

"The natural healing force within each of us is the greatest force in getting well."
- Hippocrates (Father of Medicine)



everydayroots

.....
215+ Home Remedies, Natural Beauty
Recipes and DIY Household Products
.....



Claire Goodall

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A Note from the Author

If you are reading this, you have my heartfelt thanks and congratulations. You have taken a huge step towards improving not only your life, but the lives of countless others as well. You will find that natural living-whether you are interested in replacing a few cleaners here and there, or want to create an entirely new lifestyle-will open your eyes to new things every day. It is a constant journey of learning, creating, and feeling whole.

If you are new to this whole thing, no worries! This book was created with people who are just taking their first steps in mind, but it also has something for those who seek to deepen their existing experience and knowledge. Throughout the following chapters I try to explain some of the science behind home remedies, or the theories behind why they work. Sometimes there is nothing to explain, and sometimes there is a whole lot. I also firmly believe that the best way to figure out how to manage something is to understand it; so many remedies will give backgrounds on the conditions as well. Hopefully you will begin to see the connections between certain ingredients and ailments, and begin to explore with your own variations and recipes!

Now to address what many people will inevitably wonder at as they read this-does this stuff really work? The answer to that is yes, and no. Nothing can hold up to the powerful and potent chemicals in store bought cleaners and modern medications, but that doesn't mean natural techniques don't work. It does not mean you are settling for anything less-just something different. It takes a little more elbow grease, a little more effort, and a fair bit of patience. You may have to retrain your brain to grasp a new definition of what "works." Does a cleaner have to dissolve something before your very eyes to be satisfied? Or are you willing to pass up the chemicals and possibly wait a little longer for it to work? The same thing goes for some medication. We often sacrifice health and happiness for convenience, but once you rid yourself of the extreme results some modern day techniques give, you will be surprised at just how successful you really can be. And, I will happily admit, sometimes you will find in this book that there really is nothing to explain or justify a remedy-it just is! I love classic and traditional remedies that, for no known scientific reason, have worked in some way or another for hundreds of years.

Before you go on your way, I will say that if there is one thing to take away from this book, let it be this: Making a change towards a state of natural wellbeing, whether great or small, is started by a change of heart, but it is continued by a change of mind.

Best wishes on your journey,

-Claire

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How It All Works

How it All Works

To ensure you have an easy and enjoyable time navigating this book, take a few minutes to read through this section. It will explain how everything is laid out, as well as point out a few general things that are good to know as you go about your adventures.

Layout

The book is divided into four sections-Health, Beauty (conditions), Beauty (recipes), and Household. Some chapters will have a “tips & troubleshooting” section. The tips given are meant to be used in conjunction with the remedies in the chapter. They aren’t quite full remedies themselves, but can really work to enhance the other remedies you are using. The troubleshooting is to help work through some common problems you may encounter when making a recipe.

General Safety

A lot of these recipes involve working around heat and with hot waxes and oils. Exercise common sense, and always be careful and vigilant. Also keep in mind that just because something is natural, does not mean it is completely safe! Always check with a medical professional when using home remedies, and be aware of any allergies/conditions you have, or medications you are on. Because of the risk of botulism, do not give honey in any form to any child under the age of 2 years. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, do not try anything without first consulting your doctor. For that matter, regardless of who you are, always get professional advice. I would really rather we all stay healthy, safe, and happy.

Essential Oils

One common theme you will notice throughout this book is the use of essential oils. If you are new to the world of home remedies or natural living, you may be puzzled by these tiny little bottles that everybody makes such a big deal out of. They may seem exotic, hard to come by, or not worth your time or money. To this I say they are no more exotic or difficult to order than anything else on the internet, and they are worth the investment. You may not think you are getting much for the amount you spend, but these oils are powerful, and only a few small drops will do quite a bit.

The scent you breathe when you peel an orange or a smell a rose is the essence of the plant. When that essence is removed, it becomes essential oil. Essential oils are highly aromatic substances found within certain plants specialized cells or glands. Some plants have them, and some do not. They are highly concentrated substances and only need to be used sparingly to get their therapeutic benefits. There are various extraction methods in which essential oils are obtained depending on the plant, but all ultimately allow us to take the wonderful aroma and benefit of the plant with us.

I hope to write at least a basic guide sometime in the near future on the use of essential oils that goes a little more in depth on the use of these incredible substances.

Essential Oil Safety

Essential oils are incredibly potent plant extracts. It takes about 50 rose flowers to create a single drop of rose oil! Because of this, I always recommend dilution before using them topically. Essential oils must be diluted in a carrier oil, such as olive or grapeseed oil, and cannot be diluted in water-water and oil does not mix. Essential oils are attracted to lipids (fats) and if not mixed with carrier oil will sink straight into your skin, and possibly cause irritation.

If you are uncertain about how you will react to an essential oil, you can conduct a patch test. Make a 2% dilution of your essential oil in carrier oil (10-12 drops in 2 TBLS of carrier oil) and rub a 1 inch patch on the inside of your arm just below the crook of your elbow. Let it sit for 24 hours. If you start to experience any sort of irritation, rinse with water immediately, and apply some plain carrier oil to the spot. Note that pregnant women, children, and the elderly should not go above a 1% dilution (5-6 drops in 2 TBLS of carrier oil.) The exception to this (for children) is the earache blend, which is at a 5% dilution. Essential oils should never be used directly on children under age 5.

Never keep undiluted essential oils in plastic containers, as they will eventually erode it. If you are using plastic for diluted oils, try to use PET plastic, which is less prone to damage than regular plastic. There are glass spray bottles-they are more environmentally friendly too!

Cleaning Sense

Ph., or the measure of how acidic or alkaline something is, plays a huge role in cleaning. It is measured on a scale of 1-14, with anything under 7 being considered acidic, and anything above being considered alkaline. Two common ingredients we use in cleaning are vinegar and baking soda; however they should not usually be combined. Vinegar is an acid, baking soda is a base, and when mixed together they react and neutralize each other. What is left over is mostly water. There are some exceptions when they are combined, such as drain cleaning, where the bubbling and fizzing action is desired, in which case I do mix the two. Otherwise, you are essentially rendering both useless. It's hard to swallow when so many recipes call for them together (I made the mistake many times in earlier days!) but I promise you will find more success if you leave them separate. Now when you combine baking soda and soap, which is also alkaline, you get an AWESOME cleaner. And if you have any little soap scum build up? Just use that acidic vinegar to rinse it all away.

Again, just because these products are more natural than most found in stores, doesn't mean they don't have the ability to stain or discolor. Always test a small patch of the surface you plan on cleaning to make sure there aren't any problems.

The Double Boiler

Countless recipes here call for the use of a double boiler. If you don't have one (I actually don't) you can easily make your own by placing a heat proof over a pot of water filled slightly less than halfway with water OR you can use a glass measuring cup, such as a Pyrex, place in a pot of water. I find the latter useful when it comes to pouring any sort of balm or salve into a small container.

That Sounds Scary

There are several recipes that have names that sound intimidating, unnatural, and downright obscure. Below I've listed the ones that intimidated me before I knew what they were and explained a little bit about them-remember, you can always choose to opt out of their use if you feel uneasy.

Citric Acid: Citric acid is used in the bath fizzies, or bath bombs, recipe. It is what makes citrus fruits taste sour-lemons, limes, grapefruits, oranges, etc. all have a high concentration of citric acid. Here it is simply isolated from the fruit via a fermentation and filtering process. It is used as flavoring and as a preservative in food, pharmaceuticals, and beverages. In the bath bombs, it is what gives them their characteristic fizziness. While it is only a weak acid, and considered quite safe to use, it can cause eye and lung irritation if you mishandle it. I suggest not leaning directly over it (which I did the first time I opened a bag), wearing goggles if you like, and you should be fine.

Vegetable Glycerin: Glycerin, or glycerol, is the backbone of lipids (fats) that can be separated into its isolated viscous form and used for a wide range of reasons. Primarily it is used to provide lubrication, restore luster to hair, attract moisture, and soften skin. Vegetable glycerin is used here in a remedy recipe for dry hair, as well as dish soap, toothpaste, and laundry detergent. Regular glycerin I am not a fan of-it is based off of animal or petroleum products, and is generally just kind of gross. Vegetable glycerin is extracted only from vegetable fats, usually palm/coconut oil, and can be found in the health store. It more pleasant (and natural!) than its "regular" cousin. It does not become rancid, rank, or ferment, and does not have the same side effects as petroleum or animal product based glycerin can. Food grade glycerin means it is safe to ingest-this is used in the toothpaste recipe.

Castile Soap: Castile soap, both liquid and in bar form, is called for in recipes ranging from floor cleaner to shampoo. It is true soap, whereas most "soaps" sold under the name are harsh enough to be detergents, and contain no true soap at all. Castile soap originated in the Castile region of Spain centuries ago, and is a mild, olive-oil based soap (versus an animal fat based soap) that is more environmentally friendly and gentler on our bodies.

Epsom Salt: Like castile soap, Epsom salt was named for the geographical location it originated from-in this case, a saline spring by the town of Epsom in Surrey, England. It is rich in magnesium and other minerals, and is generally obtained directly from natural sources. It is used for numerous recipes throughout the book, forming the body of bathing salts and scrubs, and relieving muscle aches and tension.

Castor Oil: Castor oil is a vegetable oil derived from the castor plant. It is recognized as a generally safe product to use from treating constipation to split ends. The castor seed that is derived from contains a toxic protein called ricin; however, during the heating that takes place in the extraction process, this protein is denatured and inactivated. Because it can help with inflammation, it is used in a remedy for carpal tunnel. It is also used as a remedy for common warts.

Borax: I think a whole other book on borax could be written, so great is the debate and confusion surrounding it, but I'll do my best to sum it up here. Borax, also known as sodium borate, is used in cleaning and laundry detergent recipes. It is a basic mineral that is mined from the ground, and while it is wholly natural, there is still quite a bit of contention around whether or not it's safe for use. To put one thing straight, borax is not the same as boric acid. Boric acid is used in pesticides and insecticides and is derived from borax by a refining process that renders it a whole different beast.

Borax is considered, by industry standards, generally safe to use (with the exception of it being forbidden as a food additive.) Speaking from experience, I have never had a problem with it, and keep it labeled and securely away from kids and pets. It is up to you whether or not you are comfortable using it. It must be ingested for its toxicity to be expressed, however too much can cause mild skin irritation because of its high alkalinity. I find it staple for laundry detergent and some carpet cleaners as well. As long as it is kept in moderation, I will say that I find borax ok to use in certain recipes.

The Golden Rule: Everything in Moderation

I think that many people-and I am quite guilty of doing this also- tend to use more of a cleaner or ingredient than they really need, and I think this is especially the case with natural products. Because you feel the need to make them “strong enough” to do their job, you go ahead and don’t dilute something, add excessive amounts of ingredients, or use too much at once. The truth is, less is more. It’s shocking how little vinegar cleaner you actually need to clean something or baking soda to scrub a surface clean. Remember that too much of anything is a bad thing-even with something natural.

Oils and Butters

Oils and butters, along with beeswax, form the base and body of the salves, balms, and other similar recipes and remedies. They are also used as carriers for essential oils to reduce the risk of an adverse reaction. Most commonly they are used to soften, moisturize, and protect our skin. The term “carrier oil” covers a vast range of both oils and butters, from common place extra virgin olive and grapeseed oil to the more exotic baobab seed oil and kpangnan butter. For many recipes found here the oils are easily substituted, while for others, things can get a little more complicated. I don’t list every oil and butter below-there are hundreds! - but this will cover what you need to know for the recipes in this book.

Liquid Oils

These remain liquid and do not solidify at room temperatures.

Olive Oil: Pressed from ripe olives, olive oil is a common household staple for cooking and consumption. It is also a common base for balms, salves, chapstick, and lotions, being soothing and moisturizing to the skin.

Grapeseed Oil: Created from the residue of grapes that have been juiced, grapeseed oil is an inexpensive alternative to the pricier oils such as jojoba or olive. It does, however, possess a shorter shelf life than most other vegetable based oils.

Avocado Oil: Avocado oil is pressed from the ripe avocado fruit, and possesses a pleasant nutty/spicy odor. Unrefined it is deep green in color, easily distinguished from the pale yellow refined oil (you want it unrefined!) It is used as cooking oil, but is also luxurious to use in cosmetic applications as well. It is rich in vitamin E, highly penetrating, slow to absorb, and deeply nourishing.

Sesame Seed Oil: Rich in fatty acids, the pale yellow oil obtained from sesame seeds works as an excellent emollient, moisturizing skin and hair to keep it smooth, soft, and protected by the natural barrier it forms.

Sweet Almond Oil: Sweet almond oil is an excellent carrier for essential oils, and is light, non-greasy, and skin nourishing. It comes from the sweet almond, versus the bitter almond, which only yields about half of the fixed oil that a sweet almond does. It is rich in vitamin E.

Jojoba Oil/Wax: Cold pressed from the seeds of a wild evergreen shrub, jojoba oil is not truly an oil, but a liquid wax. It is highly penetrating, with a faintly sweet aroma and a pale golden yellow color. Its molecular structure is extraordinarily close to that of our natural sebum (the oil we produce to keep our skin supple and healthy.) Since we lose sebum due to weather, wind, and age, jojoba is incredibly healing. I also find that it feels less oily than grapeseed or olive oil.

Soft Oils and Butters

These are solid at room temperature, but have a relatively low melting point and remain fairly soft.

Shea Butter: Shea butter is a pale, soft butter obtained by the cold pressing of the fruit of the Karite tree, found in West Africa. It has a wonderful nutty and rich aroma, and is rich the fatty acids (90% stearic and oleic acid), vitamin A, and vitamin E. It is incredible and moistening and maintaining the elasticity of skin, as well as reducing inflammation. It is also a powerful healer when it comes to sunburns, psoriasis, and eczema. There are actually two kinds of West African shea butter-be sure to purchase *Butyrospermum parkii* and not *Vitellaria nilotica*, which comes from East Africa is usually refined.

Coconut Oil: Coconut oil is one of my favorite staples of natural cooking and health/beauty care. It is so versatile, useful, and it smells divine. If I had to choose one scent to describe what I think heaven would smell like, it would be coconut oil. Below a temperature of 76 degrees Fahrenheit, coconut oil is solid. After that, it becomes a liquid oil. This makes it ideal for certain balms, deodorants, and body butters. It is wonderful carrier oil for people who suffer from dry, itchy, sensitive skin, and also possesses antifungal properties. Its awesome healing powers are due to the high percentage of saturated fatty acids, particularly lauric acid, but also palmitic, oleic, and myristic acid.

Hard Oils and Butters

The only “hard” oil or butter used in this book is cocoa butter.

Cocoa Butter: A solid fat, cocoa butter is expressed from the fermented, dried, and washed seed of the cocoa tree. It has a strong chocolate-y, buttery aroma, and I tend to avoid using it in chapstick or lip balm because of this, as the odor stays quite raw. It is highly praised for being high in vitamin and antioxidants, softens skin, and has been used to reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles around the eyes and mouth.

Substituting Oils

When a recipe calls for an oil, the needed ingredients will state what oil I prefer to use personally. If there is no specific oil that is needed, I will list my chosen oil, and then add “any “liquid” “soft” or “hard” oil” so that you know the general category of oil to choose from, and what may be an appropriate to substitute. Below is an example in a recipe for a basic, soft, salve.

Basic Salve

You will need...

- 1 tablespoon of beeswax
- 10 tablespoons of olive oil, or any liquid oil

In this case, it would be fine to use any other liquid oil of similar consistency to olive oil. If you wanted to use, say, coconut oil, you would want to play around with the beeswax ratio to make sure you didn't wind up with a salve that was too hard.

Quality and Shelf Life

To determine the shelf life of something you've made, go by the shelf life of the shortest lived oil, or ingredient, you used. There are two exceptions to this. The first is if you were to add water, such as in the case of a lotion or cleaner, which would open the door to nasty little microbes growing. No matter what you add water to; it creates the risk of mold, bacteria, and fungus growing. Refrigeration and distilled, filtered, or boiled water can help reduce that risk of invasion. Another factor is if you have used any botanicals or fresh plant matter. A general rule of thumb I go by if water or fresh matter has been added is 2 weeks, up to 3 if refrigerated. This may change depending on the recipe.

Below is a list of the shelf life of commonly used oils and butters, as well as several other frequently used ingredients in these recipes, and some notes when looking for quality products. Keep in mind the shelf life is a guide-line. Don't forget to trust your instincts, and use common sense. If something looks a little off, or smells a little off, toss it. Some recipes include shelf life, while others don't. This is because they can vary depending on climate, even from house to house, and storage conditions.

Ingredient	Expected Shelf Life	Quality
Extra Virgin Olive Oil	1 year, if stored in a cool dark place	<p>A lot of variables go into the quality of these oils before they hit the shelves, such as the time of harvesting, what kind of seed or olive was used, and time between being processed and actually shipped out.</p> <p>The best way to determine the quality of these oils is to look for kinds that are cold-pressed, meaning they weren't exposed to high temperatures that alter their properties or other chemicals during extraction. Unfortunately, while Europe has set standards, there is no regulation on the definition of cold-pressed in the U.S., so the term can mean anything under 400 degrees Fahrenheit. The only sure-fire way to know a lower temperature was maintained is to call the manufacturer. Don't hesitate to do so!</p> <p>Since light and oxygen are the 2 main things that begin to degrade oil quality, look for oil sold in dark glass bottles to protect it from UV rays.</p>
Grapeseed Oil	6-9 months, if stored in a cool dark place	
Sesane Seed Oil	6-9 months, if stored in a cool dark place	
Coconut Oil	2 years stored in a cool, dark, place	Coconut oil is solid up to 76 degrees Fahrenheit, after which it begins to melt. You want virgin coconut oil that is cold-pressed. It should have the delicious aroma of fresh coconuts. Coconut oil that has been extracted using a solvent or fractionated is less desirable, and often times loses its aroma.
Shea Butter	1 year, stored in a cool, dark, place	Look for raw, unrefined, shea butter. The refining process strips it of some of its wonderful benefits. It should have a rich, nutty, aroma with just a hint of vanilla. Refined shea has little to no odor.
Avocado Oil	1 year, stored in a cool, dark, place	True, organic, cold-pressed avocado oil of high quality is a dark olive green color, somewhat thick, and smooth and rich in texture.
Jjoba Oil	Indefinite	A rich yellow color, jjoba oil should be unrefined and cold-pressed as its extraction method.

Cocoa Butter	1 year, stored in a cool, dark, place	Cocoa butter has an aroma befitting of its name-it smells chocolaty! Look for organic unrefined cocoa butter, with a slightly yellow color and a harder, but still creamy, consistency.
Honey	Indefinite	You want organic, raw, honey. It is not clear, pristine looking, or liquid. It is cloudy, sometimes crystalline, and fairly solid. Honey that has been processed has lost its beneficial enzymes and much, if not all of, it's healing power.

But What If I Mess Up?

You will, at some point, and you will continue to do so. Like any endeavor, you just have to put in the time and patience to natural living and you will quickly learn what works for you, what doesn't, and even add your own personal touches to recipes. The beauty of all of this is that it is not an exact science. As long as it is within the realms of being safe, you can tweak and adjust and play around with most of these recipes all you want. If you find the smell of something too strong, add less essential oils. If a balm is too solid or too soft for you, tweak the amount of beeswax or solid oil/butter in it. A lot of the recipes will list amounts over a range, such as 1-2 tablespoons, or 10-15 drops, so that you have some wiggle room to match it to your preference but still be successful. If something you makes turns out too oily, for example, don't have a total break down about it. Simply add a little less oil less time. Yes, these recipes do work for me, but it is inevitable that some people, even simply because of their environment, will get a different result. I want you to have tools to be able to work with.

Clean Up

Solid ingredients like beeswax and coconut oil can pose a problem when it comes to cleaning up. Because they will become solid as they cool, they can potentially clog your drains if poured down them. For best results, keep the excess oil or wax warm and wipe out thoroughly with a paper towel. Then rinse with HOT water and lots of soap. If I have been using a double boiler, I will often times pour that water into the waxy or oily bowl as well. If you plan on using beeswax a lot, I suggest getting a separate set of bowls specifically for that use.

When it comes to pouring things into their containers, like balms and salves, place the containers on a cooking sheet covered in parchment paper or aluminum foil. That way you can easily clean up the inevitable little drips and spills that will happen!

Where Do I Get All of This?

I know a lot of this sounds exotic, but the beauty of the internet is that you can get just about anything now. Making your own cleaning products, DIY stuff, or home remedies, really isn't hard. It's actually no different than cooking. You couldn't whip up a batch of soup if you didn't first get the carrots, onions, broth, and a pot could you? Like anything else, you need to equip yourself with some ingredients and equipment.

The resources page is listed on the table of contents.

Sustainability

As our interest in herbs, oils, and butters, grows, it is important to do a background check on your sources before purchasing. Since many of our precious ingredients come from developing countries, it is up to us to make sure they are coming from fair conditions for those who grow and farm them, and make sure the planet is being respected in the process. It is also good to keep in mind that our beautiful herbs and flowers aren't unlimited-look into sources that mention sustainable growth and collection or, better yet, grow your own!

Health

“The natural healing force within each of us is the greatest force in getting well.”

- Hippocrates “Father of Medicine”

Arthritis

Our bodies put up with all kinds of strange things us humans love to do, and somehow manage to avoid falling apart (right now I am thinking specifically of people skiing moguls, and my mother ranting on about how their knees are going deteriorate at any second.) Our joints in particular take an incredible amount of repetitive strain on a day-to-day basis, no extreme sports required, so it's no wonder that as we age our joints begin to wear. The result of this wear and tear is known generally as arthritis. There are actually two types of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis, the latter of which is more common, and the former which is far more mysterious.

Osteoarthritis takes place as the cartilage cushioning our joints wears down over time, until bone grates painfully against bone. It is usually simply the result of aging, but can also be caused by repeated excessive strain, or after an injury to the joint. Rheumatoid arthritis is a little less straightforward. It is the product of a chronic autoimmune disorder in which the immune system-whose job is to attack foreign cells such as a virus or bacteria-attacks the body's own tissues. Specifically it targets the synovial membrane, a soft tissue that protects joints in the body. As a result, sufferers experience many painful symptoms, including inflammation, fluid build-up, and sometimes eventual bone loss. While arthritis of either type can be an unavoidable reality in our lives, treating the symptoms at home can be quite easy, and people generally experience a high degree of success.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Maintain your ideal weight. Being over-weight puts more strain on your joints than necessary, possibly leading to osteoarthritis.

- Exercise to maintain strength in all parts of your body, reduce stiffness, and increase flexibility. Not moving around because your joints ache is the very last thing you should do. Just be sure to balance it so it is not so strenuous as to do more harm than good.

Ginger Root Salve

- Ginger root infused oil can be a bugger to make because of the fresh root's high moisture content, so be sure to leave the lid halfway ajar to allow it to evaporate.

- Whenever you add water content to something, you decrease shelf life greatly. To be on the safe side, make a small batch of this and keep it in a mason jar, boiled previously to eradicate any germs, in a cool dark place. Use within 1 ½ weeks, or up to 2 ½ weeks if refrigerated.

- You can leave the oil as it is without making it into a salve if you want to keep it simple. Usage is the same.

White Willow Tea

- Chipped bark is more desirable than powdered, which can leave behind a gritty, sandy texture in your tea.

Ginger Root Salve

A process called prostaglandin synthesis goes on in many animals, including humans, and can play large role in the treatment of arthritis. This process, or synthesis, makes lipid (fat) compounds called prostaglandins within our cells that act like little messengers. They run a wide variety biological processes, including inflammation, and transmitting pain signals to neurons. Virtually all common OTC painkillers work by inhibiting this process, therefore preventing or lessening pain and inflammation. Wonderful ginger root is a natural alternative that has been shown many times to work the same way, sans the side effects of regular medication. By massaging this warming salve gently into aching joints, you can help quickly relieve pain, swelling, and stiffness.

You will need...

For the oil:

-2 cups of ginger root, cut into medium to large chunks

-3 ½ cups of olive or jojoba oil

-A crock pot

For the salve:

-10-12 parts infused oil

-1-2 parts grated beeswax or beeswax pastilles

-A double boiler

Directions

1. Set your crock pot to the lowest setting. Add your chopped ginger and then cover with oil, leaving the lid halfway ajar to allow the moisture to evaporate-I cannot stress how important this part is!

2. Allow the oil to infuse for 2 full days, checking every now and then to make sure it is not boiling or burning.

3. Decant your oil and strain it. Place in a clear mason jar for 24 hours to allow any extra water that remains to separate from the oil. If you do get water, simply use a clean turkey baster to suck it up, or carefully pour the oil from the water. It is vital to get as much out as possible to extend shelf life.

For the salve:

1. Pour 10-12 parts of the now infused oil back into a double boiler and add 1 part grated beeswax, heating until the wax is completely melted, and giving it a quick stir at the end to make sure everything is blended together.

2. Remove the mixture from the heat and transfer to a small airtight jar. Massage gently into sore, aching, joints as needed.

Birch Balm

This balm is a potent blend of two powerful essential oils, wintergreen, and birch. There are some people who advise against the use of these essential oils at all, and some who consider them a staple. The reason they are so powerful is because they contain a high percentage (85-95%) of methyl salicylate, which is similar to acetylsalicylic acid found in aspirin. Before we had these painkillers, birch and wintergreen were nature's form of aspirin. These oils are very strong, but almost unmatched when it comes to joint pain, especially rheumatic, thanks to their strong anti-inflammatory properties. If you cannot find birch oil, or wish not to use it, using wintergreen on its own works as well. This is also a wonderful headache remedy.

Birch and Wintergreen should NEVER be given to children or young teenagers, and should never be used excessively-i.e. covering of the legs and arms.

You will need...

- 3-5 drops of wintergreen essential oil
- 3-5 drops of birch essential oil
- 1/4 cup of coconut oil
- 1 teaspoon of grated beeswax/beeswax pastilles

Directions

1. Set up your double boiler and add the coconut oil and beeswax.
2. Stir now and then to make sure they are blending together thoroughly. Melt completely.
3. Remove from the heat and add 3-5 drops of wintergreen and/or birch essential oil, stir, and pour into tins. Cover immediately so the essential oils don't evaporate. After cooling, rub into sore joints as needed. It will keep for up to a year in a cool dark place away from direct sunlight.

White Willow Tea

Similar to wintergreen/birch essential oil, white willow is another one of nature's forms of aspirin, as it too contains the active ingredient salicin. Salicin is converted to salicylic acid, which is similar to acetylsalicylic acid, the active ingredient in aspirin. The difference is that naturally occurring salicin is converted after it passes through the stomach, and the irritation and side effects are lessened. There is a capsule form, but I prefer tea.

You will need...

