

Today's



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HERBS FOR SUMMER HEALTH

Just about everyone looks forward to the summer months when school is out and more time can be spent outside. Backpacking, hiking, camping, boating, and bike riding are just a few of the adventures available. It's a time for connecting and becoming reacquainted with nature while exploring the outdoors. Family camping trips and backpacking through the wilderness can help us put our hectic lives in perspective and renew as well as refresh the body. Along with the adventures, a few bumps, bruises, bites and stings are expected. Before the summer holiday begins, prepare by having some herbal remedies on hand to help with minor accidents that may occur.

Aloe vera

Aloe is one of the best choices for the first aid kit. Commercial preparations can be taken along on trips. A leaf from the plant can be sealed in a zip lock bag and tucked in the first aid kit for short term use. The plant has numerous healing abilities and can be used on minor burns, rashes, bumps, scrapes and bruises. The aloe plant is very useful for many conditions.

Modern research has proven many of the benefits of Aloe vera. It has been used effectively for treating radiation burns, skin disorders, wounds, sunburn and dermatitis, to name a few. Aloe vera can help clean, soothe and relieve pain on contact. It penetrates through all three layers of the skin rapidly to promote healing. There are many different types of aloe products. Some include:

Aloe gel: This is the undiluted goeey substance that is

found in the center of the leaves.

Aloe concentrate: The concentrate is the gel when the water content has been removed.

Aloe juice: The juice is a digestible version of the aloe plant made from the gel with at least 50 percent Aloe vera gel.

Aloe latex (aloin): The latex is the bitter yellow liquid from the pericyclic tubules of the outer rind of the leaf. The main constituent of this is aloin.¹

Aloe is known for its healing and soothing effect on burns, wounds, and rashes. It can help clean, soothe and relieve pain on contact. It is able to penetrate all three layers of the skin rapidly to promote healing. It contains salicylic acid and magnesium which work together to produce an aspirin like analgesic and anti-inflammatory effect. The transparent gel on the inner leaf is applied directly to areas of the skin to treat burns, wounds, skin irritations and frostbite. The gel can be commonly found in many first-aid creams.

Research has found that aloe when applied externally can actually help speed healing and restore skin tissue.² It also aids in healing when used externally in cases of wounds, frostbite and burns.³ The healing of burns may be due in part to the moisturizing effect of aloe. It is easily absorbed into the skin preventing the air from drying the damaged skin tissue.⁴ Aloe can help with many minor irritations that can occur during the summer months.

Steven R. Schechter, N.D. conducted a study in 1967 at the Children's Hospital in Cincinnati to determine the healing benefits of aloe. Research animals were being treated for laser burns. Dr. Schechter used several different preparations and consistently found the aloe vera gel to produce the most healing results. He found the gel to help with many skin disorders including burns, lesions and cancers.⁵

As much as we try to avoid sun exposure, it is almost

impossible to completely avoid getting a sunburn at some point in our lives. We may forget the sunscreen or stay out longer than expected. Excessive exposure to the sun can be detrimental to health. But, aloe vera may help to lessen the damaging effects of the sun. A sunburn can damage the skin as well as the immune system. Research by Dr. Faith Strickland of the Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas points to the possibility of aloe vera helping to eliminate the damage done to the immune system and skin. It may even help to restore the immune system to full function.

Many individuals have found that having an aloe vera plant growing in the home, within easy access, is an easy and simple way to treat common injuries. Commercial preparations are also available which contain aloe. Scientists have found the plant to contain antiseptic, antiviral, antibacterial, anesthetic and tissue healing properties. So why shouldn't it be useful as a natural home remedy? Simply break off a leaf of the plant and slice down the middle of the leaf. Apply the thick inner gel to the injury whether it be a burn, insect bite, abrasion, scrape, rash, or other injury. The cut leaf can be placed directly on the wound and wrapped with gauze to secure it into place for a more serious injury. The skin will soak up of the gel as it soothes the affected area.

Toxicity is rare, but some do have allergic reactions to Aloe vera products. The aloin, found in the bitter yellow latex, containing anthraquinones, may cause severe cramping and should be avoided by pregnant women and children. Aloe can also help with the following:

- Kidney Stones
- Arthritis
- Viral, bacterial and fungal infections
- AIDS
- Cancer
- Ulcers
- Constipation
- Gum disease
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Digestion

Endnotes

1 Michael T. Murray, *The Healing Power of Herbs*. (Rocklin, CA: Prima Publishing, 1995, 30).

2 Reader's Digest Family Guide To Natural Medicine (Pleasantville, New York:

The Reader's Digest Association, 1993, 296).

