

Have Herbs, Will Travel!

As trips are scheduled and vacations are planned, it's helpful to have a travel herb kit on hand to give yourself a piece of mind



Being the eco-traveller and pioneer that you are, three hours into your jungle trek in Malaysia, past midnight on that idyllic, remote island in Thailand or simply cycling along dirt track roads throughout Asia exploring the scenery, the chances of a doctor or clinic just around the corner when you need one are almost equal to winning the lottery jackpot.

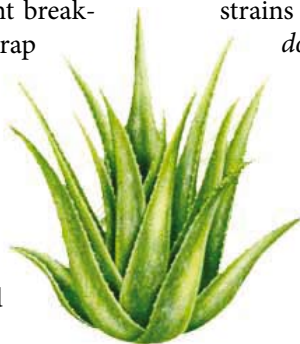
But don't let that stop you following your dream adventure, there is space in every backpack for an herbal first aid kit; from bee stings, blisters to sunburns, motion sickness and colds... you will have it covered!

The Natural First Aid Kit

With the following herbs and essential oils, you should be able to treat just about any common condition you are likely to encounter on your travels. Be sure to buy pure essential oils, not fragrance oils. To prevent breakage, use plastic bottles or wrap any glass containers in small pieces of thick flannel.

Aloe vera gel

Cooling and healing, Aloe vera soothes the inflammation of sunburn and common kitchen scalds and burns.



Arnica

Arnica gel or cream

Arnica montana flowers have anti-inflammatory and circulation-stimulating properties; the gel or cream is excellent for sore muscles, sprains, strains and bruises. *Caution: do not apply arnica to broken skin.*

Calendula-comfrey salve

The bright yellow-orange blossoms of calendula officinalis have astringent, antibacterial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory and wound-healing properties.



Calendula

Chamomile tea bags

With its delicious distinctive flavor, chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) makes a tasty tea. Gentle enough for children, chamomile has mild sedative, antispasmodic, anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties. It promotes relaxation, relieves indigestion and, when applied topically, soothes skin irritations.



Citronella

Citronella-based insect repellent

Most herbal repellants contain citronella, a pungent citrus-scented essential oil distilled from an aromatic grass that grows in southern Asia. Herbal insect repellants work well, as long as they're applied liberally and frequently (as often as every two hours).

Comfrey Salve

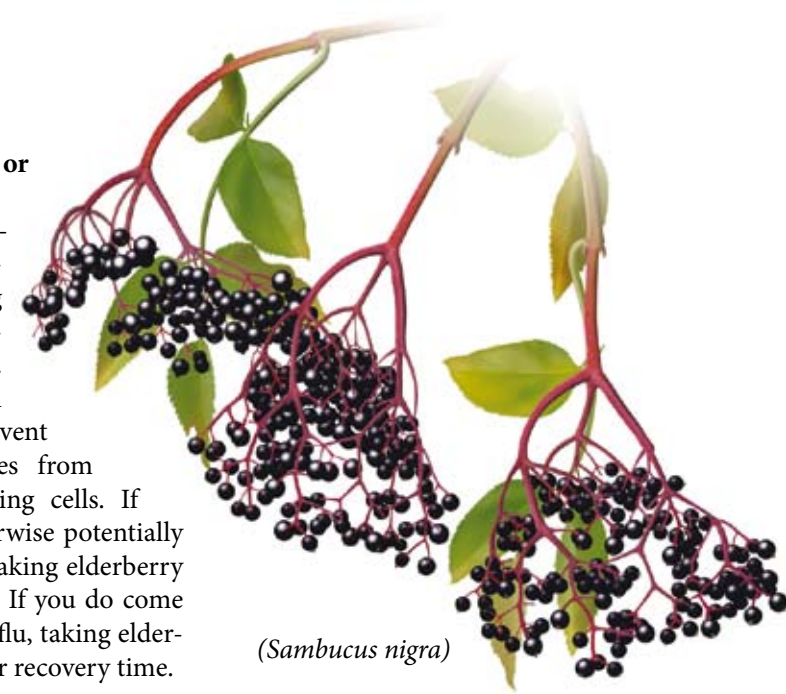
Comfrey is a great herb to use in a salve. It is often combined with other soothing herbs such as marshmallow root, St. Johns wort and chickweed. A good multi purpose salve is ideal for all kinds of minor scrapes, bites, stings, rashes and burns.



Comfrey

Elderberry capsules or liquid extract

Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) is essential for stopping a cold or flu from ruining your vacation. The berries contain compounds that prevent cold and flu viruses from invading and infecting cells. If you're flying or otherwise potentially exposed to viruses, taking elderberry is a good preventive. If you do come down with a cold or flu, taking elderberry can hasten your recovery time.



(*Sambucus nigra*)

Echinacea liquid extract

Rich in immune-stimulating chemicals, echinacea can be used for any type of infection. Liquid extracts are the most versatile because they can be used both internally and externally.



Echinacea

Eleuthero standardized extract

An excellent adaptogen, eleuthero (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) can help prevent jet lag; it was even used by Soviet cosmonauts to help them adjust to space travel.



Eucalyptus

Eucalyptus essential oil

A potent antibiotic and antiviral, eucalyptus is excellent for treating colds, flues and sinus infections when used as a steam inhalation. Dilute with oil or witch hazel extract before applying to the skin, and do not take internally.



(*Eleutherococcus senticosus*)

Ginger capsules, tea bags and crystallized ginger

The antispasmodic and gas-relieving properties of ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) soothe digestive upsets, ideal after indulging in those summer pot-lucks and barbecues! Ginger also has been proven to relieve motion sickness better than Dramamine, the conventional drug treatment.



