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Home Herbal Pharmacy and Herbal First Aid

For almost every medicine, there is a natural alternative. Symptoms of everyday ailments can be alleviated through using some of the following herbal remedies and preparations. For those who are keen to avoid a reliance on synthetic medications for commonly experienced problems or complaints, or more frequently, recurring ailments, it is always advisable to plan an 'alternative' medicine cabinet. A medicine chest stocked with herbal remedies for common ailments or for minor first aid can prove very useful, particularly for small children who, in my experience, respond extremely well to herbal alternatives. Herbal medicines have a proven record of combating symptoms the natural way and would certainly appeal to those concerned about some of the stronger conventional drugs with unpleasant side-effects. It is important to note that some of these herbal remedies have been passed on thorough generations, based on traditional knowledge and folklore that have stood the test of time and prove to be tried and tested remedies.

The home herbal pharmacy provides a plethora of gentle, yet effective alternatives for a wide variety of common ailments and minor injuries requiring some first aid. With the increasing availability of such pre-prepared herbal remedies on the market, the options are many. Some preparations have been specifically formulated from tried and tested herbal medicines that have a long history of effective use. Some are specific in their action eg. herbal cough mixtures, sleep remedies etc...

The following is a useful guideline into how a home herbal pharmacy can be planned, from a simple medicine chest to herbal First Aid. However, it is important to bear in mind that all medication (whether natural or conventional) should be taken with advice and some caution, and for any serious condition or injury that warrants emergency treatment, proper help should be sought without delay. Never mix herbal medicines with conventional drugs without proper advice from a qualified and registered practitioner of herbal medicine or a consultation with a doctor about the condition being treated. To compile your chest, it is advisable to seek the advice of a medical herbalist, especially on some of the more popular over the counter (OTC) medicines. The more expensive brands do not necessarily mean better quality of the product since they may be of very poor quality or limited in their therapeutic value (they may contain sub-therapeutic doses). Always ensure that your stock is within the best before date since the same applies to medicines as it does to food and never stock up more than you would need as some of the herbs may go rancid, particularly in a warm or humid environment. If in doubt, keep some of the liquid preparations in the fridge.

THE MEDICINE CHEST (general use)

Colds and flu	Echinacea (best as a preventative treatment), ginger, elderflower tea, garlic
Sore throat, blocked nose, catarrh	Honey & lemon, oils of eucalyptus, menthol, peppermint and cajeput (inhalation), licorice
Coughs	OTC herbal cough syrups containing thyme, licorice, wild cherry bark
Indigestion & other digestive ailments (eg. bloating, acid indigestion/heartburn)	Peppermint oil, probiotics, tea made from caraway, aniseed and clove for indigestion. For heartburn, keep marshmallow tea or slippery elm tablets
Nausea, vomiting	Ginger (best as a tea). Also examine food intolerance issues if it's persistent
Sinus congestion	Inhalations of clove, menthol and eucalyptus oils
Headaches & migraines	Feverfew tablets, willow bark tablets
Toothache	Clove oil or cajeput oil (apply topically), willow bark tablets
Period pain	Cramp bark tablets, cypress and sage oils (topically)
Cystitis	Cranberry tablets, bearberry tablets, juniper berries (tablets or teas with all 3 herbs if symptoms are persistent or recurring)
Skin problems (eg. spots, pimples, rashes, allergic reactions)	Chamomile cream, calendula cream, lavender oil, tea tree lotion/oil
Earache, blocked ears or sinuses	Garlic oil, mullein, echinacea, goldenseal
Corns, verrucaes	Tea tree oil
Rheumatic aches & pains (muscular, joint)	Arnica gel/cream (topically), willow bark tablets,
Sleep problems (eg. Insomnia)	Valerian tablets/tea, lavender oil (inhalation)
Anxiety & stress	Passion flower & lemon balm (as tea), lavender oil (inhalation)
General pain	Willow bark tablets

Hangovers	Milk thistle tablets taken before a big night out, practical measures eg. increase water intake to prevent dehydration
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CHILDREN'S MEDICINE CHEST

Headlice	Hair wash lotion containing tea tree oil, thyme oil
Cuts & grazes	Tea tree oil, Echinacea, herbal antiseptic cream containing lavender, eucalyptus and tea tree (be careful with broken skin & seek advice from a medical herbalist first)
Bruises	Arnica cream or lotion
Sore throat	Throat sprays containing echinacea, thyme oil, licorice, marshmallow, mullein or plantain
Upset tummy	Peppermint oil, ginger lozengers. Fennel tea
Earache	Garlic oil (applied with a cotton wool tip applicator), herbal ear drops containing mullein, skullcap or cohosh root
Toothache	Clove oil or cajeput oil(applied directly to the gums), willow bark tablets
Fevers	Bathe in tepid infusions of yarrow or chamomile. Drink plenty elderflower tea
Sickness & diarrhoea	Artichoke for indigestion, black horehound for nausea & vomiting, strong black tea or charcoal tablets for diarrhoea
Travel sickness	Ginger tablets or sweets

HERBAL FIRST AID (The natural home pharmacy)

General all-purpose remedies:

- **Echinacea** – general all-purpose antimicrobial both internally and externally. It boosts immune responses so good for offering protection against further infection or exacerbation of current infections. Excellent prophylactic to the common cold
- **Tea Tree Oil** – excellent all-round antimicrobial (including fungal infections and protects against parasites eg. lice, ticks, parasitic worms etc...). Very good antiseptic action too so good for preventing further infection but needs to be diluted before use for safety
- **Lavender** – good antiseptic and antimicrobial. Also has pain-relieving properties, it is good for stress & general nervous conditions and it smells nice too! It is one of the few EOs that can be safely use neat.
- **Willow bark tablets** – good all-round painkiller and effective anti-inflammatory

Seek proper advice from a qualified and registered practitioner of herbal medicine on dosages and administration prior to any self-administration.

Specific First Aid

Fever	Elderflower or yarrow tea. Practical measures for cooling the body
Nosebleeds	Cotton wool soaked in witch hazel lotion into nostrils. Practical measures eg. altering head position can help too
Burns & scalds	Aloe vera gel applied directly onto the burn (if you have a fresh plant, cut a fleshy leaf and use the clear, viscous liquid that oozes out from then leaf), marigold tea, witch hazel lotion, green or black tea, plantain or St. John's Wort tea
Fainting	Inhale peppermint oil
Shock	Chamomile , lemon balm or passion flower as a tea
Insect bites & stings	Essential oil of lavender. A good insect repellent is a combination of oils of lavender, citronella, eucalyptus, cedarwood & lemongrass. Limit sugary foods to avoid insects being attracted to the sweet smell released from the body. Also, witch hazel & plantain to apply topically to soothe & heal the skin
Cuts & grazes	Echinacea tincture (topically), tea tree oil & witch hazel cream
Bruises	Arnica, calendula, comfrey & cayenne cream
Sprains & strains Muscle Aches	Arnica, witch hazel & St. John's Wort prepared as a cream or liniment. Oils can be added such as camphor, eucalyptus, rosemary or clove. Comfrey cream (for healing), turmeric tablets (for inflammation)
Splinters	Use flat-ended tweezers to pull out any type of splinter or foreign body in the skin (eg. ticks). Wipe the affected area with tea tree oil, lavender or tincture of echinacea
Allergic reactions	Petasites or butterbur, echinacea, eyebright, chamomile, quercitin supplements
Sunburn	Same as for burns
Preparing dressings	Alginate film dressing is naturally derived from brown seaweed. It forms a gel on contact with a wound to help assist in healing