

Workshop 2: Herbs & Plants for Colds, Coughs and 'Flu

Thyme Bath, Inhalation and Syrup
Thyme is very warming and anti-viral

30g or 1 oz of herb to 600ml or 1 pint of water in a stainless steel pot. Bring to boil, cover and simmer for about 20 mins or until the liquid is reduced by a quarter. Strain all the herbs out carefully through a muslin or fine sieve. This is a decoction and it can be used in a bath or inhalation from a bowl (do NOT cover heads of infants with a towel).

For the **syrup**, reduce the decoction further until you only have a quarter of the liquid you started with. Add twice as much sugar than liquid (and even a bit more than twice if using honey, because of honey's water content) and stir until all is dissolved. Store in a sterilised bottle without too much air space. Keep in the fridge and take a tea or table spoon or two for sore throats and coughs, up to four times a day.

Garlic Honey
Garlic is anti-microbial and anti-allergic, as well as helping to clear mucus

Chop enough garlic cloves to fill a small jar (each clove in half or in three). Cover with honey and let it stand overnight. The syrup / honey can be strained off OR the garlic can be left in, to taste, although if left in it won't keep. A typical child's dose is 1 teaspoon, 2-3 times a day. This honey (and honeyed garlic) can also be used in stir-fries!

Also a chopped piece of garlic can be swallowed in a teaspoon of honey without being chewed.. this is the best "garlic tablet" there is, and can be taken as a preventative as well as a remedy..not recommended for infants or small children (better to have just the garlic infused honey).

Mustard Footbath
Great for the shivers and a head cold, as well as aching feet!

Add 1 tablespoon of mustard powder to a basin of hot water and soak feet in it, 10 mins (5 for children over 24 months).

Onion Milk
For dry coughs and sticky phlegm

Boil onions in milk. Let the milk cool, and then drink. It is soothing for the throat and milk stimulates the production of thinner phlegm. Very nice for children and for infants, a few teaspoons is enough.

Sage gargle
For sore throats (and / or bleeding gums)

Prepare one cup of strong sage tea (cover some sage leaves with boiling water, cover cup and let it infuse for 5 mins) and add a pinch of salt and a pinch of cayenne pepper. Gargle frequently.

Cinnamon twigs

Cinnamon is anti-microbial too as well as warming (which is good for both colds and for the digestion): I like to put them in a milk pan with milk and heat them up together. You can leave the twigs in or take them out when drinking, and re-use them a few times!

Elderflower tea

Elderflowers are traditionally used to expel fevers, but they are also good at reducing inflamed sinuses and drying up mucus. Great on its own and drink liberally, but for the adventurous, combine with peppermint and yarrow, the herbalist's traditional colds & 'flu recipe!

Catnip tea & Limeflower

Not easy to find in herbal teabags (although some health food shops might stock it) but a good pot plant to have, especially for those with children: it's a well-known tea for feverish, restless, coldy infants and kids, although I also like Limeflower tea for this too, which is easier to buy. Catnip and limeflower - unlike Elderflower - induce sleepiness...

Grated Ginger: tea and baths

Never peel ginger!! Just wash and grate...a teaspoon for a mug of hot water (can add lemon and honey too): this is a great anti-colds / sore throat tea...or about 4-6 tablespoons in a pan of hot water, simmer for 10 mins and strain into your bath or as a hand / foot bath. I prepared a hand bath for some three-year olds who had been playing outside for an hour and came in with frozen fingers.. grated ginger tea is also good for nausea/morning sickness.

A Note on Dosage, Babies and Infants...

For those under 12 months, no honey of course, but also the best way of taking in herbs is through baths...babies have ultra-absorbant skin, so they can drink through it. If your baby is chesty and congested, prepare an infusion/decoction of thyme tea and add to the baby's bath (of course making sure the temperature is cool enough for the baby for bathing in). For infants 12-24 months, a few teaspoons of tea is fine...and then small cups of tea from 24 months onwards. The three-year olds quite enjoy sipping a small (chinese tea-size) cup of herbal tea during the workshops... Another old-wives' remedy for babies with colds is to slice an onion in half and put it next to the baby's cot overnight...I haven't tried this, but would be grateful for any feedback (I admit this is not a scientific trial!)



Elderflower