Goldenseal capsules or powder

A powerful antimicrobial, goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) is effective against a variety of microorganisms that cause traveler's diarrhea. The powder has antiseptic properties and can be sprinkled onto cuts or wounds to stop bleeding. Do not take goldenseal internally during pregnancy.



(*Hydrastis canadensis*)

Lavender essential oil

Virtually an all-purpose remedy, lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) has sedative, anti-inflammatory and antiseptic properties. It's helpful for anxiety, insomnia, headaches, wounds, scrapes, burns and makes a wonderful addition to a relaxing bath to help sunburn pain. For most people, lavender essential oil can be applied directly to the skin. Do not take more than 1 to 2 drops internally.



(*Lavandula angustifolia*)



(*Mentha x piperita*)

Peppermint essential oil and tea bags

With its high concentration of menthol, peppermint (*Mentha x piperita*) soothes an upset stomach, indigestion, clears sinuses and curbs itching from insect bites. If you have sensitive skin, dilute peppermint oil before applying. Taken internally, peppermint may aggravate heartburn.

Valerian tincture

The sedative properties of valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) make it useful for relieving anxiety, insomnia and tension; it's also a mild pain reliever.



(*Valeriana officinalis*)



(*Hamamelis virginiana*)

Witch hazel extract

Distilled witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) has mild astringent, antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties, making it useful for insect bites and skin irritations. It's also an excellent base for diluting essential oils for a variety of simple, topical herbal first-aid remedies. Do not take it internally.

First-Aid Essentials

- Adhesive bandage strips: Various sizes, including butterfly closure bandages.
- Alcohol: Small plastic bottle for cleaning bacteria from the skin.
- Bandage materials: Sterile gauze pads, a roll of gauze, adhesive bandage tape.
- Cosmetic clay: With drying and drawing properties, when mixed with equal parts of water to make a thick paste, clay is useful for healing skin rashes, burns, insect bites and drawing out splinters. Store in a small plastic container.
- Elastic bandage: For sprains or strains.
- Electrolyte replacement: Powdered drink packets such as Emergen-C.
- Moleskin: Blister treatment.
- Scissors: Small pair for cutting bandages, adhesive tape, moleskin.
- Thermometer: Instant-read type.
- Tweezers: For removing ticks and splinters.
- Waterless hand sanitizer: Travel-size bottle.

Herbal Treatments

Blisters

To dry a blister, soak a gauze pad in witch hazel, lay it over the blister and cover with an adhesive bandage. After blister has broken, wash with a mixture of echinacea extract diluted with an equal part of water. Finally, apply calendula-comfrey salve and cover with an adhesive bandage.

Bruises

Immediately apply ice to relieve pain and swelling. Apply arnica cream or gel twice daily.

Burns

Immediately immerse the affected area in cold water until the burning sensation subsides. Then apply Aloe vera gel mixed with lavender essential oil (5 drops of lavender oil mixed with 1 tablespoon of aloe vera gel). For sunburn, soak in a cool bath with 10 drops of lavender essential oil.

Colds and Flues

Take 1 dropper-full of echinacea

extract four times a day until symptoms subside. Take 1 dropper-full of elderberry extract four times a day until symptoms subside. To relieve congestion and soothe a sore throat, drink hot ginger tea with honey. To ease congestion, add two drops each of eucalyptus and peppermint essential oils to hot water; inhale the steam vapors. Add 1 dropper-full of echinacea extract to 1/2 cup of water as an antiseptic wash. To stop bleeding, sprinkle goldenseal powder directly into the wound and apply pressure with a clean cloth. Apply a salve made from calendula-comfrey — only after a scab has formed, to prevent trapping bacteria.

Diarrhea

Replenish lost fluids and soothe the digestive tract with chamomile or ginger tea. For diarrhea caused by infectious microorganisms, take 1 capsule of goldenseal three times daily for up to two weeks. To boost immunity and fight infection, take 1 dropper-full of echinacea four times daily.

Headache

Drink chamomile tea as often as desired. For more severe headaches, take 1/2 to 1 teaspoon of valerian root extract; repeat every two hours until pain abates. Take a warm bath with 10 drops of lavender essential oil. Massage 2 drops of diluted peppermint essential oil onto temples, forehead and neck. Keep away from eyes.

Indigestion

Sip warm chamomile, peppermint or ginger tea. Chew on a piece of crystallized (candied) ginger.

Insect bites and stings

Cleanse the bite with echinacea extract. Apply a drop of undiluted peppermint or lavender oil to relieve itching and as an antiseptic. Mix clay with enough water to make a paste, and apply to the bites to relieve itching and draw out toxins.

Insomnia

Drink a cup of warm chamomile tea. For stronger sedative action, take up to 1 teaspoon of valerian tincture before bed. Take a warm bath with 10

drops of lavender essential oil.

Jet lag

Take eleuthero (100 mg of standardized extract) three times daily for one week or more before traveling and for one week or longer following the flight.

Nausea

Take 1 to 2 capsules of dried ginger every 15 minutes until symptoms abate. To prevent motion sickness, take 6 to 8 capsules of powdered ginger about 45 minutes before departing. To calm a queasy stomach, chew on a piece of crystallized ginger.

Strains and sprains

Immediately elevate and apply an ice pack to the affected area to reduce swelling and inflammation. After 24 hours, apply hot compresses to increase circulation and speed healing. Soak in a hot bath with 5 drops of eucalyptus essential oil. Apply arnica cream or gel to the affected area three times daily.

Further Reading:

Creation Herbal, www.creationherbal.com, Comfrey-calendula salve Red Moon Herbs, www.redmoonherbs.com, Herbal first-aid kit

Healing Spices: How to Use 50 Everyday and Exotic Spices to Boost Health and Beat Disease by Bharat B. Aggarwal, published January 4th 2011 by Sterling Publishing



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