

# Formulations and Applications of Medicinal Herbal Teas

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### WHY USE HERBAL TEAS?

- ❖ They're a great way to get important nutrients, medicinal constituents into your body
- ❖ Easy to prepare
- ❖ Inexpensive
- ❖ They can be tasty & enjoyable. Some people don't enjoy tinctures, or popping capsule or pills
- ❖ It creates a ritual, or time for personal space in a busy life. "Teas work best when taken in the quiet of the evening, with a prayer."
- ❖ We can bathe in them!
- ❖ Water soluble constituents include: carbohydrates, enzymes, mucilage, pectins, saponins, & polysaccharides

### PREPARATIONS

- ❖ **Standard infusions.** Hot tea, use a tea pot, tea ball, bombilla, French press, muslin bag, wire mesh strainer, a clean organic cotton sock, bandana, or whatever else you can find to strain the herbs.
  - Best for delicate plant parts such as flowers, leaves, seeds & stems. Consider it also for the roots that have delicate essential oils that could evaporate if boiled. Think ginger, osha, valerian root.
  - Boil water, and pour it over the herbs. Let steep as little as 5 minutes, up to 24 hours, depending on desire for therapeutic benefits, and the plants you're working with.
  - When drinking tea for social situations or simple pleasure, use 1 heaping teaspoon of herb to 8 oz of hot water.
  - For a more therapeutic quality consider 1 ounce of dried flower to 64 oz of hot water, or 2 ounces of dried roots or bark. Allow seeds to steep for 30 minutes to 1 hour, 2 hours for flowers, (yes, that rhymes!) 4 hours for leaves, and overnight for roots and barks.
  - Seeds should be bruised with a mortar and pestle to help release their flavor and beneficial properties, before steeping
  - Consider grinding larger roots, barks, and berries with a mortar and pestle, or an herb grinder
  - When a recipe calls for dried herbs, and you only have fresh, use 3 times the amount called for in the recipe.
- ❖ **Cold-water infusions, or macerations**
  - Sun teas: These work best with delicate plant matter such as leaves and flowers. Use 1 cup of dried herbs, to one gallon of cool water. Place it in the sun and allow it to infuse the herbs and the sun's healing powers for 4-6 hours. Strain it, & love it! Some believe this infuses the tea with masculine yang properties of the sun.
  - Lunar teas: Similar to the sun tea, only you infuse it under a full, or close to full moonlight for 4-12 hours. Don't do this if it's going to be freezing at night! Some believe this infuses the tea with the feminine mystical powers of the moon.
  - Refrigerator teas: Use a 1:32 herb to water ratio for your tea, and let infuse in the refrigerator overnight, or for about 12 hours. This method is best when using plants with long chain polysaccharides that could be damaged by heat.
  - Herbs that work well for cold infusions:
    - Mallow family herbs, marshmallow, slippery elm, Angelica, mugwort, *Astragalus*, chamomile, mints
- ❖ **Decocting herbs**
  - Best method of extracting the constituents of dense, or woody barks, roots, and seeds
  - Bring of cold water to a boil. Add 1 ounce of herb per quart of water. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes to 1 hour.
  - Be sure to keep the heat as low as possible while still maintaining a simmer, and keep the cover on so the beneficial essential oils do not evaporate.

- After being simmered, you can let the herbs steep overnight, or strain them right away.
- Decoctions are very potent! The serving size can be much less than an infusion. Consider ¼-1/2 cup of tea with decoctions.

#### ❖ Infusion-decoctions

- What do we do when we want to create a formula that contains both dense roots or barks, with delicate flowers and leaves? We do a hybrid method!
- Bring the water to a boil. Add the herbs that need decocted and simmer for 20 minutes. Remove it from the heat, and add the delicate herbs to the blend. Cover and steep for another 10-20 minutes.
- Strain before serving. Wow, you now have a hybrid infusion decoction!