-1 teaspoon of powdered or
chipped white willow bark

-1 cup water

-Honey, ginger root or lemon
(optional)

Directions

1. Bring water to a boil, and then reduce to a simmer. Add powdered or chipped white willow bark and let it infuse for 10-15 minutes.

2. Remove from heat and let the tea steep another 30 minutes, then strain. The flavor is quite bitter, a fact that is not helped by its long steeping time, so feel free to add honey and lemon to taste. A slice or two of ginger root is a nice touch as well.

Back Pain

I think most people can relate to back pain or a stiff neck, at least at some point or another in their life. If you work crunched over a computer (I am guilty here), or you slept in a funny position, or have another contributing condition, chances are you experience this discomfort on a fairly regular basis.

Whether or not you suffer from one or both, it's terrible to have to go through the day with lasting pain. The cause of neck pain is usually easier to figure out than back pain, which can be caused by anything from spinal problems to meningitis. However in this chapter I am only addressing acute pain caused by muscle strain, tension, or overuse.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-How is your posture? Actually, you don't need to answer that. I think it's pretty obvious what the majority of people would say. Poor posture will compress and affect your spine, neck, shoulders, and back muscles, which leaves you with chronic pain. I am afraid there is only one solution here-start practicing holding yourself correctly. If you work at a computer, utilize ergonomic technology to help take some of the constant strain off of yourself.

Peppermint-Eucalyptus Oil Rub

-I like to use little roller bottles to make application easier. You may find them at your local health store, or order them online.

Lavender-Epsom Salt Soak

-If you are using loose dried lavender, tie it up in some cheesecloth or muslin-it's not very relaxing having to chase down the elusive little buds while you finish up your bath. You can also use a screen cover for your drain.

-You can use the lavender bathing salts for this as well if you have them, but this version takes less work if you don't.

-Try this first thing in the morning, or just before bedtime.

Peppermint Eucalyptus Oil Rub

Peppermint is such a wonderful pain reliever. When used to treat internal conditions, such as IBS, it helps relax the smooth muscles of the cramping intestinal track. When used externally, such as on sore muscles, it achieves the same thing, encouraging relaxation and taking the edge off discomfort with a cool, tingling sensation. Eucalyptus blends beautifully with peppermint, not only because they share a similar mind-clearing aroma, but because it too has muscle relaxing properties. It also helps fight inflammation in knotted, painful muscles.

You will need...

- 2 tablespoons of any liquid oil
- 5-10 drops of eucalyptus oil
- 5-10 drops of peppermint oil

Directions

1. Blend equal amounts of eucalyptus and peppermint oil with your carrier oil.
2. Apply over sore muscles as needed, massaging gently, and taking care that you don't just brush it over your skin. You can also place a dab on your temples to help clear a tension related headache.

Lavender Epsom Salt Soak

Epsom salt has long been added to bathwater as a means to help relax, and is quite popular in sports therapy. Magnesium sulfate, a main component in Epsom salt, is readily absorbed through the skin, and is thought to help with the pain of muscle aches and strains. Lavender may or may not have pain-relieving properties when dealt with topically, but its scent alone does wonders to help you relax both body and mind. Blend all of this together in a relaxing bath of warm water, and you have a nice way to ease the tension out of your body at the end of the day.

You will need...

- 2 cups of Epsom salt
- A handful of dried lavender
OR several drops of lavender essential oil
- 1 teaspoon of oil

Directions

1. Run a bath of warm water. When it's halfway full, add 2 cups of Epsom salt and your dried lavender flowers, or lavender essential oil that has been mixed with a carrier.
2. Soak for 15-20 minutes and go about your day and night relaxed and refreshed.

Catnip Tea

You read it right-catnip is great for people as well as cats. A member of the mint family, catnip is not generally thought of as a remedy humans would turn towards, however it acts as a mild muscle relaxant, as well as helping to relieve tension related headaches. It will also help you drift off and sleep through the night.

You will need...

- 1 teaspoon of dried catnip OR
1 tablespoon of fresh catnip
- 6 oz. of boiling water
- Some honey or lemon
(optional)

Directions

1. Pour the freshly boiled water over the dried or fresh catnip.
2. Cover and steep for 10-15 minutes and then strain, adding honey and/or lemon to taste if you like. Drink before bedtime to help you unwind and wake up pain-free and relaxed.

Bad Breath

Bad breath can drag down just about any kind of social interaction. It is, after all, hard to enjoy a conversation with somebody when you're worried about accidentally breathing in the direction of their face. Bad breath can be chronic (called halitosis), or caused by something temporary, such as a certain food. There are many contributing factors to bad breath, but a common cause for lasting odor is bacteria living on the back of the tongue and below the gum line. Millions, even billions, of bacteria live in our mouth, some of which are useful, and others that hang around and produce unpleasant smelling gases as they interact with the foods we eat- especially foods high in protein. As bacteria break down left over proteins from food into amino acids, unpleasant sulfur compounds such as hydrogen sulfide (which has that characteristic "rotten egg" smell) are released. Those who are prone to halitosis have more, sometimes even different strains, of odor causing bacteria in the mouth.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Saliva is our natural mouthwash. When you have a dry mouth, as sometime caused by certain medications and other various conditions, bad breath is amplified. Our saliva production lessens while we sleep, which is part of why we wake up with such kickin' breath in the morning.

-The very best thing you can do for any kind of lasting bad breath is maintain good oral hygiene. We hear it all the time, and there's good reason. Brushing your teeth and tongue will keep bacteria count down-don't discount your tongue, since that's where a huge amount of bacteria hangs out. A quick scrub won't do it either. 2-3 minutes of good brushing, preferably twice a day, is needed to scrub away plaque that has built up, and clean out bacteria build up as well.

-Keep hydrated to help maintain moisture levels in your mouth.

Cinnamon Rinse

Cinnamon is actually more effective than mint when it comes to freshening breath long term. While mint will mask the smell temporarily, the essential oil in cinnamon actually kills off odor-causing bacteria and has a fresh scent. You can either chew a cinnamon stick after a meal, or make your own cinnamon mouth-rinse.

You will need...

- 1 cup of fresh water
- 5 sticks of cinnamon

Directions

1. Boil cinnamon sticks in the water for 5-10 minutes. Let the mixture cool, then swish around in your mouth for a solid minute before spitting out. You can bottle this and keep it in a cool, dark place for up to 3 days or in the refrigerator for up to a week.

Baking Soda Rinse

Baking soda can kill some bad oral bacteria, and tea tree oil has incredibly powerful anti-bacterial properties as well. Both of these factors will ultimately improve the way your breath smells. Less bacteria=less gas released=less odor.

You will need...

- 2 teaspoons of baking soda
- 1 drop of tea tree oil
- Fresh water

Directions

1. Mix up baking soda with enough water to create a rinse and add a drop of tea tree oil.
2. Swish for 1 minute as needed-it can be useful for a quick rinse after eating, as well as something added to a nightly or morning regime after you brush your teeth. Spit out-do not swallow.

Citrus Rinse

Have you ever bitten into a slice of lemon and had your mouth feel almost like it's contracted just before it starts watering like crazy? Even just thinking about it can make your mouth water (try it.) Citrus is a natural way to stimulate the salivary glands, which will help keep the mouth moist, and tamp down bad breath that is exacerbated by dryness. This will make you pucker!

You will need...

- 1/2 cup of water
- 1/2 of a lemon

Directions

1. Squeeze half of a lemon into your water and stir. 2 tablespoons of bottled lemon juice can work in a pinch.
2. Swish the mixture-you can drink it too if you like.

Burns

A burn is an injury that can be caused by electricity, heat, radiation, chemicals, and friction (e.g. 'rope burn.')

These home remedies will deal only with first degree or mild second degree burns caused by heat (flame, hot liquids, hot items, etc.) First degree is defined as a burn affecting only the top layers of skin, also known as the epidermis, while second burns go deeper into underlying layers of skin, or the dermis. With second degree burns, fluid may leak from damaged blood vessels and form a blister. For the record, it is a good idea to leave a blister alone when it forms, as damaging it will only prolong the healing period.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Just a curious idea to ponder: Sometime in the future, people may choose that running luke-warm or neutral temperature water over a minor burn is better than freezing cold. Recent research has shown that while both cold and warm (not hot) water delays burn depth progression, results four days after the burns took place showed that the warm water had provided additional benefit by improving microcirculatory perfusion. Microcirculation means the circulation of blood in the smallest blood vessels within organ tissues (remember your skin is your largest organ!) Perfusion is literally the process of delivering the blood. The result of the improved microcirculatory perfusion was increased tissue survival. Cold water inhibited this by constricting blood vessels and slowing circulation. Still, this research has happened only within the last few years, and most medical professionals will advise cold water treatment.

Honey Bandage

There has been a lot of speculation about how honey speeds the healing of wounds, but the general consensus seems to be that it does do something to help. Most likely this is caused by it acting as a natural disinfectant, and possibly drawing fluid out from tissues. The sticky substance will keep your burn coated and, hopefully, help it heal faster and more efficiently (the majority of complications with burns arise from infection.)

You will need...

- 1 spoonful of honey
- A strip of gauze

Directions

1. Run the burn under cool water and let it dry. It's important to make sure the burn has cooled before putting honey on it, otherwise you risk retaining heat and extending damage.
2. Place a spoonful of honey on a strip of gauze. Place the gauze over the burn and gently press it into place. Replace the bandage 3-4 times a day with fresh honey and clean gauze. During changes, gently rinse off any leftover residue from the honey on the previous bandage before applying a new one.

Apply Black Tea Bags

The tannic acid found in black tea can help draw heat away from a burn, providing relief.

You will need...

- 1-3 black tea bags
- Some cold fresh water

Directions

1. Soak the tea bags briefly (1-2 minutes) in cold fresh water before placing one over the burn. Swap it out after 10-15 minutes for the second tea bag, and again after another 10-15 minutes if you are using a third.

Slap a Potato on It

If water didn't bring you the relief you needed, slice a potato that has been sitting in a cool dark place and place a piece of it over the burn. The coolness will help soothe the burn, and the relief generally lasts longer than plain old water. You can also stick some slices in the refrigerator to cool them even more.

You will need...

-1 slice of potato

Directions

1. Place the potato over the burn, swapping it out for a fresh slice when the first has become too warm.

Canker Sores

Common canker sores, also known as aphthous stomatitis, are painful, annoying, and surprisingly complex. Despite being fairly common, we really don't know what the exact causes of these tiny ulcers are. There are actually subcategories of canker sores, but there's enough speculation flying around about these pesky things so I won't get started on that. Starting as small, red, flattened oval of skin, they develop into ulcers that are covered in a yellow or white membrane. The end result looks like a painful red patch, sometimes swollen, with a yellow or white area in the center. They generally go away on their own within a few weeks, but are still quite bothersome and can interfere with everyday life. They can also be stubbornly reoccurring.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-The exact cause of canker sores is unknown, but there are probably multiple factors that contribute to them (some of which are listed below), and people can have more than one thing working against them. By knowing what may trigger your canker sores, you have a better chance at figuring out how to prevent them in the first place. Some common causes are-

-Biting your cheek/lip: A good old chomp on the inside of your mouth may contribute to canker sores, as can rubbing from braces, retainers, or dentures.

-Certain foods: Spicy or acidic foods seem to have to a solid link to some people's canker sores. Try keeping a canker sore diary that tracks what you've been eating so you can eliminate the culprits.

-Sodium lauryl sulfate: Sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS) is an acid commonly found in hygiene and cleaning products, as it creates foaming action. It is also found in toothpaste. Numerous studies have linked it to higher incidents of canker sores, and they took longer to heal than sores not linked to SLS.

Baking Soda Paste

Baking soda can help a canker sore heal itself quickly for two reasons. First, it is an alkaline substance (opposite of acidic) and therefore helps lower the acidity levels in your mouth, which can slow down the healing process. Secondly, it also works as an anti-bacterial agent, fighting off bad bacteria in your mouth that could be contributing to it sticking around.

You will need...

- Roughly 1 teaspoon of warm water
- Enough baking soda to form a paste

Directions

1. Mix together warm water and a little bit of baking soda, adding more baking soda until a thick paste has formed. Using your fingertip (after you've washed your hands) or a cotton swab, dab the paste onto the sore and leave on. Apply as often as needed throughout the day.

Dab on Hydrogen Peroxide

Because some excess bacteria in the mouth may prolong the healing period of the canker sore, using an antiseptic will help speed up the process, because it will reduce that bacteria count. An easy to obtain and straightforward antiseptic is hydrogen peroxide-just make sure you get 3%.

You will need...

- A cotton swab or cotton ball
- 3% hydrogen peroxide

Directions

1. Saturate a cotton swab or cotton ball in the hydrogen peroxide and apply to the sore until it “fizzes.”
2. Apply up to 4 times a day.

Sea Salt & Honey Rub

Putting salt on a canker sore sounds like just about the worst thing in the world, but it does seem to help speed up the healing. One reason is probably because salt draws fluid out of surrounding tissues, which will help with any painful swelling of the sore. It also helps keep bacteria levels lower. The honey is also antibacterial, and acts as a medium that makes it easier to apply the salt (it also helps take the sting out a little.)

You will need...

- Roughly 1/2 teaspoon of sea salt

- A smidge of organic raw honey

Directions

1. Pour sea salt into a small bowl and add a smidgen of honey, just enough to get the salt to stick together, but not so much that it will smother the sore and render the salt useless to dry out the area. Apply a small blob of this to your canker sore and let it sit, without talking, eating, or drinking, for about 5-10 minutes. You can do this up to 3 times a day. An alternative is to simply apply a pinch of sea salt directly to the sore.

Salt Water

The simplest method to deal with a canker sore may just be gargling with salt water.

You will need...

- 1/2 teaspoon of salt
- 1/2 cup of warm water

Directions

1. Stir salt into water and gargle 3 times a day as needed.

Carpal Tunnel

Do you text? Type on a keyboard? Our lifestyles include an ever increasing amount of repetitive motion, especially with all the technology we are hooked into, and carpal tunnel syndrome is becoming more prevalent than ever before. It occurs when your median nerve, which runs from your forearm through the carpal tunnel in your wrist and to your hand, becomes pinched or compressed. This compression can be caused by a variety of reasons, from repetitive motion, to sleeping position, to the way your wrist is structured. It manifests itself as tingling/numbness in the fingers and hand, pain extending from your wrist up to your shoulder or out to your fingers, and weakness in your hand or trouble grasping things.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Try switching to an ergonomic keyboard/office chair
- Focus on holding hands and wrists in the correct, relaxed position
- Try acupuncture or acupressure to help find relief.

Contrast Hydrotherapy

It has a fancy name, but contrast hydrotherapy is just alternating between submerging your wrists in hot and cold water. It can temporarily take strain off of joints, help with inflammation that may be narrowing your carpal tunnel, and provide overall pain relief.

You will need...

- A bowl of hot water
- A bowl of very cold water
- A towel

Directions

1. Submerge your wrists and hands fully in hot (but not burning) water for 3 minutes, followed by 1 minute in cold water.
2. Repeat this process 3 times consecutively, and repeat the entire process 2-3 times daily.

Castor Oil Pack

Castor oil is a vegetable oil that is obtained when the seeds of the plant *Ricinus communis* are pressed, and medicinal uses date back to ancient Egypt. When applied topically it may help fight inflammation and improve circulation, relieving some of the pressure on your carpal tunnel.

You will need...

- Old strips of flannel or some cheesecloth
- Castor oil
- Hot water bottle (optional)

Directions

1. Cut strips of clean, undyed flannel or cheesecloth and soak them in castor oil. Wring out the excess, and wrap your wrists (and hands, if necessary.) Be prepared to be somewhat incapacitated during this time, as you can't do a whole lot with your wrists covered in oil!
2. To keep things neat and together you can wrap an extra layer of thick, clean, fabric over the original wraps. Doing so also allows you to place a heating pack over the area if you find heat relieves your discomfort, or a cold pack. When you're finished, rinse skin thoroughly. Do this once daily 5 times a week, or less if you find 5 days unnecessary.

Tablespoon of Flaxseed Oil

Rich in omega three fatty acids, specifically a-linoleic n-3, flaxseed oil taken regularly can help relieve inflammation. It is thought to do so by affecting prostaglandins, a group of substances that mediate the inflammatory process. While fatty acids can contribute to inflammation, they can also help resolve it, the latter of which seems to be the case with carpal tunnel.

You will need...

-1 tablespoon of high-quality unrefined flaxseed oil

Directions

1. Take 1 tablespoon of flaxseed oil daily. If it's going to help you, it takes about 2-4 weeks to set in to the point that you really notice the relief. Be aware ahead of time that flaxseed oil may have a laxative like effect on some people.

Cold

The common cold has dogged the footsteps of humanity since the ancient past, a constant, incurable, viral companion that easily claims the title of the most frequently occurring infectious disease. Technically the title “cold” should be plural, as over 200 viruses make up its repertoire, all of which are responsible for adults catching an average of 2-3 a year, and children 6-12. The majority are accompanied by coughing, sneezing, sore throat, runny nose, and sometimes a low-grade fever.

Colds are spread primarily in three ways-airborne droplets (e.g. little drops of snot or saliva, generally expelled upon sneezing or coughing), coming in direct contact with a contaminated object, such as cups, and/or coming in direct contact with infected nasal secretions that are not airborne. The virus will penetrate the mucous layers of the nose and throat, and attach themselves to cells there. They then punch into cell membranes, take over, and force the cells to produce hundreds of thousands of new virus particles. In response your brave and trusty body gathers its defenses and goes to battle it off. The symptoms you experience are the result of this immune response, more so than any actual damage from the virus.

Usually a cold will clear up on its own within a week or two, but sometimes the little buggers just hang on. And while some may lead to a stuffy nose and an overall rundown feeling, others can totally put your life on hold. Whichever you experience, a myriad of home remedies exist to treat colds (or rather, treat the symptoms, which is really all you can do) and they are some of the easiest to prepare and use.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-The best way to prevent a cold is to simply wash your hands properly. After that, just use common sense-don't go eating off of someone's plate or sharing water bottles if you know they're sick.

-The term community immunity is a rather important one when it comes to colds. It describes the immunity that takes place when a decent amount of a population gets vaccinated or becomes immune naturally. It interrupts a long chain of a contagious disease that bops from person to person, making it less likely for a susceptible person to come in contact with it. While there is no way to vaccinate against a cold, do not “shelter” yourself, or your kids. Common sense is good, but if you try to live in a bubble, you only serve to weaken your immune system and become more vulnerable to the illness, and you make others more vulnerable as well.

-The cold's namesake was earned as it was once thought to be possible to “catch” a cold when the temperature drops, which we now know is not true. Some viruses seem to be more prominent in certain seasons, which could account for that theory, as well as the fact that people spend more time in confined spaces with each other when the weather is cold. Try to your home as well ventilated as possible. If you get an unusually warm day in the wintertime, open those windows!

Elderberry Syrup

-This makes a large batch and allows you to give it to family and friends as a nourishing gift come winter time. Feel free to halve this recipe.

-Use this for the flu as well as colds!

-This will thicken some in the fridge, but don't worry if it seems thin to you, it won't be nearly as goopy as store bought syrups.

Chicken Soup

-Chicken has nutrients that can help with a cold, but feel free to leave it out if you prefer-it's still wonderful for you.

Chicken Soup

The very first thing I go to when a cold strikes is chicken noodle soup. Cliché? Perhaps, but it is truly a good remedy-it's actually one of the most beneficial hot fluids you can consume when you have a cold. The steam helps loosen mucous, making it easier to expel, along with the virus inside of it. The chicken has cysteines, a semi-essential amino acid, that helps thin and break down mucous. Cysteines also have anti-inflammatory effects that will help you breathe easier. On top of all of that goodness, the soup has easily absorbed nutrients that nourish your recovering body, and you consume much needed liquid. Of course it's delicious too. You can use any recipe in your family (even canned if you don't have the energy to make any) but I've included my personal favorite recipe.

You will need...

- 1 small onion
- 1 carrot
- 1 stalk of celery
- 2 tablespoons of grapeseed oil
- 6 cups of chicken stock
- Plain boiled or rotisserie chicken
- 1 cup of orzo (or your favorite shape of noodle)
- Parmesan (optional)
- Salt and pepper

Directions

1. In advance, cook 1 cup of orzo pasta until it is about halfway done-it will finish cooking in the soup later. Rinse it with cold water, or mix with a little oil if you are worried about the noodles sticking together.
2. Put 2 tablespoons of neutral oil, such as grapeseed, in a medium sized pot over medium heat.
3. While the oil heats, dice the onion, chop the celery, peel and thinly slice the carrot. When the oil is shimmering, add your vegetables and sprinkle with salt and pepper, stirring occasionally, until they have softened and the onion is translucent (3-5 minutes.)
4. Add 6 cups of chicken stock. When the liquid is simmering, add the noodles and cook until they are tender. A minute or two before taking the soup off the heat add shredded or chopped cooked chicken. Salt and pepper to taste, and sprinkle with parmesan if you like (if you haven't tried this, you should!)

Simple Cough Syrup

This a less labor-intensive version of the spicy-cider syrup in the congestion chapter, so if you run out of that, or you don't feel like making it, this is an easy one to turn to that still works quite well. The reasoning behind the ingredients is the same as the other recipe-the honey acts as a natural expectorant that helps loosen phlegm or mucous, while the apple cider vinegar is thought to help thin out nasal secretions. You can add a sprinkle of cinnamon in if you want a little extra kick.

You will need...

- 1/2 cup of raw, organic, honey
- 1/2 cup of apple cider vinegar
- Sprinkle of cinnamon (optional)
- A little jar with a tightly fitting lid

Directions

1. Combine honey and apple cider vinegar and stir until they are blended thoroughly. Add a sprinkle of cinnamon if you like.
2. Place in a jar with a tightly fitting lid and store for up to a year in a cool, dark, place. If you add the cinnamon, give it a shake before taking it as it doesn't really dissolve and tends to settle on the bottom of the jar. Adults take 1-2 tablespoons every 4 hours, or as needed. Children over the age of 4 years take 1-2 teaspoons every 4 hours as needed.

Elderberry Syrup

Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*)* has been around for hundreds of years, and is popular as a remedy for respiratory illnesses like the cold and flu. Studies have revealed some evidence that naturally occurring chemicals in the elderflower/berries may help reduce swelling in the mucous membranes (i.e. throat and sinuses) as well as help relieve congestions.

It has been shown to help shorten the overall duration of colds/some strains of the flu-this was thoroughly tested when the 1995 flu pandemic in Panama hit. There are store-bought versions available, but making your own is simple and cost-effective, and you know everything that goes into it. Unless you have experience with pressing fresh elder (any part of the plant) stick to dried. Fresh can also be toxic if not dealt with properly, as they contain a chemical that produces cyanide.

*Make sure you are not getting dwarf elder, *Sambucus ebulus*, which can be toxic in any form.

You will need...

- 6 1/2 cups of fresh water
- 1 1/3 cups of dried elderberries
- 2 teaspoons of whole, dried, cloves
- 6 sticks of cinnamon or 3 teaspoons of cinnamon powder
- 2 cups of raw, organic, honey
- 2 tablespoons of ginger powder (optional)
- A medium saucepan
- A large bowl & strainer
- A mason jar

Directions

1. First, boil your mason jar to make sure there are no little nasty microbes left on it. I recommend doing this with this recipe since it is sometimes used over the course of a whole winter.
2. In a medium or large saucepan add water, elderberries, cloves, cinnamon, and ginger (if using.) Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer for 45 minutes, or until the liquid is reduced by about half.
3. Remove from heat, let it cool, and pour through a strainer into a large bowl. Use a large spoon, or clean hands, to press all the extra wonderful juice out. You'll be surprised at how much you get!
4. Discard the solids, and thoroughly stir in the honey when the mixture has cooled almost completely. Store in mason jars and keep refrigerated for up to 4 months. For kids old enough to safely have honey, give ½ -1 teaspoon daily 5 days a week. For adults take 1 tablespoon daily 5 days a week. If you get sick, take the dose every 3-4 hours to shorten the duration/severity of the illness.

Congestion

There isn't a single person out there that hasn't experienced the sniffles, or gotten a nasty cough. Nasal congestion can be caused by anything that irritates the sensitive tissue in the nasal passage and causes it to swell. An increase in mucous usually takes place when your body is trying to fight off the irritant or germ by flushing it out, and the combination of the two leads to a very stuffy nose. The main culprits range from allergies to a virus, and anything irritating in between. Chest congestion happens when mucous builds up in the lungs, and is usually caused by an illness's such as bronchitis, the flu, a cold, and even relatively benign allergies. When you have chest congestion, you don't want to take a cough suppressant, but rather an expectorant-something that helps loosen the mucous to cough it up.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-It is quite un-extraordinary, but steam is one of the best ways to clear out a stuffy nose. Have you ever noticed that you can breathe better after a hot shower, or when you drink a cup of piping hot tea? That would be the steam loosening mucous and making it easier for your body to expel it. To get the benefits of steam inhalation, pour freshly boiled water into a medium sized bowl and give it just a second to cool down (steam can really burn) before leaning your face over it at a comfortable height. Drape a towel over your head to trap the steam and breathe deep. Do this for as long as needed, as many times a day as you want. It doesn't cost much, it's easy, it's quick, and it's natural!

Spicy Cider Decongestant & Expectorant

This is both a decongestant and expectorant, thinning mucous in the nose and loosening it in the chest. It does taste strong, but I prefer its flavor to regular OTC cough and cold medicine any day. Once you get used to it, it can actually be quite comforting to reach for your little jar when you find yourself with a stuffy nose and a cough.

It includes cayenne, honey, and ginger, which are all expectorants, loosening mucous clogging your lungs. Additionally, the natural chemical capsaicin found in cayenne helps relieve swelling and inflammation of the nasal passages. The strong flavors of cayenne and ginger also add a little kick to help clear things out. Apple cider vinegar is thought to help thin out the mucous being secreted, making it easier to drain, as has lemon juice-probably due to their strong flavors.

You will need...

- 1/2 teaspoon of cayenne pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon of powdered ginger
- 3 tablespoons of organic, raw, honey
- 1/4 cup of lemon juice
- 1/4 cup of apple cider vinegar

Directions

1. There are two ways to make this recipe. One uses heat to encourage thorough infusion of the ingredients, the other is more convenient. If you are using heat, pour lemon juice, cayenne, ginger and apple cider vinegar into a pot and bring to a gentle simmer for 3 minutes.
2. Let the mixture cool some and then stir in honey. Store in a jar in a cool, dark, place for up to 1 month, or in the refrigerator for up to 3. I have never had issues with it going bad, but the flavor eventually gets tamer.
3. If you are not using heat, simply mix up all the ingredients as above and pour into a jar. Let it infuse on its own for 24 hours before taking. Adults take 1/2 -1 tablespoon every 3 hours, or as needed. Children 5 years and older take 1/2 -1 teaspoon every 3 hours as needed.

