

Water Based Medicines

Internal Remedies

Tea

1 tablespoon dried herb or 2–3 tablespoons fresh herb per cup of water

Bring the water to a boil, add the herbs, cover, and let steep for 5 to 20 minutes.

Infusion

1 tablespoon dried herb per cup of water, or 1 ounce dried herb per quart of water

Steep the leaves in hot or cold water for at least 4 hours and up to overnight. This preparation will keep for 24 to 48 hours.

Hot infusion: Most herbs infuse well with hot water.

Cold infusion: Herbs that are highly mucilaginous infuse well in cold water.

Solar and lunar infusions: Let your infusions sit in the light and be blessed by the rays of the sun or moon.

Washes (Eyewash, Nasal Rinse, Gargle & Douche)

Prepare a saline solution by adding 1 teaspoon salt per quart of tea, infusion, or plain water. Use filtered or purified water and good-quality, unrefined salt.

Note: Double-strain eyewash, nasal rinse, and douche solutions through fine cotton muslin before using them.

Herbal Ice Cubes

Store teas, infusions, decoctions, or pressed plant juices in the freezer in ice cube trays. These are convenient for quick use later on and are great fun for kids.

Decoctions

1 tablespoon dried herb or 2–3 tablespoons fresh herb per cup of water

Combine the herbs and water in a pan and simmer, covered, over low heat for 20 to 30 minutes.

Syrups

Simmer a decoction until it has reduced its volume by half. Then strain, measure, and add ½ part honey.

Succus

Add enough alcohol to fresh plant juice that the resulting solution is 20 to 30% alcohol. The alcohol preserves the juice so that it will keep for a year in the refrigerator. Keep in mind that 100-proof vodka is only 50% alcohol by volume, so you would have to add 40 to 60% vodka by volume to preserve the succus.

External Remedies

Compress

Soak a piece of cotton in a strained infusion or herbal infused oil and place it on the skin. Cover with wool or cotton fabric and place a hot water bottle over it (if heat is appropriate). You can do a whole-body sheet wrap using the same method.

Poultice

Apply freshly bruised herbs directly to the skin or wrap in a cloth and place on the skin.

Herbal Bath

Add fresh herbs to the bathtub, or make an herbal infusion using fresh or dried herbs and add 1 – 2 quarts of the infusion to the bathwater.

Foot Bath

Soak feet in a warm herbal infusion.

Sitz Bath

Soak the perineal region in a warm herbal infusion.

Steam

Bring 2 to 3 inches of water to a boil in a large saucepan, turn off the heat, add ¼ cup of herbs, cover with a lid, and allow to steep for 3 to 5 minutes. Sit comfortably with the steam pot in front of you, remove the lid, drape a towel over your head and the steaming pot, and lean over to inhale the steam. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, then in through your mouth and out through your nose, repeating, for 5 to 10 minutes. If the steam is too hot, lift a corner of the towel to make a small exit path for the steam. While you don't want to burn yourself, remember that you do want a good dose of hot steam and volatile oils—that's the medicine!