3 Michael A. Weiner and Janet A. Weiner, *Herbs That Heal* (Mill Valley, CA: Quantum Books, 1994, p 61).

4 The Lawrence Review of Natural Products, 2.

5 Steven R. Schechter, "Aloe Vera," *Let's Live*, December 1994, 51.

TEA TREE OIL

(*Meleleuca alternifolia*)

Another important component of the first aid kit is tea tree oil. It can help with many minor conditions that commonly occur. Some include athlete's foot, acne, boils, burns, warts, vaginal infections, tonsillitis, sinus infections, ringworm, skin rashes, impetigo, herpes, corns, head lice, cold sores, canker sores, insect bites, insect repellent and fungal infections. It is truly a remarkable oil with valuable properties for healing and to prevent infection.

Tea tree oil is extracted from the leaves of *Melaleuca alternifolia* which is a shrub like tree found in the northeast tropical coastal region of New South Wales and Queensland, Australia. There are over 300 different varieties of tea tree but only a few are known to produce the valuable, medicinal oil.

Tea tree oil contains at least 48 different organic compounds. The compounds work together to produce the healing abilities found in the oil. Research done in the 1950s and early 1960s found that tea tree oil is a germicide and fungicide with additional characteristics of dissolving pus and debris.¹ Recent studies have found it effective for thrush, vaginal infections of candida albicans, staph infections, athlete's foot, hair and scalp problems, mouth sores, muscle and joint pain, pain, and boils.²

Tea tree oil is a valuable antiseptic for skin infections. It is able to penetrate the epidermis to heal from within. Clinical studies have found that tea tree oil can heal quickly and with less scarring than other treatments. The oil is even effective against *Staphylococcus aureus*, which is often difficult to treat and is becoming resistant to antibiotic therapy. The oil can be applied two to three times a day with full strength or diluted. If an irritation occurs, a diluted solution can be tried. Even highly diluted concentrations have been found to heal in clinical studies.

Organisms against which tea tree oil has been shown to be effective include aspergillus, baceroides, *Candida*, clostridium, cryptosporidium, diptheroids, *E. Coli*, enter-

obacter, epidermophyton, fusobacterium, gonococcus, hemophilus, herpes viruses, meningococcus, microsporidium, petococcus, proteus, pseudomonas, spirochetes, staph, strep, trichinosis, and trichophyton³

Tea tree oil is an effective bactericide. It is safe for healthy tissue. It is a strong organic solvent and will help heal and disperse pus in pimples and wounds. It has been used to neutralize the venom of minor insect bites. It is able to kill bacteria by penetrating the skin layers and reaching deep into abscesses in the gums and even beneath the fingernails. It has been found to have some of the strongest antimicrobial properties ever discovered in a plant.⁴ Tea tree oil can help with fungal infections such as candida. Dr. Eduardo F. Pena, M.D. has studied *Melaleuca alternifolia* oil for its value in treating vaginitis and candida albicans.⁵ In studying candida researchers have gone to the extreme of infecting healthy volunteers with the organism. The yeasts proceeded to invade the bloodstream and internal organs. Then they were cultured from these regions. However, within a matter of hours yeasts could no longer be cultured, indicating that the immune systems of these individuals efficiently cleared the organisms from the tissues. Unfortunately, in today's era a great many people are afflicted with compromised immune function.⁶

Tea tree oil acts as a mild anesthetic when applied to painful areas and to soothe cuts, burns, and mouth sores. It can help heal as well as reduce scarring. Burn victims in Australia are often treated with tea tree oil to help prevent infection, relieve pain and speed healing.

Tea tree oil can help prevent and heal acne. Tea tree oil has a reputation of being gentle on the skin. It does not produce the side effects of some medications such as dry skin, stinging, burning and slight redness after application.

Tea tree oil can help to heal and prevent infections from occurring. A minor scrape or scratch can sometimes result in infection. Tea tree oil applied to the area can help prevent infection. The oil is effective in healing many types of bacteria but the most amazing thing is that it does not damage the skin tissue. Many of the recommended treatments can actually do damage to the skin resulting in scarring and sensitivity.

Tea tree oil can be used to prevent bites and stings. Bugs don't like the scent and may stay away. There is no way to entirely void coming into contact with insects. Anyone who likes to be outdoors is vulnerable. Whether you live in the city or the country or anywhere in between, bugs abound. Tea tree oil or lotions and creams containing

the oil can also be used to prevent bites. Insects don't like the scent of the oil and are actually repelled by it.