Simple Peppermint Salve

Growing up my mom would always use a special rub when I had a cold, and I swear it was one of the only things that helped when I woke up in the middle of the night and couldn't breathe or get comfortable. It was truly miraculous. What she used is no longer made, so here is my homemade version of it.

The peppermint and eucalyptus essential oils contain menthol, and have a strong aroma. Speaking technically, peppermint does not actually relieve swelling the nasal passages. That said the menthol creates a strong cooling sensation when inhaled that at least feels like it eases breathing, breaking through congestion with its powerful aroma. Eucalyptus is thought to have properties that actually do ease inflammation, which can be beneficial in times of narrowed, swollen airway

You will need...

-10-12 tablespoons of any liquid oil

-1 tablespoon of beeswax, grated or pastilles

-8-10 drops each of peppermint and eucalyptus oil

Directions

1. Set up a double boiler over medium heat and add your oil and beeswax.

2. Stir once or twice to blend the two together. When fully incorporated, turn off the heat and add 8-10 drops each of peppermint and eucalyptus essential oil. When you pour it into your jar or tin, put the lid on immediately so the essential oils don't evaporate and lose strength. In a cool dark place this will last for a year.

Scented Steam Bath

Going off of one of the tips above, this steam treatment incorporates the aromatherapy of essential oils to help clear congestion. It's quite simple and very effective. The only other ingredient, aside from water, is a blend of essential oils that will work wonderfully to reduce congestion and swelling. The tea tree oil also has wonderful airborne anti-microbial properties that can help ward off any virus or bacteria hiding out in your nose.

You will need...

- A bowl
- A towel
- 2 drops of peppermint oil
- 2 drops of tea tree oil
- At least 1 cup of boiling hot water

Directions

1. Place the essential oils and hot water in a bowl. Stir to get the scent spreading.
2. Make sure the water has cooled to a safe, but still warm temperature, as steam can be quite painful. Lean over the bowl at a comfortable height and drape the towel over your head to trap the steam. Breathe slowly, and deeply. Do this for as long as needed at least 3 times a day.

Constipation

Constipation is something that many people suffer with in silence. With a culture in which we often shame one of the most natural processes the human body can go through-going to the bathroom-constipation is not an easy thing to deal with. So let's just let that go-if you have constipation, no worries. Now, as terrible as constipation is, running for the OTC laxatives may not be your best bet. They are hard on the system, and if used long-term, can end up creating a chronic problem. Instead of worsening the situation, people are learning that it is easy to treat constipation at home by natural means. You'll notice that these remedies are "drinks" in some form or another-that liquid is much needed.

Constipation happens when your large intestine absorbs too much water from your food as it moves, slower than usual, through it. This can be caused by more complicated factors, and sometimes no reason is found at all. Most commonly it is caused by inadequate fiber intake and not enough fluids.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Get moving to get stuff moving through you. Even a short walk around the block can help.

- Stay hydrated. Stool will harden if you don't have enough liquid, and become difficult to pass. Drink drink drink!

- Eat healthier. Fruits and veggies will help keep your digestion on track. Eating foods high in fiber will also help add bulk to your stool and move it along. Be sure to increase water intake when you increase fiber.

- When nature calls, answer! Our bodies only send the signal to go to the bathroom for a certain amount of time-hence why you often times 'lose the urge' if you hold it in-and that can just cause a bigger buildup. It doesn't matter if you have a busy work schedule, when you need to poop you need to poop and that's that.

- Thanks especially to processed foods and our increasingly sedentary lifestyles, constipation is becoming more and more common. Trying to live a healthier and more natural lifestyle does more than you think it might for constipation-and if you've ever suffered from it, especially chronically, you know it's worth making the extra effort.

Olive Oil & Lemon Juice

Olive oil is a natural lubricant (just think about its consistency on its own) and stimulates the digestive system. It's considered a healthier fat too, so consuming it isn't something to feel guilty about, as long as it is in moderation. While you can take just a tablespoon straight, adding lemon juice is an added kick that usually tips the scales if you're really blocked up. There's something about its acidic nature that really gets things moving along the G.I. track.

You will need...

- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- 1 teaspoon of lemon juice

Directions

1. Mix olive oil and lemon juice and take straight on an empty stomach, first thing in the morning. Repeat if needed in the evening.

Hot Molasses, Lemon & Prune Drink

The thought of prunes brings back a flood of childhood memories. Every time I had an issue going to the bath room, my mom would bring out the prunes. In this drink, you get the added benefit of fluids along with everything else. There's the water soluble fiber from the prunes, the acidic nature of the lemon juice, and some extra fluid from it too, and the power of molasses. Make sure the molasses is blackstrap-the third boiling of molasses results in blackstrap, which contains vitamins, minerals, and magnesium (which is what really helps constipation.) While I'll be the first to admit it's not the prettiest (or tastiest) thing in the world, it's so worth it. I've also heard of someone making a thicker version and spooning it over oatmeal, but I have never taken that step.

You will need...

- 1-2 cups of water
- 1-2 teaspoons of blackstrap molasses
- 2 tablespoons of lemon juice
- 1/4 cup pitted prunes, cut in half

Directions

1. Place everything in a pot on the stove and bring to a simmer. Let the mixture simmer for 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. With a slotted spoon remove the prunes. Make fresh and drink once a day.

Soaked Raisins

Raisins are packed full of dietary fiber. This means that the body can't really digest them, so they add bulk to stool and encourage things to move through the system. It also means they draw water from the intestinal track, which can soften stool that is hardened and is difficult to pass. Drink the water along with the raisins to add fluid.

You will need...

- 1 cup of regular raisins
- 1 ½ cups of fresh water
- a bowl

Directions

1. Soak raisins overnight and eat in the morning. Drink the water that they were soaked in as well. Repeat daily as needed.

Cough

I went through a period of time in which I came down with multiple bouts of bronchitis, and in that time I got far more intimate with coughs than I ever wanted to. Whether you have the flu, a cold, bronchitis, or just a reaction to dry air, not being able to stop coughing is simply dreadful. They're not just physically uncomfortable either. Nothing, except perhaps crickets, makes a heavy silence more awkward than a cough.

There are two main kinds of coughs-dry and productive. A dry hacking cough is just that-a dry hacking cough. A productive cough brings up phlegm or mucous. If you have a productive cough, do not try to suppress it, your body needs to get rid of any gunk in your lungs. That being said the below remedies include solutions for both dry coughs (suppressing them) and productive coughs (help loosen stuff up.)

Brushed aside by big companies claiming that their products "wouldn't be so popular if they didn't work" this study did not get the credit it deserved. In 2010, a review of studies found there truly isn't any evidence over-the-counter cough medicine did anything-even ones with ingredients like dexamorphane or guaifenesin. Those with codeine had such trace amounts they would have no real effect (which makes sense, since they're selling it over the counter.)

In 2008, the FDA put it out there that because there was no proof of them actually working, and little research on side effects, cough syrup should be avoided in children under the age of 4 years. The American Academy of Pediatrics took this a step farther, saying to avoid use in children less than 6 years.

If they don't necessarily do anything then, why do we spend so much money on them? A lot of it is probably because people take comfort in them-and don't ever, ever, ever, underestimate the power of the placebo effect. So if you don't have to take them, why would you ever drink out of that dreaded plastic cup again?

Tips & Troubleshooting

Homemade Cough Syrup

-You can use both honey and sugar if you like, just adjust the layering accordingly, and remember that it will be sweeter! If you choose to use garlic, unlike onion, there is no exact amount to put in. Start with 9-12 cloves or so roughly chopped and find a flavor profile that is to your preference

Homemade Cough Syrup

This cough syrup contains onions or garlic and white sugar, brown sugar, or honey. Sound delicious? No, but sometimes it just can't be avoided. In my opinion, this also tastes a heck of a lot better than the stuff sold in stores. If you have a dry cough, honey is great for soothing itchy and irritated throats. It may also help fight off any bacteria that could be causing your cough. The white/brown sugar serves as a substitute for honey if you prefer it. Both onion and garlic strengthen the immune system, work as natural anti-biotics, anti-inflammatories, and expectorants.

You will need...

-1 red or yellow onion OR 1/2 head to 1 head of garlic

-Roughly 1 cup of organic raw honey or roughly a cup OR roughly a half of granulated white sugar or brown sugar

-A jar or something similar with a tight fitting lid that will comfortably but snugly hold your onion.

Directions

1. Slice the onion evenly. Place the base of the onion in your jar, and then pour honey in a layer over it (or cover in a layer of sugar, if that's your sweetener of choice.) Continue to alternate layering the onion and sweetener.
2. Cover tightly and let it sit overnight out on the counter, or for 8-12 hours. After it has sat out, there will now be liquid in the jar. Use a spoonful as needed to control your cough, up to 3 spoonfuls an hour, if needed.
3. If you are making this for little ones, use the onion instead of the garlic, and the sugar instead of the honey. It will keep in the refrigerator for up to 1 month.

Licorice Tea

Licorice root tea is a wonderful substance if you're suffering from a cough. Its properties lend themselves to relieving the itchy, tingling feeling that may trigger a cough, a dry cough in particular, and the liquid helps boost fluid intake.

You will need...

- 3 full tablespoons of chopped, dried, licorice root
- 2 ½ cups of cold water
- Honey (optional)
- A saucepan

Directions

1. Combine the chopped, dried, licorice root with cold water in a saucepan.
2. Bring to a boil over medium heat and then reduce the heat to low, letting it simmer for about 10 more minutes. When it's done, strain, add honey to taste, and drink in its entirety 2-3 times a day.

Ginger-Anise Cough Syrup

Anise oil extract is used in cough syrup sold over the counter, and is well-known to help calm a bad cough. The gingers scent and flavor help decongest and soothe an itchy throat.

You will need...

- 1 tablespoon of chopped ginger root
- 2-3 whole star anise cloves
- Honey (optional)
- 1 cup of water

Directions

1. Pour cold water in a saucepan and add in ginger root and star anise.
2. Bring to a boil over medium heat, and then reduce the heat to low and let the tea simmer for 10-15 more minutes. Strain, add honey if you'd like, and sip 2-3 cups a day.

Cramps

Every month women have to deal with a boatload of unfortunate happenings, including painful cramps. While they often diminish with age or after child-birth, this isn't always the case, and they can really put a damper on your day. When the uterine lining begins to break down, molecular compounds called prostaglandins are released. These chemicals cause the muscles of the uterus to contract, which helps shed the lining. These contractions are essentially a miniature version of labor contractions-in fact prostaglandins are sometimes given in hospitals to induce labor. The severity of the cramps may be related to varying levels of prostaglandins in the uterine lining in women, with higher levels increasing discomfort. Assuming that your cramps are normal and benign, there are a few remedies you can pull from the cupboards and spice rack to help ease the pain.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Placing a hot water bottle or heating pack over your lower abdomen can help relax muscles that are tight, or in spasm, and reduce discomfort.

- Exercise is the last thing you want to do when you are hit with cramps, but getting up and moving can truly help relieve the pain.

- If you feel cramps in your back, it could be because of the way your uterus is tipped. If it is more backwards than forwards, this can contribute to the sensation of back pain.

- Drink plenty of water. Dehydration can contribute to the production of a hormone called vasopressin which constricts blood vessels, and can make cramps even more painful.

Basil & Mint Tea

Mint, either peppermint or wintergreen, is a common plant to turn to when it comes to easing stomach or abdominal pain. It can also help with any gas or bloating that may be making you uncomfortable along with the cramps. But why basil? It seems that basil works in a similar way to common painkillers, which interfere with prostaglandin synthesis. Prostaglandins are hormone like chemical messengers that affect a wide range of vital processes in the body, including inflammation and the sensation of pain. Prostaglandins also affect the actual act of contractions themselves. By reducing the amount of prostaglandins, you also reduce pain. Basil also works very quickly, possibly because you can ingest it directly. You can either eat a dozen basil leaves raw, or make a tea with it and peppermint.

You will need...

-1/2 cup of chopped fresh basil leaves OR 2 teaspoons dried

-1/2 cup chopped fresh peppermint leaves OR 2 teaspoons dried

-1 cup of boiling water

Directions

1. Place the leaves at the bottom of a mug and boil 1 cup of fresh water. Pour directly over the leaves, cover, and steep for 10-15 minutes. Discard the solids, or if they are fresh, eat them while drinking the tea.

Red Raspberry Leaf Tea

Red raspberry leaves are an incredibly well-kept secret, and they work a treat for cramps. They are probably a woman's best friend in terms of herbs, and also have many healing and beneficial properties during pregnancy (although always consult a doctor or midwife before trying any herbs while pregnant.) It has a high concentration of vitamin C, magnesium, potassium, and iron, which are all beneficial to the female reproductive system. It is supposed to help strengthen and relax the uterus (although the exact mechanics of this are unknown.) I am lucky enough to have a plethora of wild raspberries growing up north, but if you cannot get fresh leaves, you can order dried online or in a store bought tea blend.

You will need...

-1/2 cup of fresh red raspberry leaves OR 2 teaspoons of dried red raspberry leaves

-Honey to taste

Directions

1. Boil roughly 1 cup of fresh water and pour over leaves in a mug. Steep, covered, for 10-15 minutes, and then drink in its entirety daily, or as needed. Add honey for flavor if you want. The tea tastes like black tea, but slightly less bitter.

Cinnamon “Tea”

Cinnamon’s essential oils have active components that can help with the pain of cramps, acting as an anti-spasmodic and helping the uterine muscles to relax. The 4 main constituents are cinnamaldehyde, cinnamyl acetate, eugenol, and cinnamyl alcohol. You can purchase pre-made blends of cinnamon tea, but I find it easy and quite enjoyable to make a simple infusion of powdered cinnamon/cinnamon sticks, honey, and water.

You will need...

-1 cup of water

-1 ¼ teaspoons of ground cinnamon OR 5 cinnamon sticks

-1 tablespoon organic, raw, honey, or to taste

Directions

1. In a small pot add water and cinnamon. Bring to a boil, and then simmer for a few minutes.

2. Remove from the heat and add honey. Drink daily. It’s most effective if you start drinking the day or two before you usually start to feel cramps.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea literally translates to “flowing through”, and I think most people can say that’s a pretty accurate title. A number of diseases and conditions cause diarrhea (viruses, bacteria, food poisoning, IBS, etc.) and one could actually go incredibly in depth with different kinds and classifications, but I’ll avoid that part. Whatever the cause, what’s happening is essentially the same whenever you have diarrhea. Food and liquids you ingest move too quickly, or in too large an amount, through the colon. The colon normally absorbs liquids from the food you eat, but this doesn’t happen when stricken with diarrhea. The unfortunate result is frequent and watery bowel movements, and many trips to the bathroom.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-The single most important thing you can do when you have diarrhea is drink water and other beneficial fluids because you are losing so much. You can easily become seriously dehydrated and throw your electrolytes all out of whack if you don’t consciously drink more.

-A simple, delicious, way to put a stop to diarrhea is pineapple. Pineapple contains bromelain, which helps relieve digestive discomfort as it breaks down hard to digest proteins (hence why pineapple is used to make meat tender) and lessen inflammation in the irritated colon. Studies suggest that it may help diarrhea especially in cases related to E. coli. If you suffer from IBS, it can help with inflammation, gas, and other discomforts as well. However, there’s always too much of a good thing, and pineapple can also worsen diarrhea if eaten in excess.

-Avoid dairy like the plague, it’s quite hard to digest even at full health, and your body doesn’t need the extra strain or irritation.

Rice, Carrot, and Potato

-If you find the mixture too dry or bland, soften the veggies in a little bit of broth, chicken or otherwise, and pour that over the rice as well. For some more variety, add in some celery as well.

Dried Blueberry Soup

It doesn't sound like it would help with diarrhea, but it actually has a long history of use in Sweden, with doctors "prescribing" it for patients who are afflicted. This is one I didn't know of until recently, but I find it quite fascinating, and love that there are some theories to back it up. Blueberries contain tannins, the same stuff in wine that makes your mouth feel dry. They are natural astringents, contracting tissue and reducing inflammation. Both of those things are desperately needed when things aren't passing through you quite right. They also have substances that are antibacterial in nature (anthocyanosides) which are helpful if the upset is being caused by bacteria, especially E. coli. Finally, they contain pectin, a water soluble fiber, and you get fluids.

You will need...

- 2-3 cups of water
- 1 cup of dried blueberries, gently crushed
- A pot

Directions

1. Gently crush the dried blueberries and add to 2-3 cups of water in a pot over medium heat.
2. Bring almost to a boil and then reduce to a gentle simmer for 5-10 minutes. Pour into a mug like tea and enjoy 1-2 times daily, ideally leaving the solids in and eating them as well. You can also eat like soup.

Carob Flour, Water & Salt

Carob flour (or powder) sounds a little exotic, but you should find it in the baking aisle or health food section. It is made from the dried, ground, pods of the carob tree that grow in the Mediterranean, and has been a traditional treatment for soothing an upset tummy. It is very rich in pectin, that soluble fiber that acts as a binding substance (it's what makes gelatin become semi-solid, if you need a visual.) Stash some in the pantry to have in case of emergency. Mixing it with water helps it go down and gets some extra fluid into you, while a little pinch of salt is always good when you are losing electrolytes. Feel free to leave out the salt if you are watching sodium intake.

You will need...

- 2-3 tablespoons of carob flour
- A ½-1 cup of water
- A pinch of salt

Directions

1. Mix up carob flour, water, and salt in a glass and drink the whole thing. You can do this as often as needed, but I would recommend 2-3 times a day.

Cooked Carrot, Potato & Rice

Carrot is another good source of pectin, and white rice is wonderful at binding, so much so that too much can cause constipation. The starchy grain absorbs liquid and is high in soluble fiber-the same goes for potato, which is quite starchy and also easily digested. Making up this bland meal is a good way to get solid food into your body while simultaneously slowing down or, hopefully, stopping diarrhea.

You will need...

- 1 carrot, peeled
- 1/2-1 potato, peeled
- White rice
- Broth

Directions

1. Peel and dice the carrot and potato, and cook until the veggies are soft.
2. Put over the top of a bowl of cooked white rice. Mixing a little chicken broth into the rice can make it less “dry” and add some different flavor if you find you need something extra to get it down.

Earache

I have an incredibly vivid memory from a time when I was about 5 or 6 years old, standing in my mom's upstairs work space, most likely snooping out the TV that was tucked away there until my sister and I were given permission to watch it. One moment I was fine, the next my whole world went silent. A little bit of sound trickled back as I wobbled down the stairs, and I remember going up to my mom and saying "mom I can't hear anything" with my voice so weirdly far away and muffled.

You may have guessed by now, given the title of this chapter, that I had an ear infection. Ear infections are one of the most common causes of ear aches, especially in children, but to fully understand ear aches, you must first know about a marvelous little body part called the Eustachian tube. The Eustachian tube is a narrow channel that lies in the middle ear and connects to the back of the throat, just above the soft palate, allowing fluid to drain into the back of the throat to be swallowed. It also maintains equal air pressure across the tympanic membrane, more commonly known as the eardrum, so it can freely vibrate in response to sound waves.

Normally the Eustachian tube lies collapsed to protect the middle ear from germs lurking in our noses and mouths, but sometimes it becomes narrowed, or blocked, and fluid begins to build up in the ear. Anything from allergies, to colds, to the excess mucus and saliva produced while a baby teethes, can contribute to the blockage and fluid build-up. While the fluid does not usually cause pain on its own, it can make hearing hard because it inhibits the movement of the eardrum. It also creates the perfect environment for an ear infection, which will hurt. When there is fluid build-up bacteria gets easily trapped in the fluid, and begins to multiply. The middle ear gets inflamed and painful and you wind up with an earache. These remedies focus on relieving the pain and discomfort. While there are some natural remedies that may help get rid of bacteria in the ear, I am not knowledgeable enough about them to recommend anything internal.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Little ones are more prone to ear infections because their Eustachian tubes are floppier, narrower, and more horizontal than ours, making it easy for bacteria to enter and get trapped. The fact that they get the sniffles all the time doesn't help either.

Ache Relief Blend

These four essential oils create a potent pain-killing blend that will relieve acute adult earaches. For children over the age of 5 years, this recipe may be used at a 3-5% dilution. This recipe is at a 10% dilution for adults-it is stronger than other blends because of the nature of earaches. Note that this should NEVER be dripped directly into the ear canal.

You will need...

For adults:

- 4 drops of lavender oil
- 2 drops of peppermint oil
- 5 drops of tea tree oil
- 5 drops of eucalyptus oil
- 1 tablespoon of any liquid oil

For children over the age of 5 years:

- 4 drops of tea tree oil
- 2 drops of lavender oil
- 1 tablespoon of any liquid oil

Directions

1. Mix your essential oils with your carrier oil, and rub behind ears, and into the sides and back of the neck. You will probably have some left over, in which case store it in an appropriate container.

Onion Steam Treatment

Heat alone in the form of a warm washcloth or something of the like will do wonders for an earache, but go one step further and add an onion to the equation. Antibacterial with anti-inflammatory properties, onions can be an enormous help when it comes to earaches.

You will need...

- 1 yellow onion
- a jar

Directions

1. Place onion in a 350 degree oven until nice and warm or easily punctured.
2. After you've removed it from the oven, cut it in half and place one half of it in a glass jar and prick a few holes in it to release the steam.
3. Rest your ear over the opening of the jar for 10-15 minutes. If tilting your head downwards is painful, you can also lie on your side and hold the jar against your ear. It's fine if the onion is touching your ear; just make sure to prepare an explanation if someone asks why your head smells like an onion. Repeat with the other half if needed.

Warm Oil Blend

This is a slightly different blend than the first recipe with essential oils, and the carrier oil is warmed before application to make it extra soothing.

You will need...

For adults:

- 2 tablespoons of warmed liquid oil
- 6 drops of peppermint oil
- 1 drop of lemon oil
- 8 drops of lavender oil
- 2-4 drops of chamomile oil

For children over 5 years:

- 3 drops of lavender oil
- 2 drops of chamomile oil
- 2 drops of tea tree oil

Directions

1. Warm the oil gently, making sure it's not too hot, and add in your essential oils. Rub behind your ears and massage into back and sides of neck.
2. Store any excess in an appropriate container.

Hot Salt Pillow

This is an old remedy, one that always reminds me of grandmothers, particularly if prepared on the stove top. A salt pillow is simply sea salt sewed up in clean cloth and heated. The heat eases pain while some think the salt helps draw water out of the ear, if that's what causing the soreness or infection.

You will need...

- 1/2-1 cup of sea salt
- Clean cloth (even clean recycled shirts will do)
- Needle and thread

Directions

1. Stitch together 2 pieces of fabric, sewing only 3 sides shut. Pour the salt into the side you left open, and then sew shut completely. I don't usually use drawstring pouches, but it was what I had on hand at the time for the picture. Don't worry if your pillow doesn't look too pretty.
2. Heat carefully, in 10 second intervals, in the microwave, testing to make sure it doesn't get too hot. You can also place it in a pot or frying pan over the lowest heat on your stove top and use tongs to flip the pillow as it warms. Never leave it unattended or on the heat longer than necessary!
3. To apply, lie with your affected ear facing down against the salt pillow for 15-20 minutes.

Flu

Influenza, the true flu, is a respiratory disease that is often mixed up with the stomach flu (which isn't really the flu at all.) The flu has many symptoms similar to the common cold, but they are often times worse and there is a higher chance of complications to arise, especially if the person is young, elderly, or immune-compromised. It also has an abrupt onset, whereas a cold tends to be gradual. When the flu virus invades the body it invades other cells and essentially takes them over, effectively killing off the cell and releasing the virus out into the body to spread and multiply. As a result, respiratory tissues will become inflamed and you will probably find yourself coughing, experiencing chest discomfort, bad aches and chills, a fever, and fatigue/weakness. If you catch the flu, there is no cure, as it is a virus. The remedies for treating a cold are fairly interchangeable with flu remedies.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Wash your hands. Just do it. And stay home from work or school.

- Combine the above home remedies with lots of hydration, rest, and hot liquids (tea, chicken soup, etc.) and they will be the most effective.

- Any of the cold remedies can be used for the flu and vice versa.

- Mustard Plaster

- If you are worried about this irritating your skin, adding the white of 1 egg to mixture may help. Use the white in place of the water.

Hot Lemon & Honey

- Don't have any fresh lemon, or perhaps a little one who's picky about flavor? Get a good brand of lemonade and leave out the water. Heat the lemonade piping hot in the microwave or on the stovetop and let it cool slightly before stirring in the honey and drinking.

Mustard Plaster (or Pack)

This remedy dates back over 2,500 years ago, when it was first recommended by Hippocrates, also known as “the father of medicine.” Throughout the centuries its use spread to other parts of the world, and it was once considered a staple in households. It works to help relieve symptoms of the flu and congestion because mustard is rich with antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties that can, for the most part, be inhaled. It is also a rubefacient, which means it will cause dilation of the capillaries and increase blood circulation, and when applied over the lungs may help open them up and make it easier to expel mucous and phlegm (especially since this will make you cough too.) This may also make your skin slightly red. The details behind its function may not have been known at the time of its creation, but all people needed to know was that it seemingly “drew” congestion, germs, and pain out of their bodies.

Important: The pack should never be left on bare skin for more than 30 minutes at the absolute maximum as it can burn/ cause skin to blister similar to a bad sunburn. It’s a good idea to take a peek every now and then to make sure your skin is not a deep red or looks like it is blistering. It is normal to feel some “heat” when using it. Putting a little olive oil over your skin may help if you are sensitive. I do not recommend using this on children, although I have heard of some people using a dime sized amount and placing the pack over a shirt.

You will need...

- 2 tablespoons of flour
- 1 tablespoons of dry mustard (as fresh as possible)
- Warm water
- Egg white (optional)
- Clean handkerchiefs, bandana, washcloth, flannel, or flour sack

Directions

1. Mix flour, mustard, and a bit of warm water together until they form a paste approximately the consistency of pancake batter. Spread the paste over your fabric and then place another piece of fabric on top of it, so the paste does not come in direct contact with your skin. If it is large enough, you can also fold the fabric in half.
2. Rest the pack over your upper chest (without a shirt on) and, breathe slightly deeper than usual. Remove after 20-30 minutes (maximum) and rinse off your chest with warm water in case any leaked through. Alternatively you can safety pin it over an old shirt, in line with your chest, and wear it around the house during the day. It may feel warm and make you cough, but if it becomes very uncomfortable or painful, remove immediately.

Hot Lemon & Honey

This is akin to a hot totty, sans any alcohol, and is what my mom (and grandma) would make for me whenever I had the flu or a cold when I was growing up. It is thought to help because honey can fight off bacteria, and supposedly works as an expectorant, while the acidity in the lemon juice is thought to make your mucous membranes (like the ones at the back of your throat) a less friendly environment for bacteria/viruses. It's also possible this is just a delicious toasty drink that makes you feel better just because its healing in its warmth, soothing flavor, and gentle texture.

