

## **Natural healing – part 2 ©**

This report follows on from the first report on Natural Healing, ie natural medicines and how to make them. The focus here is more on the natural cosmetic aspect, ie:

- a) Hair and scalp care
- b) Soaps
- c) Face scrubs
- d) Cleansers
- e) Toners
- f) Bath herbs.

It's not meant as the final word, but more a starting point. Safety first though – herbal medicines will kill you if taken without reading the labels. Some of the listed remedies are for external use only, but a child might stick a finger in and lick it, which is not a good idea - care is needed. I'll give a few links at the end for anyone who does want to take the topic further or do a course.

### **Natural healing for hair and scalp**

Let's start with hair care/ scalp treatments and a general list of plants that are good for healthy hair. All of the following herbs can be used to make hair tonics, shampoos, conditioners, etc and they can be blended with other plants too, eg bananas or coconuts.

- a) Comfrey
- b) Nettle
- c) Rosemary
- d) Horsetail
- e) Thyme
- f) Lavender
- g) Aloe
- h) Calendula.

So, how can you make an effective hair tonic or shampoo? Most such treatments require the addition of essential oils, but it is possible to use infused or macerated oils too, as described in the first report. For example, an **anti-dandruff treatment** that works, involves blending apple cider vinegar (100ml) with 10 drops of thyme macerated or essential oil. All that needs to be done is to blend the ingredients, massage into the scalp and leave for 5-6 minutes. Then rinse off with warm water and wash your hair as normal.

For **hair tonics**, dried comfrey (3 tsp) can be blended with dried calendula (3 tsp) and dried horsetail (1 tsp). Just add about 100ml of boiling water and let the mixture cool down. Sieve off the herbs and add the mixture to your normal shampoo to a ratio of 50:50%. These herbs nourish the hair and scalp. If there's any liquid left over, I'd suggest using it as a general hair rinse afterwards.

I read a lot of public comments on social media at present about the amount of artificial chemicals in cosmetics. So, here's a **natural hair conditioner that helps dry or damaged hair**. You will need to make some calendula macerated oil. Take a ripe banana and blend it to a paste. Add 3 drops of ylang ylang essential oil and 2 tsp of the calendula oil. Make your hair damp, comb it and massage in the herbal paste – leave in place for 25-30 minutes. Then wash out the paste, perhaps with a little drop of lemon juice to your normal shampoo. This remedy helps to nourish your hair.

## **The wonderful world of soaps**

The title may seem a bit self-deprecating, but I couldn't think of another way to categorise soaps, body scrubs, bath salts, etc. Of course, you could go to an MBS fair and buy natural soap with many different bases, eg lavender, peppermint, rosemary, etc. However, many people find great fulfilment in making their own soaps and, here, I can only suggest that the **cold process** method is a good starting-point for newbies.

First things first – when I went on a herbal course that included the making of natural soaps, it was suggested that it's easier to buy soap bases (eg opaque goats' milk), trays, glitter, etc on-line. It all depends how much soap you need as 1kg soap will require 1 tray. A possible source of supplies is [www.soapbasics.com](http://www.soapbasics.com), but there are many other places.

OK then – what is cold process? This method uses lye to react with oils to make the soap, but heat is only needed to melt the initial solid oils. After all, soap is made by blending an acid (the oils) with an alkaline substance (sodium hydroxide/caustic soda in the lye). To some extent, cold process is the easiest method for home soap-makers.

Here's a tip if you're vegan or vegetarian. The oil names reflect their origins, eg palm oil is described as sodium palmate, beef tallow is described as sodium tallowate, etc.

There are loads of good soap recipes on-line and guides to essential equipment, so I'll not repeat them here. What I can say is that calendula soap is good for athlete's foot, rosemary soap is good for circulatory issues and peppermint soap is great for foot or skin problems.

Onto the next cleanser then, which comes under the general heading of **stuff to go in the bath**. Actually, you can add almost any fragrant herb to a bath for a soothing relaxation, eg rose petals, calendula, lemon balm, juniper, ginger, etc. Here's a favourite of mine, as all these herbs grow in my back garden: I call it the chill-out mix!