#### APPLICATIONS FOR TEA

- ❖ They can be drunk, and directly applied to internal organs
- ❖ Use them topically
  - Take a bath
    - Great way to absorb herbal constituents through your skin
    - Brew a strong blend with about ½ cup of herbs to 64 oz of water. Strain the tea in to the water & enjoy
    - Or, place herbs in muslin, or sock, & toss them in your bath. Use this muslin to scrub your body.
    - Breathe in the herbal aromas as you bathe, and benefit from the aromatherapeutic properties
    - Consider closing a curtain around to help trap in the beneficial steams
    - Take a bath right before bedtime to help you relax. This is great with children!
    - Take a refreshing bath in the middle of the day to reenergize your spirit
    - Destress in a bath after a long tough day at work
    - Soothe inflamed itchy skin
  - Eye washes
    - Soothing for sore, tired, inflamed, or infected eyes.
    - Great for eyes that spend too much time in front of a computer or reading
    - Make a weaker blend than you would for ingestion. Use a small teaspoon per cup of water
    - Simmer at a low boil for 10 minutes to ensure its sterile
    - Use a very fine mesh strainer to ensure there are no plant particles floating around
    - Get an eyecup, and make sure it's been sterilized between each use
    - Pour the strained tea blend into the eyecup
    - Lean back and pour the mixture into one eye. Blink to ensure the eye is being thoroughly washed. Repeat with the other eye
    - Make eyewashes daily to ensure you don't introduce bacteria into the eye.
    - Herbs to consider for eyewashes: Calendula, chamomile, basil, fennel, fenugreek, plantain, red clover blossoms, thyme, rosemary, raspberry leaf, basil, & elder flower
  - Facial steams
    - Cleanses the skin, improves circulation, relaxes facial muscles, & gives your skin a gorgeous radiant glow
    - Do facial steams once or twice a week
    - Wash your face first, and tie your hair back
    - Pour one quart of boiling water over a handful of herbs into a glass bowl.
    - Lean over the bowl, and drape a towel over your head to trap in the steam
    - Inhale the steam for about 5-7 minutes, lifting the towel for the steam to escape when necessary
  - Hair rinses
    - Both therapeutically & cosmetically brilliant
    - Use 4 heaping teaspoons of herb for 1 quart of water. Stir, cover, and let sit for 1 hour. Strain it into a large squeeze bottle, and add 1 TBL ACV. Pour the strained tea over your hair. Don't rinse it out, just let your hair dry naturally

- Consider this for dandruff, oily hair, dry hair, itchy scalp, balding & delightful pampering
- Compresses
  - Consider these to aid in healing wounds, rashes, inflammation, skin infections, improve circulation, stimulate the lymphatic system, relieve soreness, and stimulate the sweat glands
  - Simply soak a clean towel in a hot or cold herbal tea blend, wring it out & apply it to the area needing treatment
  - Alternatively, you could make the tea with a muslin bag, and place the strained muslin tea bag on the affected area
  - Hot compresses increase circulation, and are nice for sore throat, back aches, & arthritic pains. After the hot compress cools down, apply a cool compress briefly. Hot ginger tea can be a very effective compress
  - Cold compresses are best for inflamed conditions. They constrict blood flow, and ease swellings. After using a cold compress, keep the treated area warm, so the person being treated doesn't become chilled  
Peppermint tea is a very effective cool compress
  - For headaches, use a hot compress on the back of the neck, and a cool compress on the forehead
  - For sprains and strains, use a cold compress for the first 48-72 hours. Later, you can alternate hot and cold, remembering to end with the cold compress to enhance the healing process
- Footbaths
  - Footbaths can be incredibly therapeutic, due to the many nerve endings in the feet
  - Helps with tired achy feet, stinky feet, leg cramps, calluses, swelling, & varicose veins
  - When used at the first signs of cold, headache, congestion, or sore throat, the heat draws the congestion away from the respiratory tract, and can prevent onset of illness
  - Use foot baths either hot or cold depending on needs
  - Make about a gallon of herbal tea, strain it, and pour the tea into a wide basin
  - Place your feet in the basin, and relax until the water cools down
  - Afterward, pour cold water on the feet, dry them thoroughly, and put on clean cozy socks
- Handbaths
  - Like the feet, there are many nerve endings in the hands
  - Soaking them in herbal infusions can be beneficial for colds, flu, arthritis, & poor circulation
  - Make about ½ gallon of tea, pour into a bowl, and soak for 5-10 minutes
  - Can be used to help clear eczema, relieve hand pain, or increase circulation
- Sitz bath
  - Useful for gynecological problems, hemorrhoids and pelvic pain
  - Prepare the bath either in a normal bath tub, or in a smaller basin
  - Pour a hot or cool herbal tea into the basin, and soak the hip or pelvic region for about 3 minutes
  - Cold sitz baths tonify the pelvis and the bowel
  - Use cold sitz baths lower organ, and back problems, menstrual pain, PID, congestion of the liver or spleen, and hemorrhoids
  - Hot sitz baths increase circulation to the pelvic region, break up congestion, and can help relieve pain
  - You can alternate hot and cold sitz baths. Try 3 minutes hot water followed by 2 minutes cold water, repeating up to 3 times, and always ending with the cold water.
  - When you're finished keep warm. Alternating hot and cold can help to remove toxins from the area, bring in fresh nutrients, and great healing power
- Mouthwash or gargle
  - Prepare an herbal infusion, let it cool, then swish it around the mouth, or gargle, then spit it out
  - To be most effective with a gargle, it should be used for 10 minutes
  - Try using yarrow, Echinacea, plantain, thyme, sage, lemon balm, licorice root, calendula, or chamomile
- Steam inhalations
  - Bring 1 quart of water to a boil, remove from heat, and add 4 heaping teaspoons to the water
  - Lean over the pot, and drape a towel over your head