You will need...

- 1 whole fresh lemon
- 1/2-1 cup boiling water
- 2 spoonfuls of raw, organic, honey

Directions

1. Cut a fresh lemon in half, squeezing all the juice into a cup, and then add 2 spoonfuls of honey. Pour boiling water over them and let the mixture cool just enough to be safe to drink. Drink in its entirety 1-3 times daily, and make sure you are resting as you do so!

A Drop of Oregano Essential Oil

Oregon oil is an incredible substance that many people overlook. It is good for anything from skin irritation, G.I. upset, certain strains of bacteria (a growing number of chicken farms are actually using it instead of antibiotics), to battling off the cold and flu. Its antiviral properties will shorten the duration and severity of the illness. It can also provide relief from a sore throat. These properties have been attributed mainly to two phenols (organic chemical compounds) in the oil called carvacol, and thymol, which can kill off harmful microbes in the body. Drinking it with orange juice instead of water masks the flavor a little bit, and also gives you some much needed vitamin C.

You will need...

- 1-2 drops of pure oregano essential oil
- A glass of water or orange juice

Directions

1. Add 1 or 2 drops of oregano oil into a glass of fresh water or orange juice, and drink the entire thing. Repeat up to 3 times daily during the time that you are sick.

Food Poisoning

Food poisoning is an illness most commonly caused by eating food contaminated with bacteria, viruses, or parasites. It has a habit of striking right after you celebrated with dinner at a restaurant you were extra excited to eat at (this is not scientifically useful for anything.) Often times you will hear of the cause being a bacterial contaminant such as E. coli or Salmonella, or the viral infection Norovirus-also known as the “stomach flu.”

These nasty guys are transmitted by drinking contaminated water, or touching your hand to your mouth after coming in contact with a contaminated object. They are also often found in foods-especially if employees don't follow a strict regime of hand-washing. Most cases will pass on their own within 48 hours, and unfortunately your body just has to get the bug out of its system. Like the flu and common cold, easing the symptoms of food poisoning is usually the only thing you can do.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Various herbs found in the cupboard have shown to be effective against some food-borne pathogens, and you can try either making a tea with them or nibbling on some. They include basil, rosemary, thyme, sage, spearmint, and fennel.

-Don't take anti-diarrheal medications, as it will only slow the elimination of the all the bad stuff your body is trying to get rid of.

-As with pretty much anything, stay hydrated. Your body is probably losing fluids rapidly, and staying plenty hydrated will help flush your system clean faster than if you weren't getting enough.

-Avoid dairy.

-A dear friend of mine once got terrible upset stomach, and on a whim I brought them a plain bagel with a little bit of plain turkey and some cold soda water to drink. It proved t

Activated Charcoal

Activated charcoal (or activated carbon) is a form of carbon that has been processed so that it has a bounty of small pores to increase the surface area available to adsorb toxins, turning it into a sort of filter. The word adsorb, not absorb, is important here. The charcoal does not absorb toxins; rather toxins will bind to all the hundreds of little pores to be carried out of your system. This also means the “filter” does eventually fill up, but it can still carry a shocking amount of nasties. Large amounts of activated charcoal are actually used in hospitals in case of oral overdose or alcohol poisoning because of this. The term “toxins” here also applies to viruses, bacteria, and other impurities, so it can help clear out the system when you are suffering from food poisoning. Another bonus is that it doesn’t target the good stuff in your system, which means you aren’t wiping out beneficial bacteria.

You will need...

-A high quality bottle of activated charcoal capsules
OR powder supplement

Directions

1. Follow the dosing on the back of the bottle or bag, and use only as needed, not daily. Take some at the first sign of food poisoning.

Plain Apple Cider Vinegar

Apple cider vinegar is a traditional remedy that is turned to for just about everything (you've probably seen it in a plethora of recipes already, and will continue to see it crop up) so it's not surprising that it helps with food poisoning. More specifically, although not studied scientifically, it may have antimicrobial properties, destroying or inhibiting the growth of the little buggers that are making you sick.

You will need...

- 2 tablespoons of ACV
- 2 tablespoons of warm water

Directions

1. Stir apple cider vinegar into warm water-these amounts can be changed, just keep it at a ratio of 1:1. Drink this several times a day to help speed up recovery.

Ginger Ale

This is a nice homemade version of ginger ale, minus all the sugars and additives that don't really help. I like to drink this when suffering from any kind of stomach ache, including ones brought on by food poisoning. The ginger has an incredibly soothing action on inflamed and irritated intestines/stomach while the citrus adds a little extra acidity that I like to think, whether it's true or not, makes the environment less friendly to whatever bug is afflicting me. If you do want a natural sweetener (and I'll admit I usually do) stir in organic raw honey.

You will need...

-1/2 cup soda water (club soda/
sparkling water/fizzy water)

-A slice of fresh lime

-1 cup of peeled, grated or
finely chopped, ginger root

-5 tablespoons of honey, or to
taste (optional)

-2 cups of fresh water

Directions

1. Grate peeled ginger root, or chop finely, and bring fresh water to a boil in a saucepan.

2. Add the ginger, and reduce the heat to medium low, letting the ginger water simmer for 20 minutes.

3. Remove from heat and strain the liquid, pressing on the solids to get every last drop out. If you are using honey, let the liquid cool some and then stir it in. keep this liquid refrigerated for up to 2 weeks. To make a glass of ginger ale, add 7-9 tablespoons of the ginger water to 1/2 cup of club soda and squeeze a lime slice into it. Give it a good stir, sip slowly, and rest.

Gas & Bloating

Gas and bloating are uncomfortable to begin with, but to make the whole situation about ten times worse, society makes the very idea of them uncomfortable as well. It's quite ridiculous really, to make something very natural into such a taboo. But there's to be no shying away here! Gas is just air in the digestive track, which can build up excessively and lead to bloating. It is given off as a byproduct when bacteria in the large intestine breaks down certain foods.

We know that a lot of foods can trigger gas, namely ones that contain carbohydrates. This is because some carbohydrates (sugars, starches, and fiber) are not fully digested in the stomach. When they pass into the intestine the job of breaking them down lands on the bacteria, and gas is released in the process. Those who suffer from IBS or Crohns will feel the effects of gas more strongly than others, while even something as benign as stress can cause it. Bloating can be caused by both water retention, air, and various health conditions. In this chapter, I am referring to bloating caused by excessive gas. While intestinal gas is usually harmless, it can be very unpleasant when you experience a build-up!

Ginger

Ginger can help aid digestion, and the break-down process of foods that can give us gas, therefore reducing the discomfort and potentially helping everything pass quickly and smoothly. I think the best form of ginger for relieving gas is tea. The warmth helps relieve the cramping feeling while the ginger does its work.

You will need...

- 1 piece of fresh ginger root, 2-3 inches long
- 1 cup of boiling water
- A little bit of lemon and honey (optional)

Directions

1. Scrub your gingerroot clean and slice it thinly. Place the slices in a mug and cover with boiling water.
2. Steep, with the mug covered, for 10-15 minutes. Remove the slices; add honey and lemon to taste, and drink daily as needed. If possible, drink immediately after a meal.

Peppermint Chamomile Tea

Peppermint, like ginger, will also help with digestion, reduce gas, and alleviate the uncomfortable bloating it causes. Chamomile will help relax the smooth muscle in the intestines, and give you a break from any spasms or cramps you may be experiencing.

You will need...

-2 teaspoons of dried peppermint OR ½-1 cup of fresh peppermint

-2 teaspoons of dried chamomile

-1 cup of boiling water

-Honey and lemon to taste (optional)

Directions

1. Pour boiling water over the peppermint and chamomile, and let it steep covered for 10 minutes (if you are using dried herbs) or 15 minutes (if the herbs are fresh.)

2. Strain, add honey and lemon to taste, and drink directly after mealtime.

Warm Lemon Water

If you happen to be suffering from gas as a result of constipation, this is a good remedy to turn to. Even if you aren't constipated, lemon water is enormously helpful at reducing gas. It is speculated, but not known, that it may help digestion because of its acidity, and therefore lessen gas. It has always worked for me, and I feel no need to look any further past that. Sometimes to add a little kick to this, I'll toss in a few fresh peppermint leaves, but it's not usually needed.

You will need...

- 1 tablespoon of lemon juice
- 1/2 cup of warm water

Directions

1. Mix lemon juice (fresh, if possible) into warm water. Drink once daily to prevent gas and 2-3 times daily if you are actively experiencing gas.

Headaches

A headache can be caused by a multitude of factors, from all too common tense or knotted muscles to mysterious migraines. There is a wide range of other causes, but these remedies will focus on the above categories-migraines, and tension-type headaches. In this stressful world many people suffer from muscles that get tight, spasm, knot-up, or contract. When this happens, it triggers what is known as a tension-type headache. Since many people get them several times a week, NSAIDS like aspirin are often turned to in order to cope with the pain. The problem is, setting aside any other nasty side effects, NSAIDS cause rebound headaches. This means if you take aspirin every day for long enough, the next day if you fail to take it you will get a headache. You then take another aspirin and it becomes a vicious cycle.

Migraines, on the other hand, are less straightforward. They are actually a fairly shrouded problem, considering how common they are. What has been theorized and/or concluded so far is that genetics play a huge factor, and the sensation of pain itself is caused by vasodilation of the blood vessels in the brain-vasodilation means they swell up. This pressure presses on nerves and results in symptoms such as intense pain, an aura, sensitivity to light, nausea, and a number of other unpleasant things. We can identify some migraine triggers, such as certain food, stress, loud sounds/bright lights, or smells. A lack of serotonin may also be linked to them, which is possibly the reason people with depression get migraines more often than people who don't.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Long hair can give you headaches, especially if you wear it in a ponytail. All that hair added up actually weighs a decent amount, and the constant pressure from being tied back just makes it worse. At the end of a long day, especially if you have to wear your hair up a lot for work, yank out your hair binder and chances are you'll feel an almost immediate sense of relief. I learned this last summer when the lovely woman who cuts my hair informed me of it. It seems obvious, but it's also easy to overlook.

-If you notice you get more headaches, especially migraines, during a certain time of the year or during certain kinds of weather, you may be reacting to changes in barometric pressure (the weight of the atmosphere.) This has been speculated for some time, but the International Headache Society published an interesting piece earlier this year to back it up. The study gathered data showing that when lightning struck within 25 miles of a migraine suffers house, there was a 31% increase in headache instances. That's not a small number! And that's not including changes before storms, seasons, and other fluctuations.

-Posture. It makes all the difference in the world for tension type headaches, especially if you work at a computer.

-Utilize massage therapy if possible. It's so often seen as a luxury, but the truth is, it does incredible things for our health, and it's drug-free.

Roots Balm

-Using 2 tablespoons of beeswax will yield a pretty solid balm, which I find useful since I never need to use too much of this for it to be effective! Lower the amount to 1 tablespoon if you prefer a softer balm.

Cool Scented Compress

Aromatherapy is a powerful tool for headaches. Something about our sense of smell is linked closely to headaches, and as mild as a treatment as it may sound, I have used it to great success for my own tension headaches. When you combine aromatherapy with a cool compress, you get an extra soothing remedy. If you want to treat muscle tension directly, swap it out for a warm compress on your neck/shoulders to relax them. Studies have actually shown that some scents (such as lavender) lengthen brainwaves, indicating relaxation.

Dried rice or beans are the filler for your compress, and retain the cold or warmth. The lavender promotes relaxation, which is vital when it comes to tension headaches. The peppermint works because the menthol it contains creates a cooling sensation, while its aroma can penetrate the foggy pain of a headache.

You will need...

- 1 cup or so of dried rice or beans
- A tube sock or scrap fabric
- 1 tablespoon of any liquid oil
- 3-4 drops of lavender oil
- 2 drops of peppermint oil

Directions

1. Pour a cup or so of dried rice or dried beans into a clean tube sock so that there is about an inch left at the top. Loosely tie off the top-just enough that it doesn't lose any of the filling.
2. Place it in the freezer until cold and then re-open, adding in the essential oil blend. Tie it off well, shake, and hold against your forehead and temples, alternating with the top/back of your head if needed. When you're finished pop it back into the freezer and reuse as needed.
3. If you are using a warm compress repeat the process above, but instead of putting it in the freezer pop it in the microwave for a few minutes, or until it is as hot as you want it. Make sure to check every 30 seconds so it doesn't overheat. Mix the oils in after microwaving, and lay it across the back of your neck or shoulders.

Feverfew for Migraines

Feverfew has a rich history, and has been used since the times of ancient Greece. Originally it was its main use was to bring down fever, as its name suggests, but it was not found particularly effective.

Nowadays, promising research shows that it can help reduce the severity and frequency at which a migraine occurs. Sometimes during a migraine the smooth lining of blood vessels will spasm as they dilate unevenly. This, plus the inflammation pressing on nerves, can cause that typical pounding or throbbing sensation as blood is pumped through the awkwardly narrowed vessels. Feverfew contains parthenolide, which is what has been tentatively linked to warding off migraines, possibly because it can impact inflammation. Past that, the specific science of it has not yet been pinpointed.

You will need...

- 3 teaspoons of dried feverfew (leaves and flowers both work)
- 1 cup of water
- A dash of lemon juice to taste (optional)

Directions

1. Boil fresh water and pour it over the dried feverfew. Allow the mixture to steep, covered, for 5-10 minutes. Drink daily to prevent migraines and lessen their severity. You can also chew several of the fresh plant's leaves or flowers a day, or take it in supplement form if you like. I personally prefer the routine of tea.

Soothing Roots Balm

Roots Balm is a great savior when it comes to headaches, and there has been so much positive feedback on it! This lovely balm utilizes essential oils that help alleviate pain topically and by utilizing pure aromatherapy. The peppermint oil contains menthol, which provides a soothing, cooling, almost tingling, sensation on the skin that works in tandem with its refreshing scent to help your headache. The eucalyptus works in a similar manner with its scent, while studies have shown it actually affects brainwave activity and reduces fatigue. When applied topically over tense muscles, it helps unwind knots and trigger points. Lavender, known for being a relaxing scent, is here to help you naturally relax your muscles on your own.

You will need...

- 15-20 drops of peppermint oil
- 7-10 drops of lavender oil
- 7-10 drops of eucalyptus oil
- 1/4 cup of any liquid oil
- 1-2 tablespoons of beeswax pastilles/grated beeswax

Directions

1. In a double boiler melt together the beeswax and oils. When they have melted and combined, turn off the heat and quickly add essential oils, giving it a brief stir to mix it all together. Pour into container, cover, and allow it to solidify.
2. When you feel a headache coming on, massage some onto your temples, back of neck, or the pressure point between your thumb and forefinger. Breathe deeply.

Heartburn

True to its name, heartburn is a burning sensation right beneath the breastbone, often accompanied by pain that creeps up the throat, possibly leading to a bad taste in your mouth. It's a symptom, rather than a disease, of acid reflux or gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), so these remedies will target acid reflux as a whole.

When you swallow, a tight band of muscle around the bottom of your esophagus called your lower esophageal sphincter (LES) relaxes and allows the food/liquid to pass into the stomach before sealing tightly shut again. But with reflux that muscle relaxes abnormally, or is weak, and stomach acid flows back up into the esophagus. This, naturally, creates a very unpleasant sensation.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Elevate yourself when you sleep by putting some wooden blocks or books under the feet of the bed closest to the headboard. Laying down pushes the contents of your stomach against your LES and increases the likelihood that acid will creep up and wake you.

- Avoid tight fitting clothing and belts that may put pressure on your stomach, and consequently your LES.

- Keep a journal of what triggers you, such as caffeine, chocolate, and so on, and make an effort to avoid them (hard as it may be.)

Baking Soda

Baking soda doesn't do anything for tightening the LES, but it can help neutralize stomach acid if you begin to feel heartburn coming on. Because it has a Ph. higher than 7 it is considered alkaline, which is the opposite of acidic. This should be used no more than a week straight since sodium bicarbonate is high in sodium.

You will need...

- 1/2 teaspoon-1 teaspoon baking soda
- 8 ounces of fresh water

Directions

1. Mix the baking soda into fresh water and drink the entire mixture when you begin to feel heartburn. Repeat as needed, not exceeding 7 1/2 teaspoon doses in 24 hours.

Aloe Vera Juice

Aloe vera can help heal a number of ailments-or at least soothe them-inside and outside of the body. When you feel acid beginning to rise, drinking aloe vera juice can help soothe the sensation, much in the same way spreading the gel on sunburn would. It is, like baking soda, very alkaline, and therefore neutralizes the acid.

You will need...

- 1/2 cup of aloe vera juice
- Some fresh water (optional)

Directions

1. When you feel the symptoms of reflux coming on, drink the aloe juice. You can also drink aloe juice every morning to set you up right for the day. If you don't like the taste, add a little organic raw honey or dilute it with fresh water.

Cold Buttermilk

Perhaps just an old wives tale, I couldn't resist putting this in here (and some people do swear by it!) Buttermilk, rich in probiotics, has been used to help heartburn. If you can stand the distinctive tangy flavor, which I actually enjoy, try drinking it when you start to suffer.

You will need...

-1/2 cup of ice cold buttermilk

Directions

1. Drink the ice cold buttermilk when you feel the onset of symptoms.

Basil & Honey Tea

It is thought that basil can help minimize the amount of stomach acid that is backing up into your esophagus because of reflux. I couldn't pinpoint a scientific reason as to what exactly in basil performs this, but anecdotal evidence suggests it's helpful.

You will need...

- 10 chopped fresh basil leaves
- 1 teaspoon up to 1 tablespoon of organic raw honey
- 1 cup of boiling water
- Your favorite mug

Directions

1. Place the basil leaves in a mug and bring water to a rolling boil. Pour the hot water over the leaves and let steep, covered, for 15 minutes. Remove the leaves, and stir in honey.

Hot Flashes & Night Sweats

As a side effect of some medication I was on, I got to experience some nightmarish moments of raging heat that make your body feel like an over-stoked furnace. To be specific I was experiencing night sweats, which are simply hot flashes that occur during the night. When you wake up you will be drenched in sweat and lying on soaked bed sheets. As exemplified by this experience, hot flashes are not limited to menopause, although that is the most common cause of them. Other causes can be a side-effect of certain medication, stress, and even some foods/drinks. So what's going on during these mysterious moments of heat?

The body's internal thermostat is the hypothalamus, located at the base of the brain, and it regulates body temperature along with several other basic processes. In the case of menopause, the decrease in estrogen has a very direct effect on the hypothalamus, and "confuses" it. We know that estrogen is not the only cause though, as children have low estrogen and don't experience hot flashes, and other things can have the same effect.

Whatever the reason is, it throws your poor hypothalamus all of whack, and it reads "too hot!" Instantly your brain picks up on this and sends an all-out SOS alert to the nervous system that screams "get rid of the heat right now!" Within seconds the nervous system is passing this message along via a number of chemical messengers (serotonin, prostaglandin, etc.) to the heart and blood vessels. Your heart beats faster, the blood vessels in your skin dilate to circulate more blood through them to try to "air out" the heat, and your sweat glands go to work. When you truly are too hot, say you're out on a steamy summer day, this is what cools you down. In this case though, the well-intentioned hypothalamus causes a confusing response that makes you heat up rapidly, and then end up chilled. It is an intensely uncomfortable experience, to put it mildly.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-If you get night sweats, set up a bedtime "survival kit." Turn down the real thermostat, make sure your sheets are strictly cotton, sleep in cotton pajamas, and set 2 glasses of icy cold water on the nightstand. If possible, set up a fan. Have a spare thin blanket that you can pull up over you if you kick all the sheets off and then get chilled. Keep a spare pajama shirt nearby so you change out of the soaked one that's making you feel cold.

-Keep a diary of when your hot flashes are happening and what you are doing at the time. This way you can track (and avoid) your triggers, like certain foods, drinks, or high stress levels. Stress is actually thought to be one of the highest triggers on the chart, so try to slow things down and take some deep breaths.

-Don't be afraid to stick your head in the freezer or refrigerator.

-There are actually shirts designed for hot flashes that are worn under regular clothing. I have never tried one myself, but it's an interesting concept!

Cooling Spray

-Always shake before using, as the oils separate from the water.

-If you have a fan, try to utilize it after applying the spray. The blast of air brings out the effect of the peppermint in particular.

Sage Tea

There has been some study based evidence, albeit limited, and plenty of anecdotal evidence that sage can help reduce the reoccurrence and severity of hot flashes. There isn't really anything that pinpoints a particular component in the herb that would be responsible for this, but it's suspected that it raises estrogen levels. It also has some mild sedative effects, and can help you sleep through the night, or fall back asleep, which is a big plus when you wake up often from night sweats.

You will need...

- 2 teaspoons of dried sage leaves

- 1 cup of boiling water

- Honey or lemon (optional)

Directions

1. Place 2 teaspoons of dried sage leaves in a mug and pour boiling water over them. Steep for 10-15 minutes, strain and drink. Add lemon or honey to taste if you like.

Cooling Spray

This is a blend of wonderfully cooling essential oils to combat the initial burst of heat. It's also very calming, and as stress is a big trigger for hot flashes, calming down can be as important as the actual cooling down! Peppermint is cooling thanks to the menthol it contains, while the lavender and chamomile is added to help you relax.

You will need...

- 4 ounces of fresh water
- 2 tablespoons of jojoba or any liquid oil
- 4 drops of lavender l oil
- 3 drops of peppermint oil
- 1-2 drops of roman chamomile oil

Directions

1. Mix essential oils with your carrier oil, and pour into an appropriate mister bottle. Add water and shake well.
2. Shake well before every application. To use, spray onto your legs, midsection, arms, and neck. A little spritz on your back doesn't hurt either!
3. To apply to the face dampen a cloth with the mixture and rest on cheeks or forehead. You can double the recipe if needed, and keep it in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. The fridge makes it an extra chilly spritz. I suggest also keeping a small bottle on your nightstand that you can take out of the fridge before bed. This one should keep for 3 days.

Rose & Citrus Towel

Rose is wonderfully calming, and surprisingly cooling as well, which I did not learn until I suffered from those dreaded night sweats. The citrus here adds a little fresh scent that can help clear the senses and that I find “cooling” in its own, unique way. You can either make your own rose water or you can use essential oils strictly. This could also be turned into a cold pack if you prefer that to a wet towel. In terms of a citrus essential oil, I prefer lemon and orange.

You will need...

- 1/2 cup of rose water
- 3 drops of orange oil
- 1 drop of lemon oil
- 1 tablespoon of jojoba or any liquid oil.
- A smaller, clean towel or washcloth

Directions

1. If you're making rose water, pour 1/2 cup of boiling water over 1/4 cup of dried rose petals. Strain when completely cool and refrigerate for 15 minutes.
2. Mix citrus essential oils with your carrier oil, and then stir into water. It will separate.
3. Give it a brief stir and dunk a clean washcloth in the mixture. Wring out excess water and drape over the back of your neck. Dab a little of the liquid on your wrists and temples as well. If you want to make extra, simply store the rose water in the refrigerator for up to a month and add the essential oils as needed.

Insomnia

"If sleep doesn't serve an absolutely vital function," the renowned sleep researcher Allan Rechtschaffen once said, "it is the greatest mistake evolution ever made." –'The Secrets of Sleep', National Geographic, 2010

We spend a third of our lives asleep and we still don't really understand it, but we do understand that we can't do without it. During sleep your energy is boosted, vital tissues are restored, growth hormones are released (this is why it's emphasized that kids get enough rest) and the brain calculates what memories to hang onto and what memories to let go of, virtually weaving together the pieces that will make up the life you remember.

Unfortunately, for something so vital, sleep can be hard to achieve. The more we fill our lives with stress, caffeine, heavy workloads, and anxiety; our precious moments of restoration get stripped away easier and easier. Insomnia is another personal battle of mine that I've fought for almost 4 years, and I can fully relate to the struggles it presents, especially when it comes to medication.

There are 3 main types of insomnia-transient, acute, and chronic. Transient is when you experience difficulty falling or staying asleep over a period of several days to a week before it resolves, and acute is when it lasts for several weeks. Chronic is the type that lasts for years, and the majority of cases are considered a symptom of an underlying problem, rather than a disease itself.

Onto what happens when you actually need to go to sleep. The names serotonin, melatonin, 5-hydroxy L-Tryptophan (5-HTP), and tryptophan are mentioned a lot when it comes to helping insomnia, and it often times sounds like they are all totally unrelated. In reality, they are all closely connected. The little sleep dance your brain chemicals go through is something like this-

You've consumed tryptophan, an essential amino acid, in some form (we must rely on outside sources to get tryptophan and all the others.) In a two- step process that tryptophan is converted to 5-HTP, which is then converted into serotonin. The serotonin in turn converts to melatonin, which makes our body's biological clock tick right, and tell us when it is time to go to sleep and when to wake up. It is the master clock, making us sleepy at the right time because melatonin produced is released in higher amounts the darker it is, while the amount lessens with more light. Since tryptophan is the only amino acid that can convert to serotonin, it is also the only one that can ultimately up your melatonin.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-I know that when bedtime rolls around, you just want something that will knock you out. Resist turning to medication, which will only draw out the struggle. There really isn't a short-cut, sometimes you have to re-learn how to fall asleep. If you experience insomnia due to something such as a tragic loss, sleeping medications have been shown to disrupt grieving. If your insomnia is chronic, your body will become totally dependent on the medicine. The extra effort turned towards natural treatments is well worth it in the end.

-Set a bedtime for yourself. Having a set schedule will help set your body's clock so that, eventually, you consistently become ready for sleep around the same time each night.

-Exercise! It's an incredible tool to help with sleeplessness, especially if you are experiencing short-term insomnia due to stress or another disruptive life event. Its benefits are two-fold; it both boosts your energy, and helps you sleep at night. To get the best of both worlds exercise, at the latest, 4 hours before bedtime. Any earlier and it might be harder to get to sleep from the initial energy you gain.

-I know nobody likes to hear it, but diet is vital. If you don't consume foods with enough tryptophan, you pretty much stump yourself when it comes time to fall asleep.

-Meditate. Especially if you are kept awake because of anxiety, stress, or an over-active mind.

-Your room is for sleeping. It is your sanctuary. Leave work, T.V.'s, phones- actually any screen-out of it. Just nix them. Kick the habit of watching your favorite show before bed, and don't even think about peeking at your computer-Facebook already has enough people posting about how they can't sleep. If you don't trust the studies that have thoroughly documented time and again that bright screens and electronics disturb your sleep, trust someone who has struggled with the same problem (me!) Be brave and unplug yourself.

Tart Cherry Juice

Tart cherries are naturally rich with L-tryptophan, that oh so essential amino acid that we need to fall into slumber.

You will need...

