



How to Use Herbs to Heal

Expert
Reviewed

Three Methods: [Taking Herbs to Heal Skin](#) [Supporting Your Immune System](#) [Preparing Herbal Medicine](#)

Herbal medicine is medicine. Like food, exercise, or traditional medicine, natural remedies change your body. Use herbal medicine with joy and caution: grow your own and marvel at the wonders of nature, but check with your doctor as well. If you are undergoing chemotherapy or are taking other medicine, speak to a doctor or a pharmacist before supplementing with herbs.

Method
1

Taking Herbs to Heal Skin

- 1 Speed the healing of wounds with herbal supplements.** There are a multitude of herbs that will help your skin heal its wounds, bruises, and scars. Bromelain, an enzyme derived from pineapple stems, also helps reduce swelling and pain. Take 3,000 MCU (2,000 GDU) three times a day, then reduce the dose to 2,000 MCU three times per day, for as many days as your doctor deems advisable.^[1] End use if you experience any side effects.
 - Take high-potency Vitamin B supplements to advance the healing of wounds. Follow the instructions on the bottle, and consult your doctor before taking if you are undergoing other treatment, such as chemotherapy, or taking other medications.^[2]
 - Take 1-3 grams of Vitamin C daily to speed the repair of connective tissue. Vitamin C is integral to the production of collagen, so it can strengthen your skin as well as encourage the healing of wounds. Do not take Vitamin C if you are on medication for blood cholesterol or if you are undergoing chemotherapy or radiation.^[3]
 - Vitamin C can also reduce bruising for those who frequently bruise. Try taking 400-800 mg daily, with flavonoids to increase effectiveness.^[4]
 - Take 30 mg daily of oral zinc supplements if you have a deficiency, and apply a topical zinc medicine if not. Supplements are helpful for those with a zinc deficiency, and topical medicine containing zinc is helpful even when no deficiency has been diagnosed. Do not take zinc orally without consulting with a doctor.
- 2 Treat burns with aloe and sea buckthorn.** Buy stabilized aloe gel and use it as you would Vaseline—many studies have found it to be more effective.^[5] Spread sea buckthorn oil on the dressings you apply to your wound. Sea buckthorn helps burns, and other skin injuries, heal more quickly.^[6]
- 3 Heal acne with topical medicine or a zinc supplement.** Taking a topical niacinamide (Vitamin B3) gel twice a day for two months may significantly improve acne. Tea tree oil has many of the benefits of acne medications such as benzoyl peroxide, but with fewer side effects. Take tea tree oil topically, applying a solution with 5% oil to your skin for 20 minutes twice a day. Wash off with tap water.
 - Treat rosacea and other acne with a zinc supplement. Take 23 mg three times a day for three months. If your treatment is successful and you choose to repeat the process, take a copper supplement as well, as long-term zinc use can cause copper deficiency.^[7]
 - Treat cystic acne with guggul extract. Take a dose of 500 mg twice a day for results comparable to those of tetracycline.^[8]
- 4 Heal cold sores with herbal medicine.** Plants such as lemon balm, peppermint, and aloe have been proven effective at healing cold sores. Buy an herbal lip balm or essential oil, or brew a tea from the leaves. They can speed the rate at which a sore heals, and reduce its inflammation. Lemon balm may reduce the chance a sore will return.^[9]
 - Wait until your sore has scabbed over before applying herbs to it. Open wounds may become inflamed or infected.^[10]
 - Take 200 mg of Vitamin C plus 200 mg of flavonoids 3-5 times a day to reduce the length of an outbreak.^[11]

Method
2**Supporting Your Immune System**

1 Take multivitamins regularly. Multivitamins contain a range of micronutrients that may be helpful. Immune response can be compromised by deficiencies of zinc, selenium, iron, copper, folic acid, and vitamins A, B6, C, and E.^[12] Most adults who consume a balanced diet already consume all the vitamins and trace minerals they need; however, if you cannot bring yourself to eat vegetables or whole grains, you might benefit from a multivitamin.^[13]

- There are multivitamins targeted at the needs of men, women, children, pregnant women, and the elderly. Speak to a doctor to determine what combination of vitamins may benefit you.^[14]
- There are adverse effects associated with multivitamins, and their use may be unnecessary and even dangerous.
- Your doctor may instead recommend a single targeted vitamin supplement, such as vitamin D or B-12.^[15]
- Changes to your diet may be more beneficial than taking a multivitamin.^[16]

2 Treat colds with andrographis. Purchase extract of andrographis, an herb used in traditional medicines.^[17] Andrographis boosts your immune system, and its anti-inflammatory qualities make it especially helpful in combating colds. As soon as your cold symptoms manifest, purchase an extract of andrographis and 60 mg per day, divided into three doses.

