



# Herbs for Health

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The use of plants in the treatment of human illness is as ancient as human civilization itself. The prescription of herbs is not a recent development; rather, it has been an integral component of traditional healing practices across cultures and eras. Herbal remedies were employed both as dietary elements and as therapeutic agents in biblical times. Similarly, in the East, systems such as Traditional Chinese Medicine and Indian Ayurvedic medicine have incorporated herbs into their medical practices for thousands of years.

In Western and European medicine, herbal preparations constituted the principal form of medical treatment until the nineteenth century, when the development of modern pharmaceuticals began to transform healthcare. According to various sources, as much as 70 percent of contemporary pharmaceutical drugs are derived from natural sources, predominantly plants.



Herbs can be categorised into three types.

## 1. Powerful herbs:

- They have powerful actions and often instant effects
- Can be toxic and dangerous to use
- They are not used in herbal practice
- They are usually prescription only by doctors
- Examples include belladonna, hemlock and foxglove

## 2. Mid-range herbs:

- They are somewhere between the most powerful and the gentle herbs
- They are well defined chemically and some are for prescription only
- They need to be used cautiously with a thorough understanding of their safety and interactions with drugs,
- If used inappropriately or abused, they can be potentially toxic
- Examples include Liquorice and St Johns Wort

## 3. Gentle herbs:

- They are the non-toxic herbs that are safe to use if they aren't abused,
- These herbs will be slower to work,
- Examples include Chamomile, Peppermint and Echinacea.

Herbs may be utilized in a variety of forms. Fresh or dried herbs can be incorporated into cooking or added to salads. They may also be prepared as teas, either as infusions or decoctions. Liquid herbal extracts provide a more stable and convenient means of preserving the active constituents of a

plant in concentrated form. These preparations represent the principal method of prescription used by herbal practitioners worldwide; however, they are generally not available to the general public. Tinctures are also commonly employed by herbalists. Typically less concentrated than fluid extracts, tinctures are particularly appropriate for certain potent herbs. Both liquid extracts and tinctures are prepared according to established guidelines, with specific standards governing their formulation and dosage when prescribed by qualified practitioners. Concentrated dried herbs may also be manufactured in tablet form. This method offers a practical and portable alternative to liquid extracts and is widely accessible to the general public.

It is essential to observe important precautions when using herbal medicines. Although herbs are natural substances, they contain biologically active compounds and must therefore be used with appropriate care. Herbal products may interact with prescription medications and with other herbs. They may also produce adverse effects and, if improperly prepared or administered in incorrect dosages, can be toxic.

Individuals who intend to use herbs for self-treatment or to recommend them to others should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Use only mild or gentle herbs.
- Obtain appropriate training in the safe use of herbal medicines.
- Conduct thorough research to understand the herb's chemical properties, therapeutic actions, potential adverse effects, and possible interactions.
- Seek professional advice when necessary.
- Avoid treating children, pregnant or breastfeeding women, elderly individuals, or those with complex medical conditions or multiple medications without qualified supervision.

The most appropriate method for using herbs in the home setting is to prepare them as an herbal tea, either as a decoction or an infusion. These preparations are not suitable for long-term storage and should be consumed on the same day they are made.

A decoction is a water-based preparation intended for the more resilient parts of the plant, such as roots and bark. It is prepared as follows:

- Place finely divided fresh or dried plant material in a saucepan and cover with cold water.
- Bring the mixture to a boil and then simmer until the liquid has reduced to slightly more than half of its original volume.
- Strain the liquid through a tea strainer.



- Consume the preparation in divided doses throughout the day.

An infusion is also a water-based preparation but is used for the more delicate parts of the plant, such as flowers and leaves. It is prepared as follows:

- Pour boiling water over finely chopped fresh or dried plant material.
- Allow the mixture to stand for approximately 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Strain the liquid through a tea strainer.
- Consume the preparation in divided doses throughout the day.