-1 cup of tart (natural, unsweetened) cherry juice

Directions

1. Drink 30 minutes before bedtime, or an hour, depending on if you wake up and have to go to the bathroom.

Valerian Tea

Valerian is a hardy plant whose roots are used in a number of ways as a sedative and sleep aid. It is thought to work by increasing the amount of GABA (gamma aminobutyric acid) which helps regulate the action of nerve cells and has a calming effect. Because of its calming effect, it is also extremely popular as a natural anxiety remedy. Prescription anxiety medications also increase GABA, but those are better off avoided, if possible. The gentle relaxation brought on by valerian makes it easier to drift off, especially if you have racing thoughts before bed. It's easy to brew up a cup of tea, but if you find the odor too strong, it is also available in capsule form.

You will need...

-1 tsp of dried valerian root

-8 oz. freshly boiled water

Directions

1. Put your valerian root in a mug.
2. Boil water in your kettle, and pour over the root. Steep, covered, for 10- 15 minutes.
3. Strain, and get ready to enjoy a peaceful night. Add milk or honey to taste.

Chamomile Tea

There's nothing quite as delightful as a cup of freshly brewed chamomile on a chilly night as you settle in for bed. This sweet flower has long been a reliable remedy for helping people doze off. It relaxes your muscles, and is thought that, potentially, a substance called apigenin can bind to GABA receptors which affects the central nervous system and sleepiness (similar to valerian.) Other studies have disagreed with apigenin theory, and think other constituents in the chamomile are what act as a sedative. Either way, it's tasty and it makes you tired. You can, of course, buy chamomile tea from the store, but I personally love it fresh. Adding a pinch of dried lavender can also help induce sleep thanks to its calming aroma.

You will need...

- A rounded ¼ cup of fresh chamomile flowers OR 2 rounded tablespoons of dry flowers
- Honey (optional)
- Milk (optional)
- Freshly squeezed lemon juice (optional)
- A pinch of dried lavender (optional)

Directions

1. If you're using fresh flowers, use only the flower heads and compost the stems. Place the chamomile in a mug, and bring your water to a rolling boil. Pour over the flowers.
2. Let steep for 5-6 minutes and serve hot. Add a little bit of honey and milk to taste. A squeeze of juice from a fresh lemon can be a nice touch as well.

Itching

Itching is actually quite fascinating. For something so common it has remained elusive for a long time, and only recent research has most likely pinpointed the exact cause of an itch. When some sort of sensory trigger stimulates our skin-e.g. an insect, hair, fibers, hives, or poison ivy-a signal not even close to the place where you feel the itch is sent lightning fast to the far end of our nerve cells. This triggers a release of neuropeptide natriuretic polypeptide b (Nppb) molecules, a specialized sub-set of neurons just for itching. They then begin an epic journey of leaps to other nerve cells that race the message to your brain, telling it to itch. And while it's possible now to genetically change mice that don't feel itching, or pain, or heat, we still don't know how to safely stop those maddening itches for people. We know where and why an itch starts, but we don't know how to stop it. So for now we're just going to have to settle for some nice, simple, home remedies. When it comes to itching, the best thing to do is figure out the cause of what's causing the itch, and treat that, since I really couldn't tell you how to manage your Nppb levels. For example, itchy dry skin would require moisturizing, while contact with poison ivy would require something that would help with the irritating oil in the plant.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-If you are suffering from itchy, sensitive, or dry skin, moisturizing is a great way to go about helping it. Another key thing to try is switching to gentler soaps and body washes (or better yet make your own!)

-Try to not go overboard with the scrubbing. Soaps can strip the skin of natural oils that are helping keep it moist and protected.

Oatmeal and Herb Paste

-If you find your paste too thin, up the amount of oats in ¼ cup increments, and the honey by 1 teaspoon. If it is too thin up the water 1 tablespoon at a time.

-To lengthen the shelf life, use basil and mint essential oils instead of the fresh herbs.

Anti-Inflammatory Itch Salve

A good chunk of things that cause itching are accompanied by inflammation, just think of a big mosquito bite, or a hive! The inflammation is an immune response to a perceived “invader” such as pollen or certain foods, and is caused by the release of the protein histamine. We then experience what is known as “histamine-induced itch.” The uncomfortable inflammation contributes to the intense urge to go crazy trying to relieve the itch, which only makes the irritation worse.

This recipe contains herbal essential oils and ingredients that will help cool the inflammation, and help relieve itchiness. Witch hazel is a wonderful addition to any cream or salve as the naturally occurring resin and procyanadin (a flavonoid) in it interfere with inflammation taking place, and eases any that has already occurred. Lavender and chamomile also have natural anti-inflammatory properties, while calendula is known as the “eczema eater” because it is so powerful when it comes to relieving itchiness caused by eczema.

You will need...

- 7 1/2 tablespoons of carrier oil
- 2 1/4 teaspoons of witch hazel
- 3-5 drops each of calendula, lavender, and chamomile essential oil
- 1 tablespoon of beeswax

Directions

1. In double boiler heat beeswax and your carrier oil until the wax is completely melted. Remove from heat. Add in witch hazel, essential oils, and stir. The witch hazel will create small bubbles.
2. Pour into tin or jar and allow it to cool with the lid on. This will keep in a cool, dark, place for up to a year, depending on the oil you used. Adjust the amount of wax if you want a softer or firmer salve.

Clove & Juniper Berry Salve

I personally love this recipe. It's quite simple, but very effective and time tested (the native Americans used juniper berries to relieve itching well before any fancy creams came out.) While the volatile oils in juniper berries stop the itch where it is, cloves contain eugenol, which was originally used in dentistry to numb patients. This numbing will also help deaden the feeling of itchiness, as itch and pain are closely related.

You will need...

- 10 tablespoons of olive oil or any liquid oil
- 1 tablespoon of beeswax
- 4-5 drops each of juniper and clove essential oil

Directions

1. Melt your oil and beeswax together in a double boiler, remove from heat, and then add 4-5 drops of juniper and clove essential oil. Stir.
2. Pour into tins and cover to prevent the essential oils from evaporating. Apply as needed.

Oat & Herb Paste

You will often hear of a lotion or cream containing “colloidal oatmeal,” which is essentially finely ground oatmeal helpful in relieving itchy, irritated skin. It is also often found in oatmeal baths, a common remedy for eczema or psoriasis. It is wonderfully soothing and helps moisturize skin, as well as tame any inflammation, and discomfort taking place. However, you don’t need to buy fancy lotion or even specialized powder to get its benefits, you can make your own by grinding up a good quality oatmeal (not the instant kind!) until it is very fine. If you don’t have something to grind it up, you can soak your oats in water for 20 minutes and then strain and use the water to make a thinner version of this paste. Added to this is basil, which contains eugenol like cloves do, mint, which can help cool the sensation of a burning rash, and a bit of soothing honey. Now you have a wonderful blend that will keep, at the very least, the worst of the itching at bay!

You will need...

-1 cup of fresh chopped mint leaves OR 2 tablespoons dried

-1 cup of fresh chopped basil OR 2 tablespoons dried

-2-4 tablespoons of oats, finely ground

-1/4-1/2 teaspoon of organic raw honey

-Water

Directions

1. Place basil and mint in a bowl, chopped roughly if they are fresh, and bring water to a boil.

2. Pour the water over mint and basil so they are submerged. Cover and let this steep for 20 minutes. In the meantime, grind the oats as finely as possible (keeping a jar of pre-ground oats on hand is a good idea if you find yourself needing relief often.)

3. Remove the solids from the basil-mint water and add the ground oats and honey, stirring until a paste forms. This will keep, refrigerated, for up to 1 ½ weeks. Apply generously as needed.

Leg Cramps

Leg cramps are bothersome, but when they last for more than a few minutes, they can become truly crippling. This familiar pain is triggered when a muscle in the leg, usually the calf, contracts too hard (spasms) resulting in a burst of pain. You can experience leg cramps at night, or during/just after exercise. When you exercise you can become dehydrated, overexert muscles, and throw your electrolytes out of balance. The last three are all related in one big way with electrolytes being of particular importance, as some are vital for muscles to function in the first place. Potassium and sodium, for example, work with calcium to make a muscle contract, and release. If you lack potassium, you have nothing to block calcium that starts the contraction, and you end up with a spasm or cramp. Often times a cramp hits just after you finish exercising because it takes energy to release the muscle, just like it takes energy to contract it. You stop moving, exhausted, and your body lacks the fuel it needs to let the muscle relax.

If you get leg cramps in the night, it is speculated that your muscles are already in a shortened position, since most of us sleep with bent knees, and may be stimulated to contract. Since it is already “shortened” the muscle can go into spasm.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Since your muscle is seized up the most straightforward, possibly most effective, way to help it is to stretch. Hold your legs out straight, flex your toes upwards, and if you can, lean forward and grab your toes (I hate this position, but it does help.) Hold for 5-10 seconds, relax, and repeat.

-If you are lying down, prop up your knees with a pillow or rolled up towel.

Hot Basil Bath Towel

Basil is wonderfully soothing to aching, spastic muscles. It contains both potassium and magnesium which are hugely helpful, actually vital, for getting muscles to relax. For this you can also use basil essential oil and mix it with carrier oil to make a rub. In this case, I suggest heating the carrier oil slightly before applying, as heat will help loosen your muscle.

You will need...

- 1 cup of chopped fresh basil leaves OR 2 teaspoons dried
- A clean towel
- Hot water

Directions

1. Bring several cups of water to a boil and pour over basil leaves. Cover and let steep for 10 minutes before straining the liquids.
2. Reheat the infused water if it has cooled-heat is needed here to help muscles relax. Dunk your towel in the water once it has cooled to a safe, but still toasty, temperature and wring out excess liquid. Wrap around the part of your leg that is cramped, and relax. If you need to you can reheat any leftover liquid and re-dunk the towel when it cools off too much. You may also place some fresh basil leaves between your leg and the towel, and try some gentle stretching at the same time.

Epsom Salt Bath

Magnesium is a vital mineral that helps regulate muscle function, and a lot of people suffer from a severe deficiency thanks to our diets these days. It is found in high amounts in Epsom salt, and is easily absorbed transdermally (through the skin.) The warm water from the bath also helps clenched and cramped muscles relax. Add some lavender essential oil to the bath to help you relax overall as well. If you happen to be home and free when a cramp strikes, climbing into the tub for a soak is great, but it's not something you really want to do if you wake up in the middle of the night with a cramp. If you tend to experience them at night, take a soak before crawling into bed. It will help you relax and give a little magnesium boost that may help ward off a cramp, or at least lessen the severity.

You will need...

- 2 cups of Epsom salt
- A warm bath
- Lavender oil
- 1 tablespoon any liquid oil

Directions

1. Pour 2 cups of Epsom salt into the tub and fill with warm water. When it's about halfway full, add the oil blend. Soak for 15-20 minutes when needed, or before bed.

A Spoonful of Mustard, Vinegar or Pickle Juice

This is about as easy as it gets. It's possible it's the vinegar or turmeric in the mustard that makes it work so well, but people swear a spoonful of yellow mustard relieves their cramps quickly and effectively. You can also drink straight vinegar. In a study that induced cramps in 10 college athletes, the ones that drank vinegar were relieved up to 45% faster than those who didn't. It's deeply puzzling, since the vinegar would not have passed through the stomach in the minute or so it took to relieve the cramp. Along the same lines as vinegar, pickle juice was also used in the study and found to be effective as well.

You will need...

-1-2 full teaspoons of yellow mustard OR 1 teaspoon of white distilled vinegar OR 1 tablespoon of pickle juice

Directions

1. Before exercising, bedtime, or even after a cramp sets in, swallow a full teaspoon of yellow mustard. Follow it with some water to wash it down and boost hydration as well.

Motion Sickness

Motion sickness goes by several names, but whether or not you call it carsick, seasick, or airsick; it's all referring to the same miserable thing. The nausea, dizziness, fatigue, and even vomiting that a sufferer typically experiences, is due to a bit of a mix up between the systems that help us create balance-vision, touch, and the vestibular system. The vestibular system is a part of your inner ear containing fluid that flows around in reaction to movement, stimulating special cells located around it. When your brain gets different messages from your eyes and your vestibular system, such key components for our body to determine its position in space and direction, you get motion sick. Unfortunately, there isn't a whole lot of medication that can help motion sickness. It usually just makes you drowsy, and may make you feel even more nauseous. Speaking broadly, you might break motion sickness (M.S.) into 3 general categories.

M.S. caused by motion that is felt but not seen: An example would be riding in a car. Your eyes are seeing mainly the non-moving interior of the car, while the vestibular system picks up on all the bumps and turns. This is why reading a book is so miserable in a car, as looking at the still page causes even more confusion. Being in a room on a ship with no windows is another example, as is flying in an airplane. The mix-up between the two sends a befuddling message to your brain.

M.S. caused by motion that is seen but not felt: Such as might be experienced during movies and video games. The eyes are picking up on a lot of motion, but your body is still.

M.S. caused by motions that are seen and felt but don't quite match up: Say you ride in a car going over a bumpy road very slowly. You get jolted and bounced around a lot, but your eyes don't see the right amount of motion to correspond. The result is, again, confusion between the systems, and ultimately you wind up feeling sick.

This disagreement between what your eyes see and what the vestibular system senses, no matter what causes it, results in feelings of motion sickness. An interesting hypothesis as to why this happens is that it is possibly the brain's response to perceived neurotoxins. The part of the brain that responds to motion sickness is the same part that picks up on toxins and poison. When your vestibular system says "we're moving" but the brain also gets a message from the eyes that says "we're still" its response is to assume there is some sort of hallucination taking place. The next logical assumption would be that this is because of an ingested poison or toxin, and its attempts to rid the body of this perceived threat makes you end up feeling really crummy and sometimes getting sick to your stomach. While mainly speculation, it's still interesting.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-If you are feeling sick because of motion you feel but don't see, focus on something in the distance, which may help your eyes catch up with your body on the fact that you are, indeed, moving.

-If riding in a car, sit up in the passenger's seat. This may help because your eyes pick up on more motion with the windshield directly in front of you and the windows on either side, or possibly because you get jolted around less in the front rather than the back of the car.

-Stay calm. Thinking about or anticipating being sick can make you sick, so try breathing deep through your nose and don't focus on the thought or worry of feeling ill. Even if you feel a twinge of nausea, try not to have a mental breakdown in fear of getting sick.

-If you're on a boat, try to stay on the deck. Doing so will help confirm that you are moving, making it easier for your body and brain to figure out disconnect it's going through. When you are in your room, lie down and close your eyes, breathing deeply.

Acupressure

-In Chinese medicine there is "cun" (pronounced "soon"), a traditional Chinese unit of length relative to a person's body. Using it, acupuncturists (this includes acupressure) are able to locate exact points on a person's body. Generally speaking, P6 is located 2 inches below the crease of the wrist. If you wanted to try and be exact, you could measure it out in cun. Of course, this would mean you have to learn how to measure cun first, and I find it just as effective to follow the general guidelines.

Anti-Motion Sickness Spritz

-I find the feeling of cool water really helps with nausea, but if you wanted to simplify this remedy, or simply extend its shelf life, you could use purely essential oils blended with your carrier and use as a rub. This will last as long as your carrier oil does, when stored appropriately in a cool dark place.

Acupressure

Acupressure is like acupuncture, but you don't have to whip out needles and poke yourself (therefore greatly disturbing the person sitting next to you on the plane.) With acupressure you simply apply pressure to certain trigger points on the body that are thought to relate to varying sensations, such as nausea or pain. The point used here is called P6, the 6th point on the pericardium pathway in Chinese medicine, found on the inside of your wrist. The pericardium pathway passes through your chest, your diaphragm, and into your abdomen. It also passes through the stomach, which makes it ideal for calming a turbulent tummy and feelings of nausea.

Directions

1. To relieve nausea caused by motion sickness, press your thumb against the inside of your wrist, between the 2 tendons, about 3 finger widths below the base of your palm. You may experience relief, or you may need to hold the pressure for up to 2 or 3 minutes. Relax, and take deep breaths. There is "travel sickness" bands designed to do the same thing, but this is an easy (and free) approach.

Anti-Motion Sickness Spray

I would argue that aromatherapy is one of the best ways to combat nausea, whether it's caused by motion sickness or something else (assuming the body does not actually need to actually rid itself of anything.) The scents can help relax the mind and body and clear your senses. It grounds you, but in a very gentle and refreshing way. This blend of oils will help calm your nerves, and reduce nausea and dizziness.

You will need...

- A small mister bottle
- 1 tablespoon any liquid oil
- 5 drops of peppermint oil
- 3 drops of lime oil
- 5 drops of lavender oil
- 1 drop of ginger oil

Directions

1. Mix essential oils with your carrier oil in your little mister bottle
2. Add water to fill it the rest of the way and shake vigorously before every use. Spritz a little on your wrists, neck, and just above your navel. Use your fingertips to apply to temples as well if you like.

Nibble Fresh Ginger Root

I know I say it a lot, but ginger really is the cure-all when it comes to stomach upset and nausea, whether it's caused by the flu or motion sickness. If you are prone to feeling sick during travel, keep fresh ginger root on hand at all times whenever going by air, car, or boat. Sure, you might get a few odd looks on the plane if people see you nibbling on a root, but it's better than getting sick any day.

You will need...

-About an inch of fresh ginger root, peeled or unpeeled

Directions

1. At the first sign of motion sickness (or just before it starts) nibble the ginger root, slowly. You don't have to chow down and consume a lot, but just chewing and getting a little bit of the juice/flavor/scent really helps.

Nausea

Nausea, put quite mildly, is a terrible feeling. Whether it proceeds getting sick to your stomach, or just hovers around on its own, that queasy sensation we can all relate to makes enjoying life, or even just living life, difficult to go about. Many things can cause nausea, from pregnancy to the stomach flu to various medications. Sometimes it's a good thing, like when you've eaten something bad that your body needs to get rid of, but many times it's also just plain uncomfortable. Figuring out the source of your nausea, if possible, is the best way to cure it. If you have a migraine, address the headache, if you have food poisoning, let yourself get sick, and so on. Many times though we're helpless to remove the reason for feeling nauseous, if we can even figure it out, which is where these remedies will come in handy.

Rice Water

While it may not sound very appetizing rice water acts as a demulcent, which basically means that it forms a soothing film over a mucous membrane. In this case the membrane in the stomach is being protected. It relieves any irritation and inflammation of the lining of the stomach (called gastritis.) Gastritis can cause stomach upset, and yes, nausea, so if you have determined this is the cause, try whipping up this soothing drink.

You will need...

- Water
- White rice
- A pot

Directions

1. Cook the rice in twice the amount of recommended water, and just as it starts to become tender, remove it from the heat. Drain the water and drink warm, or let it come to room temperature. Save the rice for a bland meal later on.

Mind Control & Lying Face Down

This may seem like a cop out on a natural remedy, but it is the farthest thing from it. I used to have an intense fear of getting sick to my stomach in a place where I had nowhere to go-think on an airplane, on a bus, in a lecture-pretty much any place very public. So intense was this fear that I would make myself feel quite sick over the thought of it alone, and a viscous cycle began. With the use of deep breathing and meditation, I trained myself to be able to let go of the gripping fear that made me sick. At the onset of nausea, a tingle of fear that you may throw up can exacerbate it terribly, but being able to use your mind to work around it is one of the most effective, and safe, ways to help yourself.

You will need...

- A cool, quiet, place
- Patience

Directions

1. Practice meditation once a day, nauseous or not, and deep breathing. Focus on being able to let go of a thought when it pops into your head-this is key in being able to let go of nervous thoughts that can make you feel even sicker.

Tummy Time Blend

Making a blend of essential oils is an invaluable way to fend off nausea, and this blend of soothing aromas will help clear your mind and settle your tummy. Just keep a little bottle on hand to use when you may need it.

You will need...

- 6 drops of peppermint oil
- 5 drops of lavender
- 3 drops of pine needle oil
- 6 drops of lemon oil
- 1 tablespoon of any liquid oil
- A small, dark bottle

Directions

1. Mix up your blend and store in a dark glass bottle to preserve it. When needed, rub a dab behind each ear, above the navel, and on each temple. Breathe deeply.

Psoriasis

Plaque Psoriasis, although it's a common skin disease (and the most common of all types of Psoriasis,) isn't fully understood. It is thought to be related to a flaw in the immune system, where a white blood cell called a T lymphocyte (T-cell) behaves abnormally. T cells usually float throughout the body detecting and fighting off infection. With psoriasis, the T cells mistakenly attack healthy skin cells, like they are fighting off infection or trying to heal something. The result is skin cells that go through their life cycle over the course of several days, rather than a month, building up quickly on the surface of the skin and forming itchy, red, dry patches and silvery "scales." There is no cure, but there are natural remedies you can try at home to relieve the discomfort and reduce the appearance of it.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Try keeping a humidifier in the house to prevent your skin from drying out.

- Avoid dyes, fragrances, and anything else along those lines in your shampoo, lotion, etc.

- Take a warm soak with Epsom salts daily, pat skin gently dry, and moisturize.

- Drink lots of water to keep skin hydrated from the inside out.

- Keep a little log book of your outbreaks, and see if you can track your triggers.

Aloe Vera Fish Oil Body Rub

Aloe vera gel has long been associated with relief from various skin conditions from dry skin to sunburns. Those with psoriasis have also found it helps relieve discomfort, and provides some much needed moisture to irritated patches of skin.* Combine this with the healing, wholesome, properties of omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil, and you have a pleasant rub that can help clear up plaques. While it may not sound all that pleasant to apply fish oil topically, the smell of the aloe helps it dissipate. Using free form fish oil (that is, not in capsules) also has less of an odor. If the smell offends you, mix in 1 or 2 drops of orange essential oil.

You will need...

- 1/2 cup of aloe vera gel
- 1 teaspoon fish oil
- Glass container

Directions

1. Combine aloe vera gel and fish oil, blend thoroughly.
2. Apply several times throughout the day as needed. If possible, take a warm bath free of any sort of soap before bed. Pat your skin dry, and apply the mixture. It should keep refrigerated up to 3 months in a glass container.

Avocado Oil & Tea Tree Oil Rinse

This can be used on the body as well as scalp. Avocado oil is rich and penetrating, providing moisture for the dry skin. Tea tree oil, while typically used for fungal or bacterial based conditions, has been reported to help some affected by psoriasis (particularly psoriasis of the scalp.)

You will need...

- 2 tablespoons of avocado oil
- 20 drops of tea tree oil
- 1 cup of water

Directions

1. Mix avocado oil with the tea tree oil, and then combine with water.
2. Pour over your hair using an old cleaned out shampoo bottle, or spray on with a spray bottle to ensure you get most of it on your head.
3. Massage in well, gently but firmly rubbing in circular motions with your fingertips. Let it sit for 2-5 minutes, then rinse. You can also apply just the oils to patches on your body, diluting the tea tree with 1 tablespoon of avocado oil first. You can stick to just the avocado oil if you prefer.

Honey & Olive Oil ‘Balm’

Honey, when combined with olive oil and beeswax, has been shown to help reduce inflammation and help the itching and irritation that comes along with plaque psoriasis. While the studies have been somewhat limited, anecdotal evidence is strong. This balm will have a wonderful aroma-mildly sweet and warm with a hint of floral honey.

You will need...

-1/2 cup of raw, organic, honey

-4 tablespoons of grated beeswax

-1/2 cup of jojoba oil or any liquid oil

Directions

1. In a double boiler, melt beeswax and olive oil together.
2. Remove from the heat and let it cool, gently “whipping” it with a fork or a whisk to keep the beeswax from totally freezing up. After it’s cooled some, about 3 minutes or so, beat in the honey.
3. Apply as needed. This will keep in an airtight container in a cool dark place for up to a month.

Seasonal Allergies

Seasonal rhinitis is a fancy way of saying seasonal allergies-rhinitis referring to the inflammation or irritation of the mucous membranes inside the nose. While many people often call their allergies “hay fever” that technically means that only grass or hay pollen is responsible. The proper term for allergies caused by pollens from any plant is “pollinosis.”

When a person who has a sensitized immune system breathes in certain allergens, such as pollen, it triggers the production of an antibody, also known as immunoglobulin. The antibody is a protein that counteracts a foreign substance upsetting the immune system. In this case, the immunoglobulin released is known as immunoglobulin E, or IgE. The IgE binds to certain cells that then release histamine, triggering an inflammatory response and causing sneezing, itching, watery eyes, swelling of the nasal passages, and a boost in mucous production. Though you may be miserable, your body really has good intentions when all of this is going on. It is, after all, attacking what it perceives as something harmful. Well intended or not though, this often leaves you in need of some relief.

I myself didn't suffer from seasonal allergies until later in my teenage years, and then I finally understood why everybody made such a big deal out of them. They're awful. When the warm weather rolls around all you want to do is frolic in the outdoors, but the stuffy nose, itching, watery eyes, and constant sneezing make it very hard to enjoy being outside. This is especially heinous in Minnesota, because the majority of the year we're locked in a freezing ice-land and have a very limited time frame in which we can enjoy warm weather anyways. I have to say that with consistent use natural allergy remedies seem to work quite well. I'll take my honey and leave the stuffy nose to wintertime!

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Avoid using window fans, which can pull allergens into the house and circulate them through the air.
- Boost your vitamin C intake, which has been shown to ward off allergy symptoms
- Try a gentle saline nasal rinse to flush out the irritants causing your sniffles and congestion.

Local Honey

Honey is an incredible substance, one that's been prized for literally centuries, and for good reason. When it comes to allergies, local honey helps because it exposes your immune system to allergens, helping it build itself up to them without throwing it into an all-out panic. It is vital that you get raw, unprocessed honey for this. Otherwise, any little bits of pollen and such will have been filtered out and it will be useless. Getting your honey local is crucial as well because you will want to build up a tolerance to the pollens in your area. Your co-op or local farmers market are good places to check.

You will need...

-1-3 teaspoons of local, raw, unprocessed honey

Directions

1. About a 1-1 ½ to 2 months before allergy season, eat a ½ teaspoon of honey twice daily. Build up in increments every 1-2 weeks until you can consume 3 teaspoons daily. Be sure to spread out consumption at first (so if you are having it twice a day take it once in the morning and once in the evening.) Taking too much at once won't give your body a chance to build up its immunity, so be patient!

Nettle Tea

Stinging nettle seems like it should be the enemy, but it has a surprising amount of health benefits. When I found out it was supposed to help allergies, it made seeking out the prickly plant that much more worth it. It is theorized that it helps with allergies because it seems to bring down the levels of histamines the body produces in response to an allergen, and when the levels of histamines go down, so do the irritating symptoms. If you're hunting down nettle yourself, make sure you wear long sleeves and pants to avoid getting pricked.

You will need...

