

Medicinal Plants--Basic Recipes

Tea Infusions and Decoctions

Infusions, or what most people commonly think of as tea, are made from parts of plants such as leaves, flowers, and stems, etc.— the more delicate pieces. Decoctions are basically longer infusions needed for woody parts, like roots and bark. The longer you infuse your herbs and the more herbs you use in your infusion, the stronger and more potent the tea will be. Some herbs have a sweet spot, but generally you can follow this basic outline.

To make an 8 oz., single-serve infusion,

- 1 TBSP of dried herbs (or about 2 TBSP of fresh herbs)
- Steep in 1 cup of boiling water (cooled about a minute)
- Cover with a lid or towel to keep steam and the medicinal extractions from escaping into the air
- Steep for about 20 minutes or longer to extract nutrients and medicinal proprieties
- Strain and drink

*If you wish, you may make more than one serving at once and store some of the strained tea in the refrigerator for a few days. Some medicinal teas, however, seem to be more beneficial taken warm, especially in the case of digestive problems.

*You can also cold brew teas by simply steeping them in cold water overnight or in the sun for a few hours, but it will not be as potent.

To make a decoction,

- Simmer the herbs for 25-45 minutes
- Strain and drink
- Or...Remove from heat and let stand overnight before straining and drinking.

Oil Infusions for Topical Treatment

I like to make solar infusions, but you can also use a double-broiler method (similar to making tea) to extract the healing properties of a plant.

Solar Infusion

- Chop, cut, or crush dried or fresh herbs (at least wilt the herbs some so that all the water is evaporated)
- Place herbs in glass jar
- Cover with 1-2 inches of high quality vegetable oil (I use extra virgin olive oil)
- Let sit and steep in a warm, sunny place for 2-4 weeks
- Strain and store in cabinet

*You may also gently melt beeswax or shea butter to mix with the oil to make a salve. I often leave my oils without anything to thicken it, depending on what I tend to use it for. If you intend to travel with it at all, I recommend creating a salve.

Double-broiler method

- Chop, cut, or crush dried or fresh herbs (at least wilt the herbs some so that all the water is evaporated)
 - Place in double-broiler, cover with 1-2 inches of oil
 - SLOWLY simmer the oil for 30 minutes or longer until it becomes aromatic and oil changes color slightly
 - Strain and store
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Tinctures

Tinctures are concentrated extractions (usually alcohol extractions) that draw the medicinal action of a given plant. I use 80-proof vodka for my tinctures, but you can also use vinegar or vegetable glycerin in your extractions (I have never used either). For most tinctures, any 80-proof alcohol is usually good to use. However, some herbs need to have a higher alcohol content to extract certain compounds. Alcohol tinctures will last years to forever, whereas glycerin will only last a few years and vinegar about a year or a little over. I like to make alcohol extractions because they keep so well and are so easy to take and even transport. They also work very quickly and are very effective in treating illness.

Alcohol Tincture

- Finely cut up your fresh or dried herbs (if your herbs are fresh, you may want to let them wilt a little bit to get rid of some of the extra moisture)
 - Place in a glass jar, about ½ to 2/3 full
 - Pour alcohol over it, covering it by around 2 inches
 - Place a good lid over the jar and date it
 - Let sit for 4-6 weeks, attempting to shake daily (to help release plant compounds and mix with the alcohol)
 - Strain and store in a glass jar with a tight lid inside of a cabinet or other darker place
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Syrups

Elderberry syrup is one of the most common medicinal syrups that has gained popularity lately. If they are made with sugar or maple syrup instead of honey, they can be a good option for young infants. They can last for a while at room temperature, or a few months in the fridge

- Place herbs in a pot of water (about 4 TBSP of herb to 1 quart of water)
- Bring to a slow simmer and partially cover
- Simmer to about half the original volume
- Strain herbs from liquid
- Measure the liquid and add the same amount of sweetener (honey, sugar, or maple syrup) to it in the pot
- Warm on low heat until thoroughly combined (or until the mixture is as thick as you'd like it)
- Remove from heat and store refrigerated in glass jars

You may add other flavorings when finished or little bit of alcohol at the end to help preserve the syrup.

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Poultice

A medicinal poultice can be used in treating a wound or skin infection. I tend to think of poultices as drawing but they can also soothe and otherwise aid in healing.

- Tear, cut or mash herbs with a little bit of hot water (sometimes adding clay or flour to make a paste)
- Place directly over affected area or place in a sock or cloth bag and place on skin

*You may also add heat over top of the poultice too.

*In a pinch, you can also mix herbs with a bit of saliva and place on skin; if the herb is a safe one to consume, you can just chew it up into a ball and use it on your skin. I have done this several times with plantain leaves for cuts and dandelion leaves for nettle stings.

*A **compress** is similar to a poultice, but you use a very strong tea instead of the mashed up plant. You can use it hot to increase blood flow and draw out infection or cold to reduce swelling and inflammation; or use a hot compress, alternating every few minutes with ice, to move blood throughout a given area.