- Inhale steam for about 7 minutes
- Aids in loosening mucous from the respiratory tract
- Helpful in respiratory conditions such as asthma, bronchitis, coughs, nasal congestion, and sinus infections
- Consider thyme, oregano, mint, yarrow, and other aromatic herbs
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## DOSAGES

- For acute illnesses, one cup of tea every 2 hours, except when sleeping
- Chronic conditions, 1 cup of tea 3-4 times per day
- Consider pulse dosing with teas: 10 days on, 3 days off or 6 days on 1 day off
- When using teas for healing, drink them for at least a week, and reevaluate your situation to determine if you should continue or not
- Consider the body type and size of the person being treated
  - Women may need less than men
  - Large people may need more than small people
  - For the elderly, reduce the dose by  $\frac{1}{4}$  for those over 65, and by  $\frac{1}{2}$  for those over 70
- When dosing children, consider the formula of dividing the child's weight by 150. The ending fraction is the fraction of the adult dose the child may have. For a 75-pound child,  $75/150=.5$  the child can have  $\frac{1}{2}$  the adult dose
- Infants can receive the benefits of tea through the mother's breast milk about 15-30 minutes after the mother drinks the tea

## THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN FORMULATING HERBAL TEAS

- Formulating herbal tea is both a science and an art. Have fun, be creative, and make effective medicine!
- Flavors, make it as palatable and pleasurable as possible. It will help with compliance
- Feelings you're trying to evoke
- Condition you are trying to treat
- Are you trying to treat anything, or is this for simple pleasure?
- Supplements or prescriptions the client is currently on, and an adverse reaction possible with the herbs you're considering
- What organs are you trying to help? Are there herbs that have an affinity for that organ? What supporting organs could you use herbs for in the formula? For example, treating the skin? Consider herbs for the liver, and the large intestine
- Energetics of the person
  - Colder people can benefit from warming herbs like cinnamon or ginger, whereas hotter people may need a cooling herb like spearmint or peppermint
- Energetics of the symptom or disease
  - Treat heat and inflammation with cooling herbs, and cold conditions with warming herbs
- Attempt to create formulas that address the entire being and the symptoms needing treated. For instance, a old person with poor circulation could benefit from cinnamon, and hawthorn in their tea. Or, a hot person with excessive flatulence would benefit from a cooling carminative like peppermint
- As always, remember to see the whole being, not just the health issue. Can you coach them on lifestyle choices? Often times a change in emotional health, diet, & exercise can be just as therapeutic as herbal therapeutics
- You do not have to follow any strict rules. My greatest words of advice are to have fun experiment, taste it, feel it, and do it all over again!

## MATERIA MEDICA

- ❖ **Catnip *Nepeta cataria***

- Common uses as tea
  - Nervine
    - Anxiety, sleeplessness, hyperactivity, fussy babies and children (hello popsicles!),
  - Digestive issues
    - Flatulence, abdominal cramping, colic, diarrhea, indigestion, when served cold before a meal catnip increases appetite, when served hot after a meal it improved digestion, ease smooth muscle spasms
  - Colds & Flu
    - Anti-viral properties beneficial for chicken pox, flu, small pox, measles, mumps, bronchitis
    - Diaphoretic
  - Topical Applications
    - Compress or Poultice for sprains, strains toothache, hemorrhoids, or bruising
    - Hair rinse for irritated scalp
    - Eyewash for inflammation, irritated eyes due to allergies, bloodshot eyes
    - Use as a liniment for rheumatism and arthritis
    - Cleanse the colon with a catnip enema
    - Relieve congestion with a steam inhalation
- Contraindications
  - Not recommended during pregnancy
  - Large doses can cause vomiting