- 1 cup of fresh nettle leaves OR 2 teaspoons of dried nettle if you can't locate a fresh plant
- 2 cups of fresh water
- A pot
- Local honey (optional)

Directions

1. For fresh nettle, place your leaves in a pot and cover with fresh water. Bring almost to a boil and then reduce the heat, letting the tea simmer for 3-5 more minutes. Strain the tea into your favorite mug, add local honey if you'd like, and drink 1-2 times daily.
2. If you are using dried nettle, use 1 teaspoon for 1 cup of water. Place in a mug and pour boiling water over it. Cover and let it steep for 5-10 minutes before straining and drinking. Taking nettle capsules are a convenient way to get its benefits as well.

Apple Cider Vinegar Drink

ACV is a commonly touted cure-all, said to help anything from weight loss to constipation. I don't know about the former, I can sadly vouch for the latter, and will tentatively add allergies to the long list of things it's good for. The evidence for this is anecdotal, with theories being that it helps block histamine and reduce the resulting inflammation, but I feel it is more likely the strong flavor that helps clear out stuffiness.

You will need...

- 1-2 tablespoons of ACV
- Raw, local, honey (optional)
- Warm water (optional)

Directions

1. Every morning or evening, take apple cider vinegar straight.
2. Alternatively, You can also mix up a drink consisting of 2 tablespoons of ACV, 1 teaspoon of raw local honey, and enough warm water to fill the cup. Stir and drink daily.

Sinus Infection

Sinus infections are commonly caused by a viral infection, most often a strain of the common cold, but bacterial/fungal infections and allergies can also be culprits. The air filled cavities around your nasal passages, your sinuses, are lined with a thin mucous producing membrane. When a sinus infection sets in, your sinus cavities become swollen and inflamed. This swelling blocks or reduces mucus drainage and it builds up, leading to throbbing pain in the face, headaches, a horribly stuffy nose, yellow or green nasal discharge, difficulty tasting and smelling, and a cough that usually bugs you terribly at night. If it is caused by a virus, it will generally clear up on its own, and some home remedies may be all that is needed to get you through.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Do the best you can to avoid anything that may be an irritant, such as smoke, perfume, etc. as they can worsen the irritation in the sinus cavities and only drag out the time they are inflamed.

-Keep a humidifier in your room at night, as dry air will also only further irritation.

-If you feel comfortable doing so, try doing a nasal rinse with a neti pot or something similar to help flush out stubborn mucus.

-Avoid consuming a lot of dairy- especially milk. It can make phlegm feel thicker and make you feel more congested as a result.

-For general relief, place a warm, steamy, towel across the sinuses and bridge of nose. The warmth can help provide some humidification and may help loosen mucous. Mostly, it just brings comfort and relieves the sensation of pressure.

Scented Steam

-If you had to use one of the essential oils, I would choose tea tree first. Its airborne microbial fighting action will be brought right up into your nose, where there may be a lurking virus.

-You may also add ½ cup of white distilled vinegar.

Scented Steam

I maintain that steam is one of the best natural ways to clear out a stuffy nose, but it's just heaven sent when you have a sinus infection, especially when you add the benefits of aromatherapy. The warmth and heat will loosen and help drain mucous, and I find the pressure is almost always relieved or lessened greatly after this treatment.

You will need...

- Several cups of boiling water
- A large bowl
- A towel
- Tea tree, peppermint, eucalyptus, or rosemary oil

Directions

1. Bring several cups of water to a boil and pour into a large bowl.
2. Add 3 drops of peppermint, tea tree, or rosemary essential oil. You can also try a combination of all or a few of those oils. Feel free to add more or less if you find the scent too strong or too weak.
3. Place your face directly over the steaming bowl after it has sat for a moment (be careful not to get too close as steam can burn.) Cover your head and the bowl with the towel, creating a sort of tent that will trap the steam.
4. Breathe deeply for 10-15 minutes. Keep a handful of tissues at the ready!

Horseradish

Horseradish is potent, powerful, and one of the easiest ways to deal with the discomfort of a sinus infection. The intense flavor and odor will thin out mucous and encourage your body to expel it. It is also thought to improve facial circulation, although this has yet to be proven. The horseradish in this recipe is the fresh kind. This pungent root should be available in the produce section of your grocery store/supermarket/co-op.

You will need...

- Fresh Horseradish
- A grater or knife

Directions

1. Grate or chop a bit of fresh horseradish root. If the scent alone doesn't make your nose run, place a bit in your mouth and hold it there for a minute. You should notice an effect taking place quite quickly. Again, have tissues at the ready.

Garlic Juice

Garlic juice is strong smelling and powerful. When used directly in the nasal passages it can help thin out mucous and make it easier to expel.

You will need...

- 1-2 cloves of fresh garlic
- Cotton swabs

Directions

1. Crush 1-2 cloves of fresh, firm, garlic and soak the ends of the cotton swab in the juice that comes out. Swab just inside of each nostril-no need to jam it in there- and wait for mucous to loosen. You can also use a juicer, or purchase garlic juice, and try mixing it into some water and drinking it to help clear out your sinuses.

Snoring

Many health conditions don't just affect the person experiencing them, but their friends and family as well. Snoring, while it may not sound like the most dramatic example, is one such condition. Couples in particular tend to be negatively impacted by snoring, and as anyone who has dealt with it knows, it's not fun to have to elbow your partner or flip them onto their side just so you can get a good night's rest. Come morning a frustrating argument may ensue, one person irritable and sleep deprived, the other feeling like they are being blamed unjustly. They might be cranky too, as snoring doesn't make for a restful slumber.

A lot of factors contribute to snoring, such as allergies, stuffy nose, weight, alcohol consumption, and even just the construction of your airway. Regardless of the cause, ultimately the sound happens when your airway is partially obstructed. As you sleep the muscles in your throat, tongue, and soft palate relax. Sometimes they relax so much that they can partially block the airway. Air rushes past the tissue as the person breathes in-sometimes even when they breathe out- and the walls of the throat will vibrate. That vibration results in the harsh sound of snoring. Sleeping on your back often exacerbates the problem as the tongue can flop back and block off the throat even more.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Figure out why you snore to figure out a way to stop it. Closed-mouth snoring may indicate a problem with your tongue, open-mouthed may be related to the tissues at the back of the throat, snoring on your back tends to be milder and corrected with lifestyle changes, while snoring in all of the above situations probably means you have a more severe reason, like sleep apnea, behind all the noise.

-Try losing weight if you're overweight. Being overweight often means you have excess tissue at the back of your throat which can narrow your airways, making your snoring worse.

-Avoid alcohol and sedatives at least 4 hours before bedtime-these can make your muscles relax even more and exacerbate snoring.

-Place a humidifier in your room. Dry air can irritate membranes in the nose and throat.

-Clear nasal passages with a saline rinse if congestion is the reason you're snoring.

Use a Tennis Ball

This was one of my favorite tips on the Everyday Roots website. If you snore when you sleep on your back, as many people do, attaching a tennis ball to your back is a great way to solve the problem. When you go to roll over onto your back in your sleep, the discomfort of the tennis ball forces you to roll back on your side, without waking you up. As strange as it sounds, if you can sleep through your partner elbowing you (and we all know it happens), you can sleep through the gentle nudge of a tennis ball.

You will need...

- 1 tennis ball
- Shirt pocket of an old shirt
- Scissors
- Needle and thread

Directions

1. Dig up an old, clean, shirt and cut out the shirt pocket.
2. Sew the pocket into the mid back region of your pajama top. Keep in mind the material of your pajamas should be snug enough that the fabric doesn't just shift the ball out of the way as you roll over.
3. Tuck the tennis ball in the pocket before bed, and carry on sleeping as usual. If a tennis ball doesn't work, try a body pillow to keep you on your side.

Elevate Your Head

Elevating your head when you snore can help take some pressure off your airways, improve airflow, and put your tongue and jaw into a better position.

You will need...

-Several pillows or a phonebook

Directions

1. Elevate your head 4-6 inches. You can do this by sleeping with multiple pillows, a thick pillow, or by placing a phonebook under your pillow (make sure you still have a thick pillow for that!)

Gargle with Peppermint

If your snoring is caused by something like allergies, gargling with peppermint can be a great way to reduce the symptoms, clear the nose and head, and help you sleep peacefully. It is thought peppermint may help temporarily shrink lining of the nose and throat, which opens up the airway.

You will need...

- 2-4 drops of peppermint oil
- 1 glass of fresh water

Directions

1. Before bed gargle for 20-30 seconds. Do not swallow.

Toothache

A toothache has a tendency to hit at the worst time, like anytime you can't get into the dentist. Capable of causing tremendous amounts of misery, these aches also generally strike at night (this can be aggravated by the change of blood flow when you're lying down.) If you find yourself suffering from one these buggers, there are natural ways to find relief. When you think about, dentists had to find ways before modern medicine to reduce pain, at least to some degree. As horrible as they are (and they are really quite horrible) a toothache doesn't have to last forever, and you can at least make life bearable until you get to the dentist.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Remember to rinse with salt water before using a remedy here if possible. Doing so cleans out your mouth and ensures there's nothing in the way of what you're applying so it can really go to work and do its job.

Clove Compress

-If you don't have the oil, you can suck gently on whole cloves until they soften, however you do not get the same degree of relief as you would with the essential oil.

Clove Compress

This is probably one of the best home remedies for a toothache. Cloves have long been used by dentists as they contain eugenol, a powerful antiseptic and anesthetic-meaning it stops the pain and wipes out germs. Eugenol is still used today, although in a separated and “purified” form.

You will need...

- 2-3 drops clove oil
- Cotton balls
- 1 teaspoon of olive oil, or any liquid oil

Directions

1. Rinse your mouth out with warm salt water, and blend the clove oil with the olive oil.
2. Soak the cotton ball in the solution and hold it against the aching tooth/gum area gently but firmly for 5-10 minutes or longer if needed.

Chamomile Tea Bag Compress

Chamomile has also long been used as a topical anesthetic, with its dried flowers containing terpenoids and flavonoids, naturally occurring chemical compounds found in certain plant families. Drinking the tea may help, but I have found holding a slightly steeped tea bag against the ache to be much more effective.

You will need...

- 1 bag of chamomile tea
- Cool or cold water

Directions

1. Rinse mouth out gently with warm salt water.
2. Soak 1 bag of chamomile tea in cold water for roughly 30 seconds, or until thoroughly saturated. Hold gently but firmly against aching tooth/gum for 10-15 minutes, squeezing occasionally to get more liquid out.

Ginger & Cayenne Pepper Paste

Cayenne contains capsaicin, a neuropeptide-active agent that affects the release and transport of substance P. In very plain English that roughly translates to “capsaicin has something in it that talks to our nerves, and it has been shown to lessen the amount of something called substance P, which is partially responsible for why we feel pain.” Ginger has been shown to possibly reduce the amount of cytokines, substances that can create inflammation, and are therefore linked to pain. Mix the two together and you have a powerful pain-killing paste!

You will need...

- 1/2 teaspoon of ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon of cayenne powder
- Some cool water
- A cotton swab

Directions

1. Rinse mouth with warm salt water.
2. Mix together ground ginger and cayenne powder. Add enough cool water to form a thick paste, and generously swab onto the gum/gum line of the aching tooth. Let sit for 15 minutes, then rinse with cold water. If you like, you can also leave it on.

UTI

The discomfort caused by a urinary tract infection is one of the most frustrating sensations. It makes you feel like you have to go to the bathroom every few minutes, only to painfully push out a tiny amount of urine, if any at all. A UTI is an infection in any part of the urinary system, which technically speaking includes the kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra. Most infections happen (or at least start) in the urethra and bladder. The bacterium known as *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) is the usually main culprit, but there are other strains that can cause an infection as well. If you're going to try and remedy your UTI at home, do so at the very first sign of infection. If it lasts longer than 2 days, it's important to seek professional help, as it is quite possible for them to spread to the kidneys, and then into the bloodstream.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Place a warm compress over your bladder while lying down to help relieve discomfort.

- Drink water. Lots of water. It helps keep your system flushed, and it's a mighty relief to at least have something to push out when you need to go.

- Urinate after intercourse (this is especially important for women, who have shorter urethras and therefore are more prone to infection.) It helps flush out any bacteria that may enter the urinary system "that way."

- Eat pineapple. Pineapple contains an enzyme called bromelain which has been shown to help clear up UTIs quicker in people who ate it with medication versus those who took a placebo. Even if you aren't on antibiotics, it's worth a shot.

- Drink cranberry juice-similar to the component in goldenseal, it can prevent bacteria from attaching to the walls of the urethra.

Baking Soda & Water

Baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) is extremely alkaline, so it can help neutralize the acidity of urine. This in turn would help with the burning associated with going to the bathroom. It also has antibacterial properties, which would possibly help as the UTI is caused by bacteria in the first place. This is assuming it retains its antibacterial properties after passing through your system. Make sure you drink the whole glass of water, as doing so will dilute the urine farther and flush out the bacteria.

You will need...

- 1 teaspoon of baking soda
- 8 ounces of fresh, cool, water

Directions

1. Stir a teaspoon of baking soda into 8 ounces of cool water and drink the whole thing. You can do this 3 times a day.

Goldenseal Tea

Goldenseal is a perennial herb in the buttercup family, native to the northeastern United States and southeastern Canada. It contains a compound called berberine, which can help with inflammation, as well as preventing bacteria from sticking to the walls of the urethra. Native Americans discovered long ago the medicinal properties of the plant, and used it to treat several ailments. By drinking it as a tea, you are getting not just the benefits of the goldenseal, but also extra fluid.

You will need...

- 1-2 teaspoons of dried goldenseal leaves, or a generous handful of fresh

- 1 cup of boiling water

- Some honey or lemon to taste (optional)

Directions

1. Place dried leaves or fresh leaves in a mug. Pour boiling water over them, cover, and let steep for 10-15 minutes. Strain and add honey or lemon to taste.

Ginger-Juniper Tea

Ginger can help lessen painful inflammation and lessen the acidity of urine, which will help ease the burning feeling. Juniper berries act as a diuretic, stimulating the kidneys and bladder and making it easier to urinate. Drinking the tea will, of course, get you more fluids too.

You will need...

- 3 teaspoons of freshly grated ginger root
- 2 teaspoons of juniper berries
- 3 cups of water
- Honey or lemon (optional)

Directions

1. Combine the ginger and berries in a pot and add water. Simmer for 8 minutes and then discard the solids. Add honey or lemon to taste, and drink.

Weight Loss

Before I say anything about weight loss, I must state that I firmly believe there are only two ways to truly manage weight, and they are the two things that nobody wants to hear, but I'm giving the spiel anyways. You have to eat healthy and exercise. People search frantically for some magic shortcut. There is no shortcut. This isn't news to anyone- but I am stating it anyways, because it's ignored too much. There is a reason obesity has skyrocketed with our increasingly sedentary lifestyle and overly-processed diets. Our bodies, quite simply, were not meant to live the way many of us do now. Humans constantly seek instant gratification, but the road to a healthy body, one you are confident with, is not one that will lead to instant gratification. You must dedicate yourself to eating healthy and exercising the right way, and stick to it, and you will lose weight. Maybe not for a week, or a month, or however long, but you will. Your primary reason for losing weight should always be health-looks can come second. In today's society, you are bombarded from all sides with ridiculous imaging that portrays all these "attractive" people, and what you need to look like, good, which is just discouraging and silly. It may make you feel like working at getting in shape, only to end up feeling bad about yourself and give up. Remember-being healthy will make you glow from the inside and the outside.

So what's going on when we lose weight? Fat is just stored energy, and calories are used to measure potential energy in food in the forms of fats, proteins, and carbs. Your body converts fat to usable energy for muscles through metabolic processes, while excess calories you don't need get stored away. Metabolism is just a way of saying any and all chemical process that takes place in the body to sustain life. When you exercise and eat right, and don't replenish or overload your calories, your body draws on its stored fat to convert it to energy, and the fat cells shrink. It doesn't disappear; it's just changing its form, like water turning to steam.

Really that's just scratching the surface of weight loss, but that's the process in a tiny little nutshell. When it comes to losing weight, there's also a fascinating science behind forming habits and changing behavior that is far too complex to go into now, but I strongly suggest reading a book or two on habits. There's also genetics, and a host of other factors, but again, I couldn't fit it all in this book! Ok, now that that is out of the way, the following remedies can help with weight loss in accordance to diet change and proper exercise.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Exercise and eat right.

- Focus as much on the mental aspect of losing weight as physical aspect. Your body will perform the same process to burn fat automatically-your mind, on the other hand, needs to be convinced to do what you want.

- Assuming you don't have any outstanding conditions that make you sensitive to certain things, don't totally deprive yourself of something tasty (as long as it's in moderation.) Just make sure you are balancing what you eat and how you exercise. If you totally deprive yourself of any treats, in moderation, as it's just going to make it harder to stick to your weight-loss plans. Following popular dieting methods you make it seem like you're starving yourself, and your body just packs more fat away and slows metabolism to conserve energy.

- Chew gum-it's a good way to get flavor without a bunch of calories.

- An interesting theory suggests that will-power is like a muscle that gets exhausted the more it gets worked. It explains why you wake up in the morning with the solid resolve to eat better but cave in after dinner to a bowl of ice cream. You've "flexed" your will-power muscle all day and it's finally worn out! Remind yourself of that when you feel tempted at the end of the day. You'll wake up stronger for it.

Metabolism Tea

Metabolism is simply a term that refers to any and all chemical processes in a living organism that helps sustain life. This includes the process of fat getting converted to energy. The 4 spices in this tea have all been shown to potentially help with weight loss, and they are all quite common. If you are familiar with home remedies you almost certainly use them quite frequently already. First and foremost is ginger, which some studies have shown can increase metabolism by up to 20%. Second is cinnamon, which helps insulin function efficiently. Insulin is a hormone that removes glucose (blood sugar) from the bloodstream-a lack of insulin results in diabetes. A lower or stable blood sugar can also stabilize your appetite. Third is cayenne pepper, which is normally touted for its ability to reduce pain thanks to its capsaicin content. It turns out that capsaicin increases the body's production of heat (which is why you might feel warm and sweat during a spicy meal.) This indicates that your metabolism is increasing-one study showed by up to 50% for 3 hours after a meal. A sprinkle of black pepper is then added, which may help speed metabolism in a similar manner to the capsaicin in cayenne.

You will need...

-1/2-1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon OR 5 cinnamon sticks

-1/2-1 teaspoon of cayenne pepper

-1/2-1 teaspoon of ground ginger OR 1 sliced inch of fresh ginger root

-A sprinkle of black pepper

Directions

1. Pour a cup or so of water into a pot and bring to a boil, then reduce to an active simmer.
2. Add the ground or whole spices and let it simmer for 5-10 minutes. and then pour into a mug and drink, removing the solids if you used any. It is best if you do this within an hour after a meal.

Spicy Mustard

Spicy mustard may help accelerate metabolism by up to 25% for several hours after a meal. It does so the same way that cayenne does-by increasing body temperature.

You will need...

-1 teaspoon of spicy mustard

Directions

1. After a meal take a teaspoon of spicy mustard-the hotter the better! Start off doing this only once a day to make sure it doesn't hurt your tummy.

Fresh Peppermint Tea

The powerful flavor of peppermint tea can create a sensation of fullness that helps curb appetite and cravings. It also kick-starts the digestive system and keeps everything functioning smoothly. If you make it with fresh peppermint leaves you can ingest them as well, which will fill you up even more.

You will need...

-1 cup of fresh peppermint leaves OR 2 teaspoons of dried peppermint

Directions

1. Place peppermint in a mug and pour boiling water over the leaves. Let it steep for 5-10 minutes and drink after a meal.

Fresh Parsley Tea

Physically, parsley will not make you lose weight; however, similar to peppermint, it can help really curb your appetite. You can either eat a ½-1 cup of fresh leaves, or make a tea out of it.

You will need...

-1 cup of fresh parsley OR 2
teaspoons dried parsley

Directions

1. Put parsley in a mug and water to a boil. Pour over leaves and let steep for 5-10 minutes before drinking.

Coconut Oil

While it may seem strange to ingest a fat to lose weight, coconut oil isn't just any old fat. It was given a terrible reputation, but new research is showing that it has some weight loss benefits. Coconut oil has special fats called medium chain triglycerides which can help you store your energy (aka calories) more efficiently. MCT's may be a saturated fat, but they are different than the vast majority of other saturated fats, which are long chain triglycerides. MCT's are not broken down in the intestines, and therefore do not get stored away as fat. Instead they are absorbed intact and sent straight to the liver to be used as energy. There have been several very promising studies that have shown that coconut oil can help some people lose weight. In 2002 the Journal of Nutrition concluded that it can aid weight loss when used in place of long chain triglycerides. It was also shown to strongly curb appetite (oh how I can vouch for this!) and it appeared to increase the burning of calories. In 2003 Obesity Research found that it may help burn calories, probably due to the fact that it boosted energy. In 2010 the International Journal of Food Sciences and Nutrition also found that it could help boost metabolism and reduce appetite.

You will need...

-2 tablespoons of good virgin cold-pressed coconut oil

Directions

1. Twice a day, take 1 tablespoon of coconut oil. You can take it before, during, or after a meal. If you tend to struggle with proportions, I suggest taking it before you eat. It can also be substituted for a cooking fat. I've used it in place of olive oil and love it.

Beauty

(conditions)

“Beauty is how you feel inside, and it reflects in your eyes. It is not something physical.”

- Sophia Loren

Acne

Before you go slathering all kinds of harsh creams on your face take a deep breath and a step back. I've battled acne for the vast majority of my life and went through some intense treatments to try and get it under control. Unfortunately I am genetically predisposed-my grandfather had horrible cystic acne-so it was no small feat to even reduce it, let alone get rid of it. I know how damaging it can be both physically and emotionally! Before trying a hodge-podge of everything you can think of, take a moment to understand the "enemy", and be smart about treating it. Acne is a fickle thing and one cream that works for one person may be the opposite of what you need.

If you don't already know what it is, try to figure out the cause of your breakouts, and then think logically about how to solve or prevent the problem at the source. The term "acne" is all-encompassing, and can refer to non-inflammatory and inflammatory lesions. Non-inflammatory are whiteheads and blackheads. These occur when sebum, an oil produced by the sebaceous glands in your skin to keep it supple and healthy, along with dead skin cells and sometimes bacteria, clog up your hair follicles. Blackheads form when the follicle has an extra-large opening, and the sebum and cells react with the oxygen and turn black. Blackheads are not caused by dirt, nor do they have dirt in them! Whiteheads are the same as blackheads, but the follicle has a narrower or closed opening, so it does not get dark in reaction to oxygen.

Inflammatory acne includes papules, pustules (pimples), nodules, and cysts. Papules and pimples are raised red, tender bumps that indicate an infection in the follicle. Pimples have white pus at the tip. Nodules are large, hard, painful bumps underneath the skin, caused by a buildup of secretion deep within the follicles, while cysts are painful, pus filled, and infected beneath the skin's surface. They are generally the hardest to treat, most likely to scar, and the most painful.

Acne is commonly seen in teenagers because of the increase in sex hormones, which creates an increase in sebum production. The extra oil clogs follicles and causes acne. Adults who suffer from acne can be dealing with the same over production of sebum. Acne can also be caused by the bacteria *Propionibacterium acnes*, which is why dermatologists will sometimes prescribe antibiotics as a form of treatment. This bacterium is normally present on human skin, but those with acne sometimes have excessive amounts.

Tips & Tidbits

-Contrary to popular belief, acne is not caused by diet, or dirt for that matter. If you wash your face too much in attempts to clean away all the "dirt" that's causing your acne, you actually irritate your skin further. You also dry it out too much, and it produces that much more oil to make up for it. Stress does not cause acne either, although in theory it can affect hormones, which can affect acne.

-A gentle rinse with warm water 1-2 times a day, plus a light moisturizer if you have dry skin, it usually all that's needed to keep your face clean.

-Don't skimp on the moisturizer-it helps keep your skin balanced and discourages your pores from making more sebum to compensate for any you dried up when you washed your face. Stick to a light moisturizer if you are prone to oily skin.

-Don't touch your face. As hard as it may be, don't pick or scratch at your breakouts. It will only take them longer to heal no matter what remedy or treatment you are using, and will increase the likelihood of scarring.

Tea Tree Oil & Coconut Oil

-You need to dilute the tea tree oil in 2 tablespoons of coconut oil, but you will most likely find yourself with some leftover. In this case store it in an appropriate container and re-warm when it comes time to use it again.

Tea Tree Oil & Coconut Oil

A 5% solution of tea tree oil can be effective in fighting acne, thanks to its antibacterial and general cleansing properties. Coconut oil contains unique acids that can also act as antibacterial agents, while providing some light moisture for your skin. Some people experience great success with coconut oil, while others find it worsens their condition-you really have to just try it and see.

You will need...

- 25-30 drops of tea tree oil
- 2 tablespoons of coconut oil (melted)
- Cotton swab

Directions

1. Wash your face with water and gently pat dry with a clean towel.
2. Soften the coconut oil and mix in the tea tree oil. Using a fresh cotton swab, apply the mixture to breakouts as needed no more than twice daily. Let it sit for at least 20 minutes before rinsing off, or leave on.

Borage Oil & Vitamin E

Borage is an easy growing plant from the Mediterranean that has powerful anti-inflammatory properties and contains the beta hydroxyl acid, salicylic acid. Salicylic acid is used in various creams and treatments to fight acne, but I like that it is naturally occurring in high amounts in borage, rather than being mixed with a plethora of other chemicals. Salicylic acid can help penetrate the hair follicle and loosen/aid the shedding of clogged sebum and dead skin cells. Borage does not dry and irritate skin-quite the opposite actually-but still effectively deals with acne. Vitamin E acts as the carrier oil here, which also happens to be quite good for skin. If you don't have vitamin E oil, substitute with ½ tablespoon of jojoba or coconut oil.

You will need...

- 3 drops of borage oil
- 1 teaspoon of pure bottled Vitamin E

Directions

1. Wash face with water and gently pat dry with a clean towel. Mix vitamin E oil with borage oil.
2. Apply to breakouts with a fresh cotton swab before bedtime. Be warned-borage oil doesn't have the best smell in the world!

Green Tea Bags

Studies published in the 2011 and 2012 Journal of Investigative Dermatology showed that green tea has quite an effect on acne when used externally. It contains an antioxidant called epigallocatechin-3-gallate-quite a mouthful I know- which reduces sebum production and inflammation, and also takes a toll on bacterial growth in acne prone skin.

You will need...

-1/2 cup of fresh water

-2 teaspoons loose organic tea leaves OR 1 green tea bag

Directions

1. Wash your face with water and gently pat dry with a clean towel. Place leaves or tea bag in a bowl and cover with boiling water.

2. Steep for 4-5 minutes and then strain out the leaves. Let the water cool to a comfortable temperature, and then apply it to your face. You can put it in a spray bottle and mist yourself, soak a soft cloth in it, or just put the tea bag directly on the problem areas. Let this sit for 5-10 minutes, and then apply a light moisturizer, without rinsing off the tea.