Dosage

The following are dosage instructions that I find useful and reference often. I got these from a book by Rosemary Gladstone, a well-known herbalist in the United States. Again, this is not official medical advice and you will find variations on dosage amounts depending on which herbalist you reference, but I have used many of these herbal remedies on myself, my husband, and my children (including alcohol tinctures in safe amounts) effectively and without the risk of many modern medications.

Dosage for acute (short-term) illness

Small doses given frequently

Syrup	½-1 tsp. every 2 hours
Tea	¼ C. every half hour
Tincture	¼ tsp-1/2 tsp. every hour
Topical Treatments	As needed

Dosage for chronic illness

Larger doses regularly, over a longer period of time

Syrup	1-2 Tbsp, twice daily, or as needed
Tea	3-4 C. daily
Tincture	½-1 tsp., two or three times daily
Topical Treatments	As needed

Adjustments for children

I adjust these depending on my child's size/weight. My son is nearly as big as his sister who is two and a half years older, so I tend to give him nearly as much as I give her. Dosage depends more on weight, metabolism, and vitality, than actual age, so I would adjust less or more depending on the child.

Teas (when adult dosage is 1 Cup, use these conversions)	
Age	Dosage
Under 2	½-1 tsp.
2-4 years	2 tsp.
4-7 years	1 Tbsp.
7-12 years	2 Tbsp.
Tinctures (when adult dosage is 1 teaspoon, use this ratio)	
Under 3 months	2 drops
3-6 months	3 drops
6-9 months	4 drops
9-12 months	5 drops
12-18 months	7 drops
18-24 months	8 drops
2-3 years	10 drops
3-4 years	12 drops
4-6 years	15 drops
6-9 years	24 drops
9-12 years	30 drops

Dropper Conversions

Some instructions for taking tinctures go by dropperfuls, here are some conversions.

Dropper Measure	Teaspoon Measure	Milliliter Measure
1 dropperful (35 drops)	¼ teaspoon	1 ml
2 ½ dropperfuls (88 drops)	½ teaspoon	2.5 ml
5 dropperfuls (175 drops)	1 teaspoon	5 ml

Recipes To Try

Here are some ways that I use medicinal herbs with my family in southwest Michigan. Most, if not all, of these herbs can either be foraged from the wild or easily grown in my zone.

Elderberry Syrup

Follow directions for syrup. You can add cloves or cinnamon. Take aggressively when you feel illness coming on. This is good for coughs, colds, and flus. Make with maple syrup or sugar for use with infants.

Garlic and/or Onion Honey/Syrup

This can really help ward off a cold or other virus, especially when you first feel it coming on; take a half or full teaspoon hourly. Or take it a few times a day to support your body in the midst of battling a virus.

- Cut onion and garlic and place in a pan.
- Barley cover with honey.
- Heat on low until the bulbs are mushy and aromatic.

Garlic Infused Honey

Another option...This is great for a sore throat, especially for kids!

- I have just been peeling cloves of garlic and maybe cutting in half.
- Place in glass jar.
- Cover in honey.
- Stir or turn the jar to coat all of the garlic. Screw the lid on. You may have to stir for a few days.
- Place in cabinet and let infuse for 2-4 weeks.
- I leave the garlic cloves set in the honey.
- Take a teaspoon as needed or a whole or half clove of garlic.
- Great to cook with too!

Echinacea Tincture

The idea is that the energy of the plant is focused into different parts at different times of the year. So we are getting the best of all of it with the following method. This tincture has worked like a charm in fighting off viruses and infections for my husband and myself.

Harvest some leaves in the early summer when this plant begins to grow. Process as tincture.

Harvest some flowers in the summer and add to tincture.

Harvest roots in fall. Add to tincture.

Mucus and Cough-Be-Gone Tincture

- Red Clover
- Mullein Root
- Marshmallow Root

Digestive Tea

I've used several different blends. Here are some good ones to try together. I usually add cinnamon and honey too.

- Marshmallow root
- Chamomile
- Lemon Balm
- Catnip
- Ginger root

Drawing Oil or Salve

I use this for burns, as well as cuts. It can help to draw out infection/impurities. I've used it to help draw out splinters. It's also antibiotic.

Infuse:

- Lavender
- St. John's Wort
- Calendula
- Add melted beeswax or shea butter if desired

Another option for cuts, adding yarrow to help stop bleeding and prevent infection.

- Lavender
- Calendula
- St. John's Wort
- Yarrow

Earache Drops

Drop in ears and then let drain into ear canal.

Infuse

- Mullein flowers/buds
- Garlic

Tooth Infection Tincture

Not a combination that I have used yet. I've only used plantain. Also, chewing some plantain and adding it on the affected area can be beneficial. Yarrow root can also be placed directly in the mouth.

- Yarrow
- Plantain