corrode it. Place the jar out of direct sunlight for 6 weeks. The vinegar may then be decanted or used directly from the jar.

DISCLAIMER: These pages are presented solely for informational and educational purposes only and not presented as any form of medical or health advice whatsoever. No claims are made as to the efficacy or safety or any herbs nor for any historical use or herbal treatment. In no way can the information provided here-in be taken as a substitute for standard, legal or medical practices of any state or country. Always consult a doctor or other properly qualified health practitioner, especially if you are pregnant or taking any form of medication. Proper professional treatment of any condition will require individual consultation with the appropriate health professional.