Honey & Oatmeal Face Mask

Honey has antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties, while oatmeal is wonderful when it comes to soothing inflamed and painful acne ridden skin. It may not get rid of your breakouts, but this can help decrease discomfort caused by painfully inflamed bumps, and reduce their glaring redness.

You will need...

- 1 serving oatmeal
- Water
- Two tablespoons of honey

Directions

1. Cook the oatmeal according to directions (with water, not milk), and then stir the honey.
2. While the mixture cools, rinse your face with water and pat dry. The oatmeal really retains heat, so triple check that it's a good temperature.
3. Apply a thin layer. Let this sit for 20-30 minutes. Afterwards rinse it off with warm water and pat dry.

Strawberry Face Mask

Strawberries are high in salicylic acid and easier to get a hold of than borage oil. Their salicylic acid will encourage your skin to shed its cells, open up clogged pores, and neutralize bacteria. This mask will also shrink your pores slightly after it's dried, which will help prevent blackheads in the future. Mix in some honey if you find the mixture to runny for your liking.

You will need...

-3 fresh strawberries, well rinsed

-2 teaspoons of honey (optional)

Directions

1. Wash your face with water and pat dry.
2. Rinse your strawberries and mash them to the point where you can spread them around, but they aren't too watery or runny.
3. Apply to your face and let the mixture sit for 20 minutes. It will be very thin unless you've added the honey. Afterwards rinse off completely with warm water, pat dry, and moisturize if your skin feels dried out.

Acne Scars

As if going through acne wasn't bad enough lingering scars can act as an unwelcome reminder of the uncomfortable struggle you went through. Scars, whether caused by acne or not, are formed in response to an injury, and are made up of the exact same structural protein that (called collagen) that makes up normal skin tissue. However, the patched up injury doesn't ever look quite flawless. This is because the collagen fibers normally lie in a randomized pattern, but scar tissue has cross-linked fibers going in one direction, and these don't blend in or function quite the same way. Collagen is also only half of the story too. The second structural protein needed to keep our skin in shape is called elastin. Elastin is what keeps our skin elastic, and we produce less and less as we age, hence why we get wrinkles. We can create collagen, but we create very little elastin, which is another part of why scars can be harder or stiffer than uninjured skin.

There are two general categories of scars-atrophic and hypertrophic. Hypertrophic is when too much collagen is produced and the scar is raised, while atrophic is the opposite, with depressed scars being caused by a loss of tissue. Most acne scars are atrophic. Broadly speaking, the more severe the inflammation of a breakout the worse the scarring will be. Whiteheads and blackheads are pretty superficial, don't damage deeper skin layers, and won't usually leave scars. Cystic acne, on the other hand, is very capable of leaving scars behind.

Tips & Tidbits

-You may mistake post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (if you have darker skin) or post-inflammatory erythema (seen on lighter skin) for a scar. This is just an acne mark, and the normal darkening or red/purple coloration that occurs as something heals will fade on its own, although this can sometimes take months.

-If you are currently experiencing acne, don't pick or bother it, as this will increase the likelihood and severity of scarring. Deep cystic acne can create scars even if you don't touch it, as it damages deeper layers of skin on its own.

-Using preventative measure to reduce future scarring is usually more effective than trying to treat scars that have already formed.

-Apply sunscreen to any hyperpigmentation that you may have as the result of acne. Doing so will prevent it from getting any darker.

Emu Oil

This isn't a home remedy you are likely to have lying around your kitchen, but it is worth keeping a little bottle on hand! I was turned onto the wonders of emu oil after a rather rash decision to get my belly-button pierced in my teenage years. My body ended up "rejecting" the piercing, and the skin over it thinned until it no longer held it in. This was upsetting on multiple levels, but of course my young mind went to one thing-how badly is this going to scar?! In a panic I went back to the place where I had gotten the piercing and the wonderful shop owner-one of the most knowledgeable people in the industry, and one who holds my deep respect-gave me a tiny bottle of emu oil. He told me to apply only a little bit to the healing scar daily, and it should reduce the appearance. Sure enough, much to my relief, the scar ended up being almost invisible.

Emu oil is the rendered fat of an emu, which are raised on farms in Australia and other various countries for a number of purposes. Its ability to deliver moisture and macro-nutrients deep within the skin does incredible things for it as it heals, and can even help reduce the appearance of older scars as well as fresh ones. Another reason it may be so helpful is because it is an excellent anti-inflammatory agent, and that inflammation is often a sign of how badly a scar is going end up. Make sure you are getting pure emu oil, and make sure it is AEA (American Emu Association) certified. This certification means that it has undergone 3rd party lab analysis and is guaranteed to be pure/uncut, free of bacteria, hormones, pesticides, etc.

You will need...

- 1 bottle of emu oil
- Cotton swabs

Directions

1. Dab a little emu oil onto scars (or potential scars) with a clean cotton swab twice daily. You can use emu oil actively with acne to prevent scarring-it is light, absorbs quickly, and doesn't clog pores.

Lemon Juice

Lemon juice naturally lightens skin. It has been proven to reduce the amount of melanin (pigment) that is produced when applied to your skin regularly, and it also contains citric acid, which is one of the alpha hydroxy acids that have the ability to break the bonds holding dead skin cells to fresh, new ones. This process can help lessen the visibility of a scar or acne mark, especially if applied during the healing process. It is also “phototoxic” which essentially means it will make you more sensitive to the sun, so be sure to put on lots of sunscreen and avoid extended exposure to U.V. rays for 24 hours after application.

You will need...

- 1/2 lemon
- Cotton swabs or cotton balls

Directions

1. Squeeze the juice from a fresh lemon (bottled lemon juice will do in a pinch, but use fresh if possible) and dip a cotton swab or cotton ball in it.
2. After gently washing the affected area, dab on the lemon juice with cotton balls or cotton swabs. This can sting.

Tea Tree Oil & Aloe

Aloe will help with inflammation, soften and rejuvenate your skin, and encourage scars to fade. Mixed with a little bit of tea tree oil, which may help heal skin and keep further infection at bay, and you have a homemade gel that can be quite useful in preventing and/or reducing the appearance of acne scars.

You will need...

- 1/2 tablespoon of aloe vera gel (preferably straight from the plant)
- 1-2 drops of tea tree oil
- Cotton swabs or cotton balls

Directions

1. If you have an aloe plant, collect the sap from it, if not make sure you are buying good quality aloe vera gel (it will be clear, not green.)
2. Mix tea tree oil into the aloe vera gel.
3. Use a cotton swab or cotton balls to apply to acne/scars once or twice daily. If you have sensitive skin, start with the latter application and bump up to twice a day once you know you will not have an adverse reaction.

Athlete's Foot

Athlete's foot, technically known as tinea pedis, is a common and contagious skin infection caused by various forms of fungi. It is most commonly transferred in wet places where people are walking barefoot, such as the slippery floors in the public showers at the pool (I am trying not shudder as I write that) and it needs a warm moist environment to thrive. For this reason, shoes are a big problem when it comes to athlete's foot. The enclosed and often times moist environment that they create around the foot is just the thing to convince fungi that this place is home, and it would love to stay, thank you very much. Unfortunately for fungi, the dry, flaking, peeling skin and potentially itchy, painful, blisters that can result from its presence means you aren't going to put up with any nonsense.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Before using any of the below treatments, rinse your feet with warm water and pat completely dry with a clean towel. This will get any grime or sweat off that may make it harder for the remedies to do their job.

-Wear open toed shoes or go barefoot as much as possible. This allows air to circulate around the foot and keep it dry, thus preventing the further incubation of fungi.

-Wear sandals in public areas such as the pool, showers at the gym, etc.

-Sprinkle baking soda in your shoes to make the environment more unpleasant for the fungi. This will also help keep your feet dry and absorb odor.

Garlic & Apple Cider Vinegar

I know-when you're trying to battle foot odor, garlic and vinegar sound downright awful. However, apple cider vinegar is mildly acidic, and will make quite an unpleasant living arrangement for the fungi, and the garlic itself has some handy antifungal properties that may also help shorten the duration of the condition. Just remember that the smell of garlic and vinegar will go away on their own, but the fungi won't!

You will need...

- 1 clove of garlic
- 1-2 teaspoons of apple cider vinegar
- Cotton balls or cotton swabs

Directions

1. Mash up a clove of garlic and stir it into apple cider vinegar. Using cotton balls or cotton swabs dab onto affected areas and between the toes. Repeat twice daily.

Salt, Lemon & Baking Soda

Lemon, with its fresh citrus smell, will help with any residual foot odor you may be experiencing, and will possibly ward off fungi, due to its acidity. Salt can help discourage other invaders, such as bacteria, that can cause secondary infections if you have cracked skin. On top of that, it will also have a drying effect. Remember that feeling of dried salt water on your skin after swimming in the ocean? Applying baking soda afterwards will keep your feet dry, help absorb odor, and reduce the itching and pain. If you have raw skin, this can sting at first.

You will need...

-2 cups of fresh warm water

-Juice from 2 lemons OR ½ cup of bottled lemon juice

-2 tablespoons of sea salt

-1 tablespoon of baking soda

Directions

1. Mix the lemon juice into the water and stir in the salt.

2. Soak your feet in the mixture for 10 minutes 2-3 times daily, pat dry with a clean towel and dust your feet with baking soda afterwards.

Plain Yogurt

Yogurt containing live acidophilus bacteria is a great weapon to fight athlete's foot, as it can help squash the existence of the fungus that's causing this whole mess to begin with. Just make sure that the yogurt really does contain probiotics, and that it isn't flavored (not even vanilla.)

You will need...

- Plain yogurt
- Cotton swabs or cotton balls

Directions

1. Apply a thin layer of plain yogurt to your feet with cotton balls, using cotton swabs to get between toes.
2. Let dry and then rinse with cold water. Pat dry and apply baking soda between toes if needed.

Chapped Lips

This winter got to record breaking freezing temperatures where I live, and with that cold came record breaking dryness. As a result I found myself applying moisturizer to my lips quite often, but luckily, lip balm is one of the easiest things to make at home.

I would like to say your lips cannot truly get “addicted” to lip balm. It is possible for you to get psychologically addicted to it, and that does happen, but as far as all of that stuff that says you can get physically dependent, it has no real basis. Those claims are probably founded on the fact that some forms of lip balm contain ingredients that ultimately dry your lips out so you buy or use more. Those main culprits are menthol, camphor and phenol, which feel cooling at first, but do not do anything to truly soothe lips. There is also OL, which is basically alcohol, and salicylic acid, which can help dead skin flake off (but really just makes lips peel more.) If you make your own lip balm, you will find yourself applying it much less often as it actually sinks in and moisturizes, rather than simply forming a barrier that doesn’t let moisture in, and dries off quickly.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- If you don’t have lip balm tins or tubes, repurpose another kind of tin (mint tins work great!)

- Always read ingredient labels first if you are buying lip balm, and check for the menthol, phenol, camphor, OL, and/or salicylic acid.

- Put sunscreen on your lips, or use SPF lip balm if you plan on going out in the sun a lot. Your lips have no pigment, and are susceptible to drying out.

- Do use lip balm in moderation, there is always too much of a good thing.

- Apply your lip balm before bed. If you sleep with your mouth open you will dry out your lips. It also gives it a chance to sink in without you licking it off, chewing on your lip, or reapplying compulsively.

Almond Oil & Shea Butter

- Feel free to add ¼ teaspoon of beeswax to firm this up if you prefer a more solid balm.

Basic Lip Balm

- Do not roll up the lip balm until it has cooled completely.

- Make sure you fill your tubes or tins on a baking sheet covered in aluminum foil. It’s easy to drip or spill!

Basic Lip Balm

This is a basic lip balm recipe that contains beeswax, jojoba oil, coconut oil, shea butter, and peppermint essential oil. Shea butter and jojoba oil are wonderful healing, protecting, and deeply nourishing ingredients. Coconut oil is the star moisturizer. It does not smother and suffocate skin; rather it sinks in, its fatty acids holding onto moisture and making your lips soft and smooth. It will also reinforce the skin's lipid (fat) layer and promote hydration. The beeswax can act as an emollient (moisturizer) and protect your lips from the elements, but mostly it is what gives your balm its body and holds everything together. The peppermint essential oil is just your classic lip balm smell and taste. Yes, peppermint contains menthol, but it is NOT the same as the concentrated or high amounts of menthol found in many brands of lip balm. This may feel more "slick" than some store bought balm at first but that goes away quickly as it sinks in and moisturizes!

You will need...

- 1 tablespoon of grated beeswax or beeswax pastilles
- 1 tablespoon of coconut oil
- 1 tablespoon of jojoba oil
- 1 tablespoon of shea butter
- 5 drops of peppermint oil

Directions

1. In a double boiler melt your beeswax, coconut oil, and jojoba oil.
2. Remove from the heat and stir in the shea butter, followed by the peppermint oil.
3. Carefully-an eyedropper or pipette is helpful here-add the mixture into your tubes or tins. Cap gently and let them cool.

Almond Oil & Shea Butter

This quick little concoction is a “faux balm” as I like to call it. Only two ingredients, it’s easy to make in a pinch if you don’t have time to mix up something else or lack the ingredients. The almond oil is wonderfully soothing and moisturizing, while the shea butter rejuvenates dry skin and protects it from dry air and chilly wind (but it doesn’t smother it!) This is a small batch fills about one small balm tin.

You will need...

-1 round tablespoon of shea butter

-1 scant tablespoon of sweet almond oil OR avocado oil

-Tins

Directions

1. In a double boiler melt the shea butter and almond oil together. Pour into tins and tuck away to use whenever you need it!

Infused Oil Salve

Infusing oil with herbs is a great way to make an all-natural moisturizer. Salve is softer than lip balm as it has a much higher oil to beeswax ratio. It provides a little different moisturizing experience, and it's easy to make. Because of the fresh lemon peels used, this will keep for 1-2 weeks. You can also add in lemon essential oil in place of the lemon peels, in which case it will last as long as the oil you used.

You will need...

- Fresh lemon peels from 2 lemons
- 1 teaspoon dried chamomile flowers
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1/2 teaspoon of beeswax

Directions

1. Put your oil, chamomile flowers, and lemon peels in a double boiler. Heat over the lowest possible heat setting for 3-4 hours and strain.
2. Pour the oil back into the double boiler and melt in the beeswax. Store in airtight jars or containers out of direct sunlight.

Cold Sores

You're about to give a public speech when it hits. Or maybe it's prom night. Or you're going on a first date. Or you end up getting filmed in the background of an academy award winning motion picture. Whatever it is, cold sores always show up at the most inconvenient times. Caused by the herpes simplex virus, cold sores are small, fluid filled lesions that generally pop up on or around your lips. These blisters will cluster together and, after breaking, form a painful crust.

Cold sores are contagious, and unfortunately, they will never totally go away. Because they are a virus, there is no cure. The virus lies dormant until it is triggered by something (e.g. stress or diet) and it rears its ugly head. They can be transferred by something as benign as sharing eating utensils, or a water bottle. That being said, you can do a number of things to help relieve the pain, shorten the timespan they affect you, and even prevent them.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-One of the most important things you can do for a cold sore is either keep it dry, or keep it moist. Experiment, and whichever one brings you the most relief, roll with it. Some people find relief in moisture as the blister's crust doesn't crack as easily, while others find that drying out the sore makes it go away faster.

-A simple remedy-ice it! The ice works two-fold, first by numbing the irritated area, and second by helping tamp down the inflammation. If dryness bothers you, pat any water away after you remove the ice and apply a dab of neutral moisturizer.

-Get rid of your toothbrush, as they often carry the virus that hangs out so close to the mouth. If you keep reusing your toothbrush you run the risk of triggering an outbreak.

-Keep a diary of outbreaks and anything you are eating/drinking/doing at the time. It can help you learn what to do in the future to prevent outbreaks.

-Start using a remedy the moment you feel a cold sore coming on.

Alternative Moisturizer

-If you decide to use coconut oil, use only 5 tablespoons of beeswax, since coconut oil is solid at room temperature.

Witch Hazel & Tea Tree Oil Balm

Witch hazel is an astringent, which means it will pull fluid from the cold sore, and will also help keep further infection from setting in, especially if you've picked at it. Tea tree oil will also dry it out, and its antimicrobial properties can't hurt the healing time. This recipe calls for making a fairly solid balm, but you can also just mix the witch hazel, tea tree oil, and a little bit of carrier oil and apply that directly to the sore. The nice thing about the balm is that you get a little bit of protection in addition to the "drying" action. Don't be alarmed at the strong odor (tea tree oil has a very distinct smell), or the fact that it may form tiny bubbles when you are making it.

You will need...

- 1 tablespoon +1/2 teaspoon of beeswax
- 1 teaspoon of witch hazel
- 5 drops of tea tree essential oil
- 1 tablespoon of any liquid oil
- Cotton balls or cotton swabs

Directions

1. In a double boiler melt the beeswax and then turn off the heat. The witch hazel contains alcohol so it is best not added when there is open flame.
2. Working quickly so the beeswax doesn't solidify, mix in the witch hazel and tea tree oil. Pour into a little tin and keep handy for outbreaks, dabbing a little on the sore as needed. Make sure to wash your hand afterwards, otherwise you could possibly contaminate the tin. Optimally you should keep fresh cotton swabs on hand so you don't have to touch the balm, or your sore, directly.

Vanilla Extract

Vanilla extract, being alcohol based, is thought to make a less-friendly environment for the virus, and is quite popular because of its scrumptious smell. Make sure you have real vanilla extract.

You will need...

- Vanilla extract
- Cotton balls or cotton swabs

Directions

1. Up to 3 times a day, soak a cotton ball or cotton swab in vanilla extract and dab it onto the cold sore.

Alternative Moisturizer

If you find that keeping the cold sore moist helps, but want to steer clear of petroleum products, making your own simple salve is as easy as pie. Actually, making pie can be tricky at times, so this is even easier.

You will need...

- 10 tablespoons of any liquid oil
- 1-2 tablespoons of beeswax
- Cotton swabs
- A little jar for storage

Directions

1. In a double boiler melt beeswax with oil thoroughly before pouring into a tin and letting it cool completely.
2. Apply as needed for comfort. Try not to slather it on, but apply a thin layer. Ideally use a clean cotton swab to apply to the sore.

Dandruff

Our cells are forever regenerating themselves. As new skin cells appear, the old/dead ones are pushed towards the surface of the scalp before sloughing off. Contrary to popular belief, those little white flakes on your shoulders are not *technically* dandruff, but the result of a dry scalp. Dandruff is a condition in which people's skin cells mature or flake off too rapidly, which means they shed in roughly 2-7 days, rather than the month it takes people without dandruff. The result is oily, sometimes yellowish clumps of skin coming off in large flakes, which leave the scalp sore and irritated. The skin on the scalp may or may not be red and slightly inflamed as well. True dandruff can be rooted in a number of causes, but is most commonly caused by oil build up and a yeast-like fungus called *Malassezia*. *Malassezia* is found naturally on the scalp but can be overabundant on the scalps of people with dandruff. The fungus feeds on oil, causing the greasy flakes characteristic of dandruff.

It's important to know that dandruff is different than dry scalp because it changes how you should go about treating it. While commercials show little white flakes and tout "dandruff shampoo" they're not really showing dandruff. To work with dandruff, you do not want to avoid shampooing or worry about drying out you scalp. Contrary, you should be working to relieve the build-up of oil and skin (usually by shampooing), making the scalp comfortable, and reducing a possible overabundance of yeast.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Switch up shampoos. Your skin can become 'resistant' or accustomed to one particular kind, and you may find it less effective than before.

-Lather, rinse, repeat. This is something you really **SHOULD** do if you have dandruff. Chances are you have a good build-up of stuff on your scalp, and you need to get that cleared away. Shampoo once to get through the extra stuff, and then shampoo again. By doing this you allow the shampoo to actually penetrate the scalp and do its job, rather than just sit on top.

Tea Tree Oil & Witch Hazel Spray

This is a wonderful combination of ingredients. Witch hazel is wonderfully soothing and helps itchy, irritated skin, which you probably have if you have dandruff. Tea tree has fungicidal properties to reduce any overabundance of fungus if that is contributing to your dandruff. The jojoba oil is soothing and mimics the natural sebum produced by your scalp so you don't completely dry it out. It is needed to act as a carrier for the tea tree oil.

You will need...

- 20 drops of tea tree oil
- 1 cup of warm water
- 2 tablespoons of witch hazel
- 1/2 tablespoon of jojoba oil
- A spray bottle

Directions

1. Add tea tree oil to the jojoba oil and witch hazel.
2. Add this mixture to 1 cup of warm in spray bottle. Shake well, spritz your hair/scalp, and massage in well. Pat dry, but don't rinse out. Repeat 1-2 times daily as needed.

Baking Soda Shampoo

If your scalp is just excited about life and has overactive fungi, and over active oil glands, baking soda can help balance things out. The fine granules that make up the baking soda are mildly abrasive, and when massaged in well, will help slough off built up skin cells. Being alkaline, it will also get rid of oil build up. Baking soda can be used alone, or you can add it to your own shampoo. If you use the baking soda alone, your hair may feel dry at first, but oil production usually balances out after a few weeks.

You will need...

-1/4 cup of baking soda

-A shaker

Directions

1. Wet hair thoroughly and apply baking soda.

2. Massage in well with fingertips, and then rinse. If you are using the baking soda on its own, a shaker (like the kind used for parmesan) can be useful in distributing the powder.

Lemon & Salt

The salt here provides an abrasive texture that will loosen dead, built up skin cells, while the lemons acidity can help restore the pH of your scalp and lessen the severity of the dandruff. If your skin is raw or sore, this will sting. This will also help clear the scalp so the shampoo can really sink in and do its work.

You will need...

- 2 tablespoons of lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon of coarse sea salt
- A small bowl

Directions

1. Mix lemon juice with coarse sea salt.
2. Rub into scalp, using small circular motions to massage it in thoroughly. Rinse, and then follow with shampoo as usual.

Dry Hair

Dry hair, not to be confused with dry scalp or dandruff, is a frustrating problem to try and solve. Hair is technically dead, but it can still lose moisture, get dull, break, and generally look lifeless. Remind yourself that shampoos and conditioners that advertise making your hair healthy can't really make it healthy. It's dead. It can, however, make hair look what we perceive as "healthy", which is what I am referring to when I use the word here. I covered how a strand of hair is structured in the conditioner chapter, so I won't go over it in as much detail, but it's relevant here as well. Basically there's 3 parts-the cortex, the cuticle, and the medulla. To focus on dry hair, you focus mainly on the cuticle, which protects the cortex by surrounding it with overlapping hard plates of protein, layered like roof shingles. When the cuticle becomes disrupted, and the plates break or get bent or out of shape, the appearance of the hair becomes less appealing. The cuticle also helps retain moisture, so if it's damaged, your hair won't retain its luster.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Some of the main culprits that dry out hair are heat treatments, such as blow drying, straightening, and curling, using harsh dyes or sprays, weather, and a lack of sebum production. Sebum is the natural oil our scalp produces and is the ultimate conditioner. It keeps hair supple, elastic, and looking lively. You may also have more porous cuticles, which means they don't lie flat and lock in moisture like they should.

-Focus on the ends of your hair. Sebum will moisturize hair closer to the scalp, but won't travel far enough down the shaft to moisturize the ends, making them prone to dryness and breakage.

-Protein treatments work by temporarily patching the gaps where cuticles have broken off or are lifted, essentially acting as a substitute. Why protein? Hair is made primarily of proteins. There are natural protein treatments, and while they are more than worth a shot, do not expect them to work in the same way that hydrolyzed protein used in commercial protein treatments do.

Jogoba Oil

-If you have severely dry or damaged hair, you can apply it to your scalp and hair. If you are going to do this, rub it in well, and wrap your head in a towel for 30 minutes. Rinse with cool water and a mild shampoo. My hair is personally too thin to do this without ending up looking like I slept in an oil slick, so I stick to applying it to my ends.

Jojoba Oil

Jojoba oil is not really an oil, it's a "liquid wax", and is less greasy than true oils. It is one of my favorite things to turn to when it comes to anything skin or hair related, and has one characteristic that makes it extra special- it is considered the oil that most closely resembles human sebum. Sebum is naturally produced by sebaceous glands in different parts of the body, including the scalp. It is our natural conditioner, keeping hair looking healthy and maintaining its elasticity. Look for organic, unrefined jojoba oil. Jojoba oil will naturally be a clear yellow/golden color, and should say "cold pressed" on the bottle somewhere. If you get refined jojoba oil it has been chemically extracted with a solvent, and we want to avoid that.

You will need...

- Unrefined jojoba oil
- A towel

Directions

1. Pour a pea sized amount onto your fingertips and rub into the ends of damp hair. You can leave it in, or rinse some of it out with cool water after it has sat for 5-10 minutes

Honey & Jojoba Oil

Honey is a humectant, which means it attracts moisture and holds it in. Combined with jojoba oil, this can be a double-whammy moisturizer for thirsty hair.

You will need...

- 1 teaspoon of raw organic honey
- 1 tablespoon of jojoba oil
- A small bowl

Directions

1. Stir the honey into the jojoba oil and use a small amount to rub into the lower half of your hair shaft/ends. Let it sit for 10-15 minutes before rinsing with cool water. You can make a larger amount and apply to scalp if needed, but like the plain jojoba oil, this may end up making your hair feel a little too moisturized.

Water It

Your hair is like a glorious flower that deserves to bloom in all its glory, not dry up and crisp like a tulip in the middle of the desert. And just like a flower, you need to water it. Water is the ultimate moisturizer-and no, it will not dry your hair out even more. Hair is different than skin! There is one very important thing to remember-sealing. Sealing the water in with an oil will retain the moisture for longer. Some people can get away with misting several times a day with just an essential oil and water, but I apply a little jojoba afterwards just in case.

You will need...

- Water
- A spray bottle with a fine mist setting
- Essential oil of choice
- Jojoba oil (optional)

Directions

1. Add a drop of essential oil to a spray bottle full of water. Give it a good shake, and mist hair from a distance 2-3 times throughout the day. Focus on ends. Afterwards, apply a minimal amount of jojoba to ends of hair to seal with the water.

Dry Scalp

Dry scalp is not dandruff. Most often caused by changes in weather (dropping temperatures accompanied by drier air and indoor heating) it manifests as little white flakes accompanied by itchiness. Uncomfortable and a cause of insecurity for many people, it's not as difficult to get rid of as it seems. Without turning to heavy-duty chemical treatments purchased in stores, there are solid options for you to try at home to get your scalp moisturized and flake-free in no time.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Place humidifiers around the house, especially in the wintertime.
- Try not to go overboard with the heating, or air conditioning, as both of these things can dry out your scalp, or your skin in general.
- Stick to blow drying the ends of your hair, rather than your scalp.

Coconut Oil Treatment

-You can scoop up a bit of solid or slightly softened coconut oil and work this into your scalp instead of melting it completely. This may make the application easier. It has a low melting point, and should sink right in.