The Australian tea tree oil has been found to be highly effective in treating infections and destroying microbes while not irritating the skin. Many antiseptics can cause skin irritation, but tea tree oil seems to cause no harm to skin tissue.

Tea tree oil is an antiseptic and generally not taken internally. Some evidence has suggested mild organ damage from internal use. The oil when absorbed through the skin is non-toxic. Tea tree oil is most often recommended for exposed surfaces of the body such as the skin tissue and the mucous membranes. It should be noted that the original Australian aborigines made tea from the leaves without adverse affects. And the early settlers followed their example with positive results. But the tea was a very diluted form and the distilled oil is much stronger.

Endnotes

1. Cynthia B. Olsen. Australian Tea Tree Oil. (Pagosa Springs, CO: Kali Press, 1991).
2. James F. Balch MD and Phyllis A. Balch, Prescription for Nutritional Healing. (Garden City Park, N.Y.: Avery Publishing Group Inc., 1990), 681, 682.
3. Cass Ingram, Killed On Contact. (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Literary Visions Publishing, Inc.), 15.
4. Michael A. Schmidt, Lendon H. Smith and Keith W. Sehnert. Beyond Antibiotics. (Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books), 207.
5. Olsen, 8.
6. Ingram, 64-65.

HERBAL FIRST AID KIT

It is important to know the area where you will be going to determine plants that will be available in case they are needed and access to emergency help if necessary. The herbal first aid kit is meant to be used for minor conditions that may occur while traveling. Any serious condition should be seen by a health care professional. Gathering herbs along the trail can be fun as well as useful. Simple plant remedies can be brought along in the first aid kit.

Major injuries require immediate medical attention by a professional. Minor problems can often be taken care of with simple herbal remedies. Supplies can be obtained from the local health food store or by collecting plants locally.

Along with the herbs, a few supplies should be part of the kit available at the local drugstore or market.

1. scissors
2. thermometer
3. band aids of all sizes
4. gauze
5. tweezers
6. blister kit
7. needle
8. moleskin for blisters
9. adhesive tape
10. first aid instruction manual
11. herbal first aid manual

ALOE VERA: Aloe is great for minor skin abrasions, burns and as a natural laxative. It is excellent to soothe and repair damage from a sunburn. Aloe can be applied to stings and bites to soothe and heal.

TEA TREE OIL: Tea tree oil is a natural antiseptic and contains many antibacterial, antifungal and antiviral properties. It helps to speed the healing process and is excellent to apply externally on wounds to promote healing and prevent infection. It is also a natural bug repellent and can soothe and promote healing after bites and stings.

ECHINACEA: One of the most often used herbs, echinacea is useful for preventing infection by stimulating the immune function. It can be found in herbal salve preparations and applied directly to the wound. A salve can also be applied to skin irritations from contact with poison ivy or oak.

LAVENDER: Lavender is a natural bug repellent and can be applied topically to bites and stings.

GINGER: Ginger root is excellent for an upset stomach. It is effective when used to combat motion and altitude sickness. Studies have found ginger to be just as effective when treating motion sickness due to riding in the car, boating or flying in and airplane, as over the counter remedies which often have side effects such as drowsiness. Ginger can be made into a tea or taken in capsule form.

ARNICA: Arnica can be applied externally to areas of bruising and swelling, but not to broken skin. It can help to reduce inflammation.

PLANTAIN: A poultice of plantain can help reduce inflammation when applied to the affected area. It can also help with bites, stings, scratches and cuts.

GARLIC: Along with being a natural antibiotic to help prevent infection, garlic also helps to keep mosquitoes away. They don't seem to like the scent of garlic. Capsules or pills should be taken internally.

CAYENNE (CAPSICUM): This is effective for both internal and external bleeding. Externally, apply pressure and raise affected area. Sprinkle cayenne powder over the wound.

MINT: Mint leaves, often found growing in the wild, can be made into a tea to help with digestion and calm the nerves. Some members of the mint family include peppermint, spearmint, catnip and horsemint.

FEVERFEW: This daisy like plant found growing in the wild, can help with migraine headaches and inflammation.

I N T H E N E W S

Chew the leaves, make into a tea or take in capsule form. Some have developed mouth irritations from chewing the leaves.

Tea Tree Oil Fights Staph Infection

There is much concern regarding the overuse of antibiotics leading to drug resistant strains of bacteria. Some forms of bacteria are difficult to control as they change form. Tea tree oil holds promise as an effective treatment for inactivating *Staphylococcus aureus*.