#### ❖ Chamomile *Matricaria recutita*

- Common uses as tea
  - Nervine
    - Anxiety, calms young children and cranky infants, restlessness, sleeplessness, restores exhausted nervous system, hyperactivity, irritability
  - Digestive Issues
    - Eases inflammation in the gut, diverticulitis, flatulence, indigestion, gastritis, intestinal cramping, IBS, general digestive distress
    - It's bitter and can improve digestive secretions
- Topical Applications
  - Take A Bath!
    - Calm cranky children, nourish dry skin, relieve stress ahhhhhhh
    - Sitz baths can help with hemorrhoids
  - Compress
    - Treat skin inflammation including burns, stings, insect bite, eczema, psoriasis, external ulcers, and helps to speed wound healing
  - Eyewash for conjunctivitis
  - Mouthwash for gingivitis
  - Poultice to relieve a toothache
- Contraindications
  - Those with ragweed sensitivities can be severely allergic to chamomile Roman chamomile is more allergy inducing than German chamomile

#### ❖ Cinnamon *Cinnamomum zeylanicum*, *C. burmannii*

- Common uses as tea
  - Stimulates digestive tract
  - Tightens, tones, and strengthens the digestive tract
  - Eases diarrhea
  - Warming

- Flavor enhancer
- Lowers blood sugar & cholesterol, improving heart health
- Topical uses
  - Mouthwash to freshen breath
  - Footbath to treat fungal infections
  - As a bath to treat chills and sore muscles
  - Steam inhalation to help coughs, colds, and sore throat
- Contraindications
  - Avoid large amounts during pregnancy or while nursing
  - Avoid during fever, hemorrhoids, dry stools, blood in the urine, or excessive dryness

#### ❖ **Dandelion Leaf *Taraxacum officinale***

- Common uses as tea
  - Aids in elimination of uric acid
  - Blood purifier, meaning it helps to strain & filter waste from the bloodstream
  - Treats obstruction of liver, spleen, gallbladder, and pancreas
  - Has been used to help clear the body of stored negative emotions stored in the liver & kidneys
  - Enhances digestive tract
  - Drink after a high fat meal
  - Drink during a cleanse or while fasting to improve elimination of toxins
  - Used in treating jaundice in infants
  - Boosts mother's milk supply and boosts milk's nutritional value
  - Useful for teenagers battling acne
- Has been used as a wash to treat fungal infections
- Contraindications
  - Generally regarded as safe, even in large amounts, but there's always a possibility of allergic reaction
  - There have been reports of loose stools, abdominal discomfort, nausea & heart burn associated with dandelion
  - Consult with your physician if you suffer from obstructed bile ducts, or gallstones
  - Can cause aggravated symptoms for some people with gastric hyperacidity

#### ❖ **Ginger Root *Zingiber officinale***

- Common uses as tea
  - Warming and flavorful
  - Warms digestive organs
  - Stimulates digestive secretions
  - Increases amylase in saliva
  - Facilitates digestion of starchy foods
  - Reduces inflammation and pain by inhibiting prostaglandin production
  - Strengthens the tissues of the heart muscle
  - Activates the immune system
  - Relieves nausea
  - Improves circulation
  - Can relieve morning sickness \*see contraindications
- Topical Uses
  - Compress for arthritic joints, sore muscles, & toothaches to relieve pain
  - Place over the kidneys to aid in the passing of stones, and relieve the pain
  - Placed over the back or chest it can help relieve asthmatic symptoms
  - Used in a bath for chills, sore muscles, sciatica, & poor circulation

- Used as a tea for a sore throat gargle
- Footbath to treat athlete's foot
- Contraindications
  - Pregnant women should not consume more than 1-gram daily
  - Avoid in hot inflammatory conditions such as peptic ulcers, or hyperacidity
  - May cause adverse reactions with anticoagulant drugs such as Coumadin or aspirin

#### ❖ **Lemon Balm *Melissa officinalis***

- Common uses as tea
  - Calms the nerves, eases restlessness, & sleeplessness, antianxiety, hyperactivity
  - Beneficial in cases of depression
  - Calms the heart
  - Clears heat
  - Improves concentration
  - Lifts the spirit, known as nature's sunshine!
  - Calms the nerves and boosts the mood of youngsters under stress, such as before tests
  - Helps prevent nightmares and promote restful sleep in children
  - Antiviral properties beneficial during colds and flu, shingles, chicken pox, and herpes outbreaks
  - Carminative, eases gassiness & stomach upset, colic, indigestion,
  - Helpful for teething infants
- Topical applications
  - Use as a compress for swelling, boils, gout, eczema, insect bites, sunburn, tumors, and wounds
  - Uplifting bath herb
- Contraindications
  - Generally considered safe
  - Can lower thyroid function, so not recommended for those with hypothyroid conditions
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#### ❖ **Licorice Root *Glycyrrhiza glabra***