## Herbs for Immunity

### Astragalus

- Deep immune stimulator
- Prevents colds
- Aids in cancer treatment
- Dose: 2-6g dried root daily

### Echinacea

- Immune stimulator
- For treatment/prevention of colds and influenza
- Skin infections
- Dose: 1-3g dried root daily

### Elderberry

- Antiviral
- For congestion in coughs and colds
- Throat gargle
- Dose: 1-3g dried flowers daily

### Garlic

- Antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal, antiparasitic
- Colds, influenza, bronchitis, nasal congestion
- Anti-tumour effects
- Dose: 2-4g of dried garlic daily, or 2-4 fresh cloves daily

### Thyme

- Antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal
- Colds and influenza, bronchitis, respiratory congestion
- Treatment for cough
- Dose: 2-3g of dried leaves daily
- Never ingest thyme essential oil

## Herbs for Cardiovascular Health & Blood Sugar Regulation

### Hawthorn Berry

- Improves coronary blood flow
- Improves contraction of the heart muscle
- Protects the heart muscle from damage
- Anti-arrhythmic
- Lowers blood pressure and cholesterol
- Dose: 3g dried flower/berry daily
- Caution: interacts with heart medications

### Garlic

- Prevents atherosclerosis
- Lowers unhealthy blood fats
- Lowers blood pressure
- Thins the blood
- Dose: 0.5-1g of dried garlic daily
- Caution: bleeding risk in surgery

### Olive Leaf

- Reduces blood pressure
- Reduces unhealthy blood fats
- Increases insulin sensitivity

- Dose: 500-1000mg daily

### Ginkgo Biloba (extract from the leaf)

- Improves blood circulation in the brain: helps dementia, vertigo, tinnitus, improvements after stroke
- Enhances blood flow in the extremities
- Dose: Tablet form – 120-160mg daily

### Globe Artichoke

- Reduces cholesterol and triglycerides
- Decreases blood sugar
- Dose: 1-3g dried leaves/stem/root daily
- Caution: not to use in untreated gallbladder disease

### Amla Berry

- Lowers total cholesterol
- Decreases bad LDL cholesterol
- Reduces Lipoprotein A
- Dose: 500mg daily

### Fenugreek Seed

- Lowers total cholesterol and triglycerides
- Lowers blood sugars and improves insulin sensitivity
- Dose: 2 teaspoons, 3 x each day

### Hibiscus

- Reduces BP
- Lowers blood fats
- Improves sugar metabolism
- Assists with weight loss
- Dose: 1-3g per day

### Bergamot Orange

- Reduces bad unhealthy fats
- Improves circulation in small blood vessels
- Lowers the blood sugar
- Protects against fatty liver
- Dose: juice (and some rind) of one orange daily or supplement

### Bitter Melon

- Antioxidant
- Lowers blood glucose through insulin-like compounds
- Dose: 500-2000mg daily

### Ceylon Cinnamon

- Reduces fasting glucose & post-meal glucose
- Improves long-term blood sugar control
- Enhances insulin sensitivity
- Dose: 1-3g bark daily

## Herbs for Gut Health

### Peppermint

- Treats colic, dyspepsia, wind, bloating, nausea, and cramps
- Improves the digestive process
- For irritable bowel syndrome
- Dose: 3g dried leaves daily

### Chamomile

- Treats colic, wind, bloating, nausea, and cramps
- Particularly helpful if there is underlying anxiety
- For irritable bowel syndrome
- Dose: 3g dried flowers daily

### Slippery Elm or Marshmallow

- Soothing to the gut – for inflammation and ulcers
- Relieves constipation
- Dose: Heaped teaspoon of the slippery elm bark or marshmallow root twice a day. To take this, you can put a heaped teaspoon in a room temperature beverage of your choice, vigorously stir it in, and drink it quickly before it becomes too gluggy to drink

### Ginger

- Treats slow digestion
- Anti-nausea
- For motion sickness and pregnancy related nausea
- Dose: 1g dried root daily

### **Meadowsweet**

- Treats dyspepsia, reflux or heartburn, and stomach ulcers
- Dose: 3g dried flowers/leaves daily
- Caution: do not use in pregnancy, children or those with salicylate sensitivity

### **Dandelion Root**

- Treats dyspepsia, loss of appetite, chronic constipation
- Enhances the liver function and bile production
- Dose: 6g dried root daily
- Caution: not to use in closed bile ducts, gallbladder inflammation or bowel obstruction