A study reported in the *Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy*, (1995; 35: 421-45), and lead by Dr. C. F. Carson, researched tea tree oil at the University of Western Australia. The results were significant. Tea tree oil successfully inactivated the staph bacteria which was resistant to methicillin, a salt of penicillin. It is a versatile substance with a broad spectrum of capabilities. It is generally used topically.

Blueberries for Health

Blueberries are packed full of nutritional value. A study published in the *Food and Nutrition Research Briefs*, January, 1997, found that two-thirds of a cup of blueberries had more antioxidants than the recommended daily amounts of vitamins E and C. Blueberries were followed by Concord grape juice, strawberries, kale and spinach in their antioxidant content.

Antioxidants are an important part of optimal health. They protect the body from free radical damage which can lead to a variety of conditions such as aging, cancer, heart disease and other diseases. Adding blueberries could aid in protecting the body and strengthening the immune response.

Worldwide Concern About Antibiotic Overuse

A recent report called for doctors throughout the world to be careful in administering antibiotics needlessly. Overuse of antibiotics has led to germ mutations resistant and untreatable with current antibiotics. Pediatricians in the United States have received a brochure from the American Academy of Pediatrics urging them to take precautions before prescribing. Antibiotics are not always the answer as they do not work on viral infections which cause the common cold, sore throats and some ear infections.

Staphylococcus aureus is one example of an antibiotic

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resistant strain. Over 90 percent of this staph strain are resistant to penicillin and other antibiotics. And other bacteria are also developing a resistance to antibiotic therapy. Save antibiotics for conditions that require their use.

Berry Bash Smoothie

- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup strawberries
- 1/2 cup peach juice
- 1 T. protein powder
- 1 cup vanilla frozen yogurt
- 1/2 cup plain yogurt

honey to taste if desired

Combine the juice and yogurt in then blender. Blend in the other ingredients until smooth.

Festive Fruit Salad

- 2 cups cubed cantaloupe
- 2 cups cubed honeydew melon
- 2 cups cubed, pineapple
- 2 starfruit, sliced
- 1 mango, cubed
- 1 banana, sliced
- 1 cup grated coconut
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1/3 cup lime juice
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 2 T. honey
- mint for garnish

Combine fruit and set aside. In blender add yogurt, juices, and honey and mix until smooth. Toss with fruit and serve with a mint leaf for garnish.

Yummy Yogurt Gazpacho

- 2 cups plain yogurt
- 4 T. olive oil
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 green pepper
- 4 tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1 medium cucumber, peeled and chopped
- 1/2 t. basil
- 1/2 t. cumin
- 2 T. cider vinegar

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Chill well before serving.

BOOK REVIEW

PUT COVER HERE

Aloe Vera, Woodland Health Series

Aloe vera is one of the most widely used plants for medicinal purposes. It has been used for over 4,000 years for its therapeutic benefits. *Aloe Vera*, a pamphlet written by Deanne Tenney, offers valuable information and up to date research on the aloe vera plant.

The benefits of the aloe plant are truly amazing. It has

been used to treat burns, radiation burns, skin disorders, wounds, scratches, sunburn, dermatitis, constipation, digestion, ulcer, kidney stones, bacterial and viral infections, and to relieve pain. It is widely used for skin disorders, but its benefits go far beyond the skin.

As a natural home remedy, there are few plants more valuable than the aloe. It is a simple and easy way to treat minor injuries. The plant contains antiseptic, antiviral, antibacterial, anesthetic and tissue healing properties. The *Aloe Vera* pamphlet offers historical as well as modern uses for this ancient plant. *Aloe Vera* is available through Woodland Publishing.

Tea Tree Oil, Woodland Health Series

Tea tree oil is derived from the leaves of the *Melaleuca alternifolia*, a shrub-like tree found in Australia. It contains significant medicinal value and beneficial properties. Another pamphlet in the Woodland Publishing Health Series, *Tea Tree Oil* offers historical uses as well as current scientific information.

The essential oil of the tea tree leaves is one of the most powerful essential oils. It is used extensively in Australia, and popularity is growing throughout the world. It contains antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties helping to prevent and heal infection.

Tea tree oil has been used successfully for many conditions such as athlete's foot, acne, burns, warts, vaginal yeast infections, ringworm, skin rashes, herpes, cold sores, canker sores, insect bites and in preventing infection to name a few. Tea tree oil is a natural alternative that can be used effectively for extended periods of time without

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