- Common uses as tea
  - Soothes irritated mucous membranes
  - Restores pituitary activity
  - Promotes positive emotions
  - Eases inflammation
  - Relieves respiratory issues such as bronchitis, catarrh, & coughs in general
  - Sweet and delicious
  - Emollient
  - Demulcent
  - Nutritive
  - Relieves abdominal bloating, flatulence, and colic
  - Great harmonizer
- Topical applications
  - Used as a wash to treat inflamed eyelids, dry eyes, itchy skin, shingles, rashes, eczema, psoriasis, and wounds
  - Use as a mouthwash to prevent tooth decay, gingivitis, and mouth sores
  - Use as a lubricating enema or douche
  - Can be used as a hair rinse to prevent hair loss and dandruff
- Contraindications
  - Avoid licorice in cases of vomiting, nausea, edema, and rapid heartbeat
  - Not recommended during pregnancy

- Avoid during use of steroid or digitoxin medication
- Prolonged use may elevate blood pressure and cause vertigo and headaches
- Large doses can cause sodium retention, and potassium depletion and may be emetic
- Continuous use is not recommended beyond 6 weeks
- Not to be used when taking cardiac glycosides, hypotensive agents, corticosteroids, diuretic drugs, or monoamine oxidase inhibitors

#### ❖ **Marshmallow Root *Althea officinalis***

- Common uses as a tea
  - Use the root as a cold infusion
  - High mucilage content
  - Cooling, soothing demulcent for the respiratory tract
  - Soothes inflammation in the digestive tract, and the urinary tract
  - Can calm an overactive immune system
  - Helps stimulate production of white blood cells
  - Decreases the nerve sensitivity that causes coughs
- Topical Uses
  - Use as a compress to treat burns, hemorrhoids, irritated eyes, mastitis, sunburn, wounds, and varicose veins
  - Use as a bath or wash to moisturize dry skin
  - Use as a hair rinse for dry lifeless hair
  - Gargle for sore throats
  - Use as a douche for vaginal dryness, or an enema for rectal irritation
- Contraindications
  - The mucilage in marshmallow may cause a delay in the effects of pharmaceuticals taken at the same time

#### ❖ **Peppermint *Mentha piperita***

- Common uses as tea
  - Calms smooth muscle spasms
  - Expels phlegm
  - Clears the head
  - Dries dampness
  - Relaxes the peripheral blood vessels
  - Excellent for stomach cramps
  - Can be added to laxative blends to prevent gripe
  - Eases flatulence
  - Useful for colic
  - Delicious
  - Antiviral properties
  - Vasodilator
  - Awakens and refreshes the mind
- Topical uses
  - Warm compresses to treat back pain, joint inflammation, hives, lung infection, rheumatism, & sinusitis
  - Cold compresses are beneficial for fevers and headache
  - Use as a bath to feel fresh and cool,
  - Treat bug bites, itchy skin, chicken pox, & measles
  - Use as a steam for asthma, bronchitis, sinus congestion, shock, & nausea
  - Mouthwash for fresh breath, and to prevent gingivitis
- Contraindications
  - Cold conditions and yin deficiency

- Pregnant women should ingest no more than 1-2 cups daily
- Acute gallstone attack
- Nursing mothers should avoid large amounts of mint which can dry breast milk, but small amounts can be beneficial for colicky babies

#### ❖ **Nettles *Urtica dioica***

- Common uses as tea
  - Strengthens and supports the whole body
  - Improves resistance to pollens, molds, and environmental pollutants
  - Stabilizes mast cell walls, stopping the cycle of mucous membrane hyperactivity
  - Nourishes and tones the veins, reduces inflammation, and helps prevent blood clots
  - Cleanses toxins from the body
  - Helps curb appetite, and boosts energy
  - Builds blood, promotes healthy blood clotting
  - Relieves symptoms of hemorrhage
  - Can help lower blood sugar
  - Incredibly nutrient dense
- Topical applications
  - Use as a hair rinse to treat dandruff, and hair loss
  - Cleanser for oily skin
  - Wash for sunburn
  - Sitz bath for hemorrhoids
  - Compresses for mastitis, insect bites, heat rash, gout, burns, chilblains, arthritic joints, tendonitis, sciatica, varicose veins, and wounds
- Contraindications
  - Nettles are considered generally safe, though use caution when harvesting!
  - Also, use caution when treating elderly people who may be incredibly dry, or cold, yin deficient people

Thanks for joining me for the class! I hope you are now inspired to go make incredible teas to help heal people and the planet!

Feel free to reach out to me with any more questions. I can be reached at [mel@mountainmels.com](mailto:mel@mountainmels.com) Or 503-564-9135