## **Herbs for the Urinary System**

### **Cornsilk**

- Soothing for the urinary tract
- Gentle diuretic
- Use in urinary tract infections and kidney stones
- Dose: 6g dried green silk daily

### **Buchu**

- Urinary antiseptic
- For use in recurrent and chronic infections of the urinary tract and the prostate
- Dose: 2-3g dried leaves daily
- Caution: avoid in pregnancy

### **Couch Grass Rhizome**

- Soothing to the urinary tract
- Gentle diuretic
- Helpful in bladder infections and irritation/ inflammation in the urinary tract or the prostate
- Dose: 6g dried rhizome daily

### **Cranberry**

- Antibacterial
- Prevents urinary tract infections
- Dose: 250ml glass of juice or supplement (dried powdered) form

### **Dandelion Leaf**

- Gentle diuretic
- Helps prevent urinary tract infections
- Dose: 5-10g dried leaves daily
- Caution: not to use in closed bile ducts, gallbladder inflammation or bowel obstruction; avoid if you are on diuretic medications or have chronic kidney disease

### **Saw Palmetto**

- Used to treat early prostate enlargement
- Improves urinary frequency, flow rate, retention of urine, night urination and pain with passing urine
- Dose: 3g dried berry pulp daily

## **Herbs for Ladies**

### **Chaste Berry**

- Gently helps to balance your hormones – both the oestrogen and progesterone
- For use in menopause, PMS, endometriosis, fibroids, heavy bleeding and infertility
- Dose: 1g dried berries daily

### **Red Clover**

- Contains phyto-oestrogens
- Good for menopause and skin health
- Dose: 6g of the dried flowers daily

### **Sage**

- Great for hot flushes
- Dose: 3g dried leaf daily

## **Herbs for Nervous System**

### **Passionflower**

- Mild sedative and anti-anxiety actions
- For insomnia and anxiety disorders

- Helps with nerve pain
- Dose: 3g dried plant daily

### **Skullcap**

- Mild sedative and calmate
- For insomnia, depression and anxiety
- Helps manage fatigue and tiredness
- Dose: 3-6g dried plant daily

### **Valerian**

- This a well-known gentle tranquilising and calming herb
- It is helpful in treating most anxiety or nervous tension states, and insomnia
- Dose: 3-6 grams of the dried root daily
- It's best not to use with sedative drugs or alcohol

### **Oats**

- Treats mental exhaustion and depression
- Dose: 6g dried green oats daily
- Caution: avoid in Coeliac Disease

### **Damiana**

- Treats stress and anxiety
- Aphrodisiac
- Dose: 3-6g dried stems/ leaves daily

### **Withania**

- Mild sedative
- Relieves stress, tensions and anxiety
- Promotes learning and memory
- Dose: 3-6g dried root daily

## **Herbs in the Musculoskeletal System**

### **Celery seed**

- Eliminates uric acid via the kidneys
- Helps gout and arthritis
- Dose: 3g dried seed daily
- Caution: not to use if there is inflammation of the kidneys, or pregnancy

### **White Willow Bark**

- Natural anti-inflammatory
- Relieves muscular aches and pains, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and gout
- Treats fever
- Dose: 3g dried bark daily
- Caution: do not use in pregnancy, children or those with salicylate allergy

### **Turmeric**

- Natural anti-inflammatory
- For osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis
- Dose: 3g dried root daily
- Caution: can irritate the stomach, not to use if you have gallstones or blockage in the bile duct

### **Devil's Claw**

- Natural anti-inflammatory
- Relieves muscle and tendon aches and pains, back pain, and pain from osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and gout
- Dose: 1-3g dried tuber daily
- Caution: diabetics be careful as it lowers blood sugar

### **Bogbean**

- Natural anti-inflammatory
- For rheumatoid arthritis
- Dose: 3g dried leaves daily

### **Meadowsweet**

- Natural anti-inflammatory
- For muscle and joint pains
- Dose: 3g dried flowers/leaves daily
- Caution: do not use in pregnancy, children or those with salicylate sensitivity