**Ingredients:** 2 tbsp of wild raspberry or strawberry leaves, 2 tbsp of violet leaves, 2 tbsp lavender and 2 tbsp of oatmeal.

**Method:** blend the ingredients (or use a pestle and mortar), to make a powder and put it in a muslin bag. Put the bag under the taps so that the running water flows through the herbs and then add the bag to the water to infuse the in the hot water.

Of course, there are squillions of suggestions when it comes to body scrubs, face masks, bath bombs, toners and so on. I couldn't really decide which one to recommend, but decided on something that anyone can make without spending a lot on essential oils – all that is needed is some sort of spray bottle. It **rejuvenates your skin** at practically no cost.

**Ingredients:** 3 large tsp of fresh mint, 1 large tsp of fresh dill, 1 large tsp of fresh parsley and 85ml of spring water.

**Method:** Infuse the herbs with a little boiling water. After infusion, add the spring water and pour into a sterile glass bottle with an atomiser spray. Spray your skin – the mint is a great coolant – and then store it in the fridge for 2-3 days and then chuck it!

## **Other natural cleansers**

Again, I couldn't really think of a heading to cover natural body sprays, deodorants and the like. We looked at creams in the first report, but I'd like to add a few bits and bobs about the applications.

To recap then - **creams** are really easy to do and there are many methods. They're lighter than salves and sink into the skin quicker. I'd suggest using 1-2 tablespoons of skin or aqueous cream in a bowl, placing it over another bowl of boiling water and reducing it to liquid. Then add the same measure of your herb of choice, eg chickweed or peppermint leaves, and stir until the mixture is the same colour. After an hour or so, take the mixture away from the heat, strain it with a metal strainer, add some fine oatmeal to thicken and whisk - and leave it in a glass bowl to cool. When it's cool, you can put the cream in small bottles or flat tins for storage.

That text came from the first report. What should be said now is which creams are best as **skin moisturisers**? Here's a little list:

- a) Evening primrose
- b) Viola and chamomile
- c) Rose
- d) Lavender
- e) Geranium – sometimes with orange or rose
- f) Marshmallow
- g) Lemon or grape seed
- h) Garden mint.

I thought that it might be interesting to finish with an overview of **deodorants and splashes**. Yes, I really did say that – it's not totally necessary to buy the stuff at the supermarket or chemist. How can you make your own deodorant then? Well, most natural deodorants require the mixing of 1-2 tsp of vegetable glycerin with 90ml of witch hazel as the base. Then, you add 2-5 drops of those essential oils that you find most attractive, shake the mix well and store it in a dark glass bottle with an atomiser spray. Examples might include lemon, lime, grapefruit, coriander, bergamot, etc.

Why don't we finish with a splash? **Body splashes** are not so far removed from the herbal spritz described earlier. Such sprays can include a wide variety of scents – including geranium, frankincense, rose or aloe vera. I'm going to describe an anti-insect one here.

**Ingredients:** 5 tsp of lavender water, 2 drops of citronella essential or macerated oil and 3 drops of eucalyptus essential or macerated oil.

**Method:** Blend the lavender water and the oils. After blending, pour the mixture into a sterile dark glass bottle with an atomiser spray. The spray can be used every 2-3 hours and keeps for 6 months. It's really good for deterring insects like midges or gnats.

## **Conclusion – further information**

Now I think about it, there's probably a third report on natural healing just waiting to be written. I'm thinking about putting together a guide to healing from the inside. We could look at using the herbs from your gardens or hedgerows for natural healing via foods or meals, ie soups, teas, salads, etc. If, after reading all this, you still want to investigate the subject further, there are several sources of information. The main places in the UK are listed below.

National Institute of Medical Herbalists – [www.nimh.org.uk](http://www.nimh.org.uk)  
British Association for Applied Nutrition and Nutritional Therapy – [www.bant.org.uk](http://www.bant.org.uk)  
Garden Organic – [www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)  
British Herbal Medicine Association – [www.bhma.info](http://www.bhma.info)