- Andrographis is also called "King of Bitters." It is traditionally used in India, China, and Southeast Asia.

3 Try Echinacea. Echinacea stimulates a range of immune cell functions, and has been shown to shorten colds by an average of 1.4 days. Take 3 to 5 ml of liquid extract or capsules three times a day for up to two weeks.^[18] Stop use immediately if you experience shortness of breath, rashes, or other allergic symptoms. If you have allergies to plants in the daisy family, speak to your doctor before you experiment with Echinacea.^[19]

4 Use asian ginseng. Taking 100 mg of a standardized extract twice a day may improve your immune function. Asian ginseng may also help heart disease and blood pressure, but should not be used in combination with prescription medicines for those conditions. Consult your doctor before you take asian ginseng.^[20]

Method
3**Preparing Herbal Medicine**

1 Make herbal tinctures. A tincture is a liquid concentration of a medicinal herb. It works like vanilla extract, drawing out and preserving the qualities of dry plant matter. To make a tincture, get a clean glass jar, vodka or apple cider vinegar, and the dried herb you wish to extract. Fill the jar half full of the dried herb. Pour a few teaspoons of boiling water on the herbs to open them up.^[21]

- Fill the rest of the jar with apple cider vinegar or vodka, and stir.
- If using vodka, store in a cool and dry place for anywhere from three weeks to six months. Shake daily. Strain through a cheesecloth and store the tincture in dropper bottles.^[22]
- If using apple cider, store in the fridge. Discard after 6 months, or sooner if it starts to smell or mold.^[23]

2 Brew a tea. The healing qualities of herbs such as peppermint leaf, lemon balm, burdock root, ginger, and aloe vera can be extracted by boiling. Boil a cup of water on the stove. Add 2 to 4 teaspoons of your herb of choice and steep for 5 to 15 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and let it cool, then strain out the plant matter. Drink the tea, or apply to your skin throughout your day.^{[24][25]}

- Make sure the herb you want is safe and effective when boiled. Some herbs, such as tea tree oil, can be harmful if drunk as a tea.^[26]

3 Mix an essential oil with a carrier oil for topical treatments. Purchase an essential oil, or make a tincture. Pick a neutral oil, such as coconut or vegetable oil. Mix 3-6 drops of essential oil into an ounce of carrier oil. Use your fingers or a swab to apply your medicine to your skin.^[27]

- Make sure you use a swab to apply medicine to viral skin conditions, such as cold sores, so that you don't spread them further on your skin.

4 Grow your own medicinal herbs. Many medicinal herbs, such as parsley, lemon balm, Echinacea, and peppermint, are easy to grow. Do a little research into what the climate and microclimate of your house can support: drier earth might take well to lavender, lemon balm, hyssop, and thyme, while wetter spots can support angelica, self-heal, peppermint, and skullcap. Herbs such as black cohosh and bloodroot can grow in the shade. Though herbs will grow best in soil enriched with compost and mulch, they can often struggle through poorer quality soils than other plants.^[28]

5 Cook with herbs. Herbs, roots, and vegetables will account for most of the micronutrients you need. Whole grains and meat account for the rest. Cook a traditional chicken soup for its anti-inflammatory qualities: use chicken, ginger, garlic, onion, carrots, celery and parsley.^[29]

6 Buy standardized supplements. Your safest bet is to purchase prepared herbal medicine. Doses can vary widely depending on the growing conditions and preparation of an herb, and though not all companies are reliable, they are at least experienced.^[30]

- You can buy herbal medicine at health food stores, at some supermarkets, online, or from herbalists.
- Herbal medicines don't always look like medicine. Though many herbs are sold in pill form, you might find useful supplements in an oil, a lip balm, a cream, or a tea.
- Get a prescription from an herbalist, a doctor who practices Traditional Chinese Medicine, or even a regular doctor or pharmacist to determine appropriate doses.

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Warnings

- Before taking a traditional remedy, speak to an herbalist.
- Visit a doctor from the country the herbs come from to check dosage.
- Always talk to a doctor or pharmacist before you start taking regular doses of an herbal medicine.
- If you take other medications, check with your doctor before you start supplementing with herbal remedies.

Sources and Citations

1. <http://www.uofmhealth.org/health-library/hn-1056000#hn-1056000-supplements>
2. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminB12-Consumer/#h8>
3. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminC-Consumer/#h8>

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