Sesame Oil Treatment

Full of fatty acids (linoleic, palmitic, oleic, and stearic) sesame oil is a fantastic emollient, softening and moisturizing skin, as well as forming a barrier that locks moisture in. The jasmine essential oil added can help relieve the itchiness that comes along with dryness, as well as add a pleasant aroma.

You will need...

- 1/4-1/2 cup of sesame oil
- 1-2 drops of jasmine oil
- A spray bottle (optional)
- A towel (optional)

Directions

1. Rinse your hair out with plain water, massaging your scalp a bit with your fingers.
2. Heat sesame oil immediately afterwards, and add in the jasmine oil.
3. Massage the oil into your scalp in a circular motion, rubbing in well. There's no need to rub it into your hair, just your scalp.
4. Wrap your head in a warmed towel (soaked in hot water and then wrung out, or fresh from the dryer) and then let it sit. Rinse your hair afterwards with a tiny bit of shampoo to get out any excess oil if needed.

Coconut Oil Treatment

Coconut oil is a wonderful, wonderful, thing when it comes to any issues with dryness. All natural, it absorbs slowly into the scalp and thoroughly moisturizes it, unlike many products that are water based and dry off quickly. It is chock full of wonderful medium chain saturated fatty acids (lauric, capric, caproic, caprylic, myristic, and palmitic) and vitamin E. A study published in 2004 in Dermatitis showed that in addition to moisturizing, coconut oil actually increased the level of lipids (fats) found on the surface of the skin, which made it appear more hydrated and healthy.

You will need...

- 1/4-1/2 cup of coconut oil
- A bowl
- A towel

Directions

1. Rinse your hair with water, massaging your scalp some with your fingers.
2. Warm the coconut oil until liquid (or mostly liquid) and massage the coconut oil thoroughly into your scalp. Wrap your head in a warm towel, and let it sit for 10-15 minutes. Rinse with a little shampoo to get out any excess oil if needed.

Jojoba Oil Treatment

Sebum is the oil naturally produced by our bodies that keeps skin moisturized and supple, and our hair healthy. Too much of it is the cause for oily skin or greasy hair, but if you have dry scalp, chances are you aren't making enough sebum. Jojoba oil is a great remedy for this since it is actually one of (if not the) closest oil to matching the sebum we produce naturally. By using it to moisturize your scalp, you are mimicking nature's way of keeping your skin flake-free and comfortable. Lavender essential oil is used here to help relieve itchiness.

You will need...

- 4 tablespoons of jojoba oil
- Several drops of lavender essential oil
- A towel

Directions

1. Rinse your hair with plain water, massaging your scalp with your fingertips.
2. Heat jojoba oil to a comfortable temperature and mix in a few drops of lavender essential oil. Massage thoroughly into your scalp.
3. Wrap your head in a warm towel and let sit for 10-15 minutes, and then rinse out with a little shampoo if needed.

Dry Skin

Our skin is our body's first line of defense against harsh elements, germs, chemicals, and any other external threats. It is the largest organ and quite impressive in how it functions, but it is not immune to "flaws", the most common of which may be getting dry. Nobody likes dry skin. To understand how to deal with dry skin, it's important to understand how skin works in the first place. Even though dry skin is common, not many people really know what's going on when they get crispy.

Skin is made up of countless little cells that are shaped differently and perform different jobs. The dermis is the deeper layers of skin that gives it its structure, while the epidermis is the outer layer of skin that we see.

Deep down cells are growing and reproducing, which push older cells to the stratum corneum (a fancy way of saying the skin's surface.) As they near the surface their cell structure changes. By the time they reach the stratum corneum they are filled with water-retaining proteins, and protected by a protein envelope and lipids (fats.) These cells are, for all intents and purposes, dead. They lack a nucleus and true cell structure. They are now your shield, stacked about 10-30 layers deep, and become the natural water-retaining barrier of the skin (just the barrier in general really.)

Free amino acids and several other naturally occurring chemicals, found in the stratum corneum, are your natural moisturizing factors. Without them, your skin would be dry, brittle, and easily cracked! Your natural moisturizing factors are hydroscopic, meaning they attract and hold water, keeping your skin moist and supple. But what's keeping your moisturizing friends from escaping? Lipids, i.e. fats or fatty acids, that fill the spaces between the cells of the stratum corneum. These special lipids are hydrophilic, meaning they attract water, and are stacked in such a way that your natural moisturizing factors can't leak out of the surface of the skin. They keep everything where it's supposed be-they're the type A part of your skin, if you will.

Water needs to be retained in our skin. Without it skin wouldn't be pliable, and we would run into some serious problems. The stratum corneum gets water from the deeper layers of the dermis, and from the environment. As great as it is, a number of factors can still throw the whole system explained above out of balance, and cause your skin to lose moisture. Damaging culprits can include soap, certain chemicals in cosmetics, harsh weather, low humidity, and (ironically) too much water. The damage from an irritant result's in the stratum corneum struggling to retain water, your protective barrier getting denatured- i.e. disorganized-and your skin ultimately drying out.

When your skin does become damaged and dry it can use a little help from outside moisturizers. These moisturizers are defined as chemicals that increase the water content of the stratum corneum, and are generally categorized as occlusive and humectant agents. Occlusive agents form a barrier that will literally block the loss of water from the skin and can help restore fats to the lipid barrier (examples of include oils and beeswax.) Humectants attract water to the skin, sometimes from the environment, but mostly from the deeper levels of the dermis. This normalizes your cell's functions and your skin becomes more resistant to drying out (one example of a humectant is aloe vera gel.) There are plenty of natural occlusive and humectant agents out there that you can use to retain and re-moisturize your lovely skin, and they really aren't that exotic.

Ok, now that you've made it through that, let's look at some natural ways to restore balance to your lovely stratum corneum, without any counterproductive harsh ingredients.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Active and inactive: You see these words a lot. Active ingredients are literally attracting water and moisturizing. They are improving softness, as well as filling in and smoothing over the space between dried out skin cells. Inactive ingredients stabilize, emulsify, and disperse ingredients to make something that makes a pretty product customers are happy with. Without an emulsifying agent, for example, your light and creamy lotion would separate into water and oil and make a mess.

-If you are washing your hands a lot or doing a lot of dishes, switch to a mild soap that is less likely to strip your skin of beneficial oils and upset your skin cells.

-If you are buying a moisturizer, know that the terms “anti-aging” “hypoallergenic,” “dermatologist tested” and “sensitive skin” can be things to use as guidelines, but don’t necessarily mean anything (explained below.)

-Anti-aging products are mostly empty promises-you can put anti-aging on a label if you simply include sunscreen. Nothing will reverse the fact that you and your skin are aging. It is a natural process, and it’s perfectly fine to look older. Some anti-aging products focus on minimizing the signs of aging with more than just sunscreen. Some do have some basis, but a lot of it is a marketing ploy. Before getting suckered into an expensive product, do your research.

-Hypoallergenic means that the product may have reduced fragrance or preservatives, but the interpretation of the term can vary greatly from product to product.

-Dermatologist tested isn’t something to rely on-it can be used if literally one dermatologist “tested” it. A dermatologist could be standing in the loo at a restaurant, put a dab of this new lotion on quick after washing their hands, and call it dermatologist tested.

-Sensitive skin formulas do not have a definition and are subject to variation. The product may have reduced irritants like fragrance or preservatives.

-Keep the heat and/or air conditioning to a minimum. Both suck moisture out of the air and can seriously dry out your skin.

-Even if you have oily skin, it still needs to be moisturized, especially if you are using products that dry the oil. Look for lighter moisturizers that are less heavy and greasy (e.g. more humectants and less occlusive agents.)

Sandalwood Salve

This salve contains jojoba oil, beeswax, and sandalwood essential oil. Jojoba oil can be pricey, but it is one of the oils that most closely matches the sebum (oil) your skin produces naturally, and that makes it invaluable in my opinion. Sandalwood has a wonderful soothing effect on dry skin. Beeswax is an occlusive, which means it will help form a barrier that keeps moisture from evaporating too rapidly. Feel free to up the amount of beeswax and lessen the oil in equal amounts if you want a firmer salve.

You will need...

-9-10 tablespoons of jojoba oil

-1-2 tablespoons of beeswax

-5-10 drops of sandalwood essential oil

Directions

1. In a double boiler melt beeswax and jojoba oil together.

2. Turn off the heat and stir in 5-10 drops of sandalwood essential oil and transfer to an airtight jar. Keep in a cool dark place out of direct sunlight.

Whipped Lavender Shea Butter

The shea and coconut oil are “active” agents in this recipe. The coconut oil is particularly wonderful for helping repair the lipid barrier, as it is naturally full of fatty acids, while the shea is deeply nourishing to the dry cells in the stratum corneum. Lavender is just an overall soothing essential oil, both to your dry skin and your mind.

You will need...

- 3 tablespoons of shea butter
- 2 tablespoons of coconut oil
- 2 ¼ teaspoons cornstarch
- 5 drops of lavender essential oil

Directions

1. In a double boiler, melt coconut oil thoroughly, and remove from heat. Quickly stir in the shea butter until it is completely melted.
2. Pour this mixture into a large metal bowl and pop it in the freezer for 10-15 minutes, checking on it after 5 minutes or so. A thick white crust should be forming. It is ready to take out when a crust has formed across almost the entire surface, but the oil beneath it is still loose.
3. Using an immersion blender, begin to whip the shea coconut mixture. After about 3 minutes add in the cornstarch a little bit at a time.
4. Continue to whip until you have reached the consistency you want. It will solidify more after it has sat out for a few hours. I usually whip mine for 8-10 minutes. When you are ready, add in the essential oils.
5. Store in an airtight container in a cool, dark, place for up to 5 months. Apply as needed, keeping in mind that this is an extremely rich body butter and you won't need all that much!

Sweet Almond Oil & Coconut Oil

You can use either of these oils on their own, but combined they make a great occlusive moisturizer, helping to hold moisture in and prevent dryness. This mixture can seem oily at first, as many occlusive agents do, but it will absorb. This is great for using in a dry environment or if you need heat/air conditioning a lot in your home, as they will keep in what little moisture your skin has naturally.

You will need...

- 2 ¼ teaspoons sweet almond oil
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- 2 teaspoons of beeswax (optional)
- Essential oil (optional)

Directions

1. In a double boiler combine sweet almond oil and coconut oil until melted and blended thoroughly.
2. Store in a small airtight container out of direct sunlight and apply sparingly, as needed, to dry skin.

Ingrown Toenail

Ingrown toenails can be quite painful, but the good news is they generally go away on their own, as long as they don't get infected. They're pretty straight forward to deal with, and are most often caused by cutting your nails too short, or unevenly, as a result of trauma (e.g dropping something on your foot) or if your toenails tend to grow in a more exaggerated curved angle. Sometimes they happen when your toenail is minding its own business and an excess of skin grows over the nail. They usually affect the big toe.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-If you have a tendency to get ingrown toenails wear looser fitting shoes. Tight fitting shoes that squeeze your toes together can make an ingrown toenail more uncomfortable than it already is. Interestingly, people who are habitually barefoot rarely, if ever, get ingrown toenail.

-Some people advise against clipping the nail, while others do so whenever they get affected. If you do decide to trim it, it is best done in the very beginning. Any later and it becomes too painful and risky. As soon as you feel the pressure of the nail turning inwards, soak the nail to soften it, and then fit the corner of a clean clipper blade under the edge and trim it off.

-Trim your nails evenly. If you trim your nails with rounded edges, or further down on the sides than the top, you are creating the perfect situation for an ingrown toenail. Cut straight across the nail. If the edges are pointy, file them just barely to keep them from snagging on socks.

Vinegar Soak

Not only does this help soften the nail, the acidity of the vinegar can help ward off potential infection. This also helps relieve the overall pressure and discomfort being caused by the nail.

You will need...

-1/2 cup of white distilled vinegar

-Fresh warm water

-A bowl or basin to soak your foot in

Directions

1. Fill a basin or bowl with fresh warm water and add the white distilled vinegar to it.

2. Soak the affected foot for 15 minutes twice daily. After the first soak, while the nail is still soft, you may check and see if you can trim back the part that is turning inwards. Pat dry.

Re-Route with Floss

To get your nail growing back on track, try inserting a piece of clean floss or cotton underneath the curved edge. This gently encourages it to grow up and out rather than downwards and into your skin. It sounds uncomfortable, which it can be initially, but the sense of relief from the pressure is fairly immediate. Make sure you use plain old floss-not the minty or flavored kind-and change this at least once daily.

You will need...

- A piece of plain dental floss or cotton
- Vinegar soak (see remedy #1)

Directions

1. Soak your foot in the vinegar bath until the nail is softened. Gently slide a piece of plain floss or cotton under the nail to lift it out of the skin. Change the packing daily.

Tea Tree & Baking Soda Dip

Tea tree essential oil will help ward off infection as your nail heals, while the baking soda will also fight off bacteria. Try using this in conjunction with the above remedies.

You will need...

- 3-5 drops of tea tree essential oil
- 1/4 teaspoon grapeseed oil
- 1 tablespoon of baking soda
- Vinegar

Directions

1. Rinse your foot in warm water and pat dry. Stir the tea tree oil into the grapeseed oil, and then mix in the baking soda.
2. Apply the mixture to the toenail. Let this sit for 15 minutes, and then dip your nail in diluted white vinegar and pat dry.

Oily Skin

If you struggle with oily skin, you are probably frustrated. You may have tried everything under the sun to get rid of that sheen on your face, but to avail. This is because there really isn't anything you can do to get rid of oily skin for good. It lies woven into your genetic make-up, something you have as much control over as the color of your eyes, or how curly your hair is.

Within our skin lies microscopic glands called sebaceous glands. These glands produce sebum, an oily/waxy substance that lubricates, protects, and waterproofs our skin. Sebum is, in essence, oil. It is the oil that you try so hard to get rid of, but without it, you would be a total mess. Come puberty male sex hormones, collectively known as androgens, spike. This happens in both girls and boys, and the result is that our sebaceous glands kick into gear, stimulated by androgens to produce more and more sebum. Normally the sebum would flush out our pores and keep skin healthy, but too much will clog them, leading to acne-hence bad acne in teenage years-and/or oily, shiny skin.

People who have chronically oily skin just have it in their genes to be more sensitive to androgen, to make more sebum. Larger pores generally equate to oily skin as well, as more sebum is able to be released. Just because you can't kick the oil forever, doesn't mean there aren't things that you can do to help manage it, but you should understand a few misconceptions about clearing up your skin first (read tips.) The silver lining to having oily skin is that you won't show your age as much as those without, because all that sebum means you will have supple skin that wrinkles less, and looks youthful.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-It is a myth that you should wash your face often if you have oily skin, or that you should use a harsher scrub to get rid of it. The more you wash your face, the more oil you are stripping away, and the more you are drying your skin out. In order to compensate for this your sebaceous glands kick into high gear and pump out more sebum.

-You do still need moisturize if you have oily skin. You just need to find the right one that works for you. After your wash your face, applying a light moisturizer is a good way to balance out the loss of oil.

-Greasy food does not equate to greasy skin.

-Pat your face dry, don't rub vigorously. And do not to rub at your face or touch with your hands excessively. This will only exacerbate the problem.

Jojoba Oil

-This is great for combination skin as well-combination skin meaning you have both dry and oily skin.

Lemon & Aloe

Lemon is an astringent, which means it causes contraction of tissues, in this of case your skin and pores. Reducing the size of your pores will reduce the amount of sebum coming out of them, and your face ends up less oily. The aloe gel you should use in this recipe is the all-natural kind, not the green gel you usually see, but clear. If the lemon dries your skin out, the aloe helps bring back light, balanced moisture. Note that lemon juice can lighten skin-so if you have freckles be aware of this. It will also make you more sensitive to the sun, so avoid extended exposure to U.V. rays for 24 hours after application, or apply extra sunscreen.

You will need...

- 1 teaspoon of fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon of aloe vera
- Cotton balls or cotton pads

Directions

1. Mix lemon juice and aloe thoroughly and then soak cotton balls in the mixture.
2. Apply to your face, paying specific attention to your T-zone (forehead, and either side of your nose, where there is a high concentration of sebum producing glands.) Let the mixture dry. You can then leave it on, or if you have more sensitive skin, rinse off gently with just water and pat your face dry, and apply pure aloe or a light moisturizer.

Sugar & Aloe Exfoliating Scrub

Oily skin can be more prone to building up dead, greasy, skin cells, and can use a hand sloughing them off. A sugar exfoliating scrub is simple but should only be done once a week, otherwise it will strip too much oil and dry out your skin. You can add it to your favorite moisturizer if you like, but I usually mix it with aloe vera gel so I don't irritate my skin too much.

You will need...

-1 tablespoon of white or brown sugar

-Aloe vera gel

Directions

1. Place sugar in a bowl and add just enough aloe to hold it together.
2. Scoop into your palms and scrub your face (don't be too vigorous) to loosen and shed all those built up oily skin cells. Rinse your face gently with warm water afterwards.

Jojoba Oil

Jojoba is one of my favorite natural moisturizers, whether you have dry skin, or oily skin. If you are quaking at the thought of putting oil on your already oily skin, that's perfectly normal, but before you ignore this remedy, take into account two things. First, jojoba is not technically an oil, it is a liquid wax. This doesn't change its consistency, but may bring you some peace of mind. Second, it is the closest in chemical and molecular make up to the sebum your own body produces. By applying jojoba as a moisturizer, it balances out the amount of sebum your skin perceives as necessary to generate. The result is soft, healthy, just-right skin.

You will need...

-Jojoba Oil

Directions

1. Rinse your face with warm water and pat dry.
2. Apply a small bit of jojoba oil to clean fingers and rub gently into your skin. You will need less than you think!

Poison Ivy & Poison Oak

When I was quite young my cousin and I were visiting family in California. We were quite the troublemakers when we were together, so when our aunt warned us to never, under any circumstances, touch the poison oak, of course we thought “let’s touch the poison oak!”

We picked out one of the numerous plants in her sprawling yard and rubbed it between our hands. Frowning, we waited for something to happen. Nothing did. We thought we were super-humans at the time for not getting a rash, like we had some kind of special immunity. It turns out that most people don’t develop a reaction to poison ivy or poison oak the first time. This is because the terrible blistering and rash don’t occur because of direct contact with the plant, but an indirect immune response (i.e. an allergic reaction.) Chances are you’ve brushed past poison ivy at one point and never even had a clue. Needless to say, I don’t think my cousin and I will be grabbing any poison oak again-I doubt we’d be so lucky this time!

The terrible reaction that does take place when you touch poison ivy or poison oak is because of the irritating oil in the plant called urushiol. This oil will stick to just about anything, so if your towel or clothes brush past a plant and you touch it before washing it, you can get a rash. The rash is not contagious, but can be spread if you touch something else before the urushiol has been washed off of your hands/skin/clothes.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Urushiol will penetrate the skin, sinking into the lower layers of the dermis and wreaking havoc. If you know you touched the plant, wash the affected area ASAP with cold water. Cold water is important-warm or hot water will open up your pores, which is like laying out the welcome mat for urushiol.

-The rash, assuming it is not unusually severe; will clear on its own within a week or two.

-Because it is an allergic response, some people will have a more violent reaction to poison ivy or poison oak, while a small percentage of people are completely immune to it.

-An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure here. If you are in an area with poison ivy or poison oak, be aware of not only yourself, but of your pets as well! A dog that runs past poison ivy can easily spread the oil onto your skin the next time you reach down for a well-intended pat on the back.

Bentonite Clay

Bentonite clay is an incredible substance, particularly when it comes to anything that is irritating your skin. Not only does it soothe your painful rash, but it can help dry it out if you have blisters. It also acts as a natural shield against urushiol-in fact; it is the base of an OTC topical medication targeted as a shield against exposure to the dreadful oil. It will also actively draw oil out of your skin-hence why it is used as a face mask for people with oily skin.

You will need...

- 1 tablespoon of bentonite clay
- Fresh water

Directions

1. Mix a little fresh water with the dry bentonite clay until a paste forms.
2. Spread thinly over rash to soothe it. You can reapply this as often as needed, but for the best effects rinse off the old layer first.

Baking Soda Bath

Baking soda can help heal, soothe, and dry your rash. Toss in a handful of dried oats as well-they will make the water silky and soothing.

You will need...

- 1 cup of baking soda
- 1 cup of dried oats
- Cheesecloth (optional)

Directions

1. Fill a bathtub with warm water. When it's halfway full, add 1 cup each of baking soda and oats.
2. Soak for as long as needed for relief. To keep the oats from clogging up your drain, try wrapping them in a piece of cheesecloth and tying it off.

Anti-Itch Spray

Nothing is worse than being driven crazy by an itch you can't scratch! I would say that part of the healing process of the rash is possibly the most brutal, but it's important you don't scratch to reduce the risk of infection, and potential scarring. When you have healing scabs or blisters, spritz a little of this on to relieve the itch. The eucalyptus can help with inflammation and creates a cooling sensation. The witch hazel will also help with inflammation and itching, as well as drying out any open blisters. It has been commonly used to treat chicken pox because it gives such great relief.

You will need...

- 1 tablespoon any liquid oil
- A small spray bottle -Witch hazel
- 1 tablespoon of any liquid oil
- 5 drops eucalyptus essential oil

Directions

1. Fill your spray bottle almost full, leaving room to add the oils. Once you've added them secure the top of the bottle and shake well. Spray directly onto rash for relief.

Sunburn

Summer is a glorious time and people revel in it, but as with all things good, there must be some kind of bad. In this case, it's sunburn. Too much time spent in the sun results in your skin being totally bombarded with UV rays. When our skin is exposed to these rays, it ups its production of melanin, the pigment that gives our skin its color. This is why you get tan-all the extra pigment acts as a shield for the deeper layers of skin, and subsequently make your skin appear darker. Genetically, people with fair skin will always produce less melanin, and thus will be more likely to burn. They simply don't have enough of a shield. The opposite holds true for people with darker skin.

I used to burn. A lot. I am not fair skinned by any means, but I was getting treated for acne and that made me extremely susceptible to burning. I spent more nights than I care to remember lying in bed with a fan pointed at me, slathered in aloe.

Prevention is the best thing you can do here, but if you end up burned anyways, don't despair at a long and painful healing time-the remedy is probably just in your kitchen.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-The first thing you probably want to do is hop in a cold bath or shower-don't. That cold is going to make your pores seal off as they try to trap heat-the last thing you want with sunburn. The best temperature is tepid, or lukewarm, water.

Cucumber Lotion

-If you're in a pinch, a chilled mashed up cucumber will work as well!

Cucumber Lotion

One of the easiest and quickest ways to bring about relief is in the form of a cucumber. Not only does the plain old coolness of it work, but it also has analgesic (pain-killing) properties. The addition of sage adds to the cooling sensation, and helps with circulation, helping skin heal faster. The aloe vera gel is simply unbeatable when it comes to soothing burned skin.

You will need...

- 1/2 cup fresh sage leaves
- 1 fresh, crisp, cucumber
- Sieve and cheesecloth
- A pestle
- Boiling water
- Glass jar
- Aloe vera gel

Directions

1. Bring a pot of water to a boil.
2. Take your sage leaves and place them in a heat safe bowl. Just barely cover with boiling water, and leave to steep for 20 minutes.
3. While the sage steeps, grate a fresh cucumber and place in cheesecloth lined sieve.
4. Place the sieve over a bowl-NOT the one with sage-and use a pestle (or something similar) to push the cucumber through the cheesecloth, releasing its juice.
5. Strain your sage leaves, and then mix the infused water with the cucumber juice, now adding in the aloe vera gel. Bottle, refrigerate, and apply as needed as often as you'd like. Use it within 1 ½ weeks.

DIY Burn Cream

This cream contains several ingredients, including water, witch hazel, aloe vera gel, mint leaves, and baking soda, all of which relieve sunburn for various reasons. Aloe is an obvious go-to, while water works as a good medium for the cream. The witch hazel contains properties (resin, procyanadins, and flavonoids specifically) that help lessen inflammation, and in turn lessen the pain caused by it. The menthol in mint creates a cooling sensation, and baking soda also helps with inflammation while fighting off infection (in case you have scratched at it.) You can experiment by adding or subtracting other helpful ingredients to find out what works best for you.

You will need...

- 1 tablespoon of witch hazel
- 2 tablespoons of aloe vera gel
- 2 ¼ teaspoons of baking soda or cornstarch
- 1-2 cups of fresh mint leaves, or 1/2 teaspoon of peppermint oil
- 2 tablespoons fresh, clean, water

Directions

1. If you are using peppermint leaves, place them in a pot and add just enough water to cover them. Bring the water to a boil and then simmer for 1 hour before straining. Use this water in place of the fresh water called for in the ingredients.
2. Stir the cornstarch or baking soda into your water, making sure it is cool if you are using infused.
3. Place all of your ingredients in a food processor and blend until thoroughly incorporated.
4. Transfer to a glass jar or similar container with a tight fitting lid, and store in the refrigerator for 24 hours to let the cream fully infuse. You can then apply as needed. Making some ahead of time and keeping it in the refrigerator ensures that you will always have a handy cream to heal any sunburn you get during the hot summer months. This will keep for up to 1 ½ weeks.

Apple Cider Vinegar & Oatmeal Treatment

Oatmeal contains polysaccharides that will coat and heal your skin, and it will also trap moisture to keep skin hydrated and (hopefully) prevent peeling. Apple cider vinegar, or just plain old white vinegar, hasn't been studied officially in how it helps sunburn, but people have sworn up and down for, literally, centuries that it does indeed help sunburn.

You will need...

- Roughly 2 cups of rolled oats, uncooked
- A clean tube sock
- 2 cups of apple cider or white distilled vinegar

Directions

1. Run a tub of tepid, or lukewarm, water. Fill up a clean tube sock with oatmeal and tie it off tightly before tossing it into the water.
2. Let it sit for about 2 minutes before adding vinegar and getting in. Occasionally squeeze the sock to get out all of that polysaccharide goodness. The water will get cloudy and your skin might feel a little slick-that's ok.
3. After you've soaked for 15-25 minutes, pat yourself dry gently with a clean, fluffy towel. You don't want to soak for too long, since that may end up drying out your skin more in the end.

Toenail Fungus

Nail fungus is exactly what it sounds like, a fungal infection of the nail. It usually affects toenails, but sometimes fingernails fall victim as well. Common symptoms include the nail becoming thickened, discolored, brittle, or crumbly. Sometimes pieces of the nail will break off. If left alone for long enough, the skin around the area can become painful and inflamed. While (typically) not a serious condition, it is still dreadfully unpleasant to deal with, if not because its uncomfortable than because nobody likes feeling as though they need to keep their feet or hands covered for fear of offending someone. The tough thing is that the fungus causing all of this is actually embedded within the nail, so often times remedying also needs to be coupled with some patience while the nail grows out.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Before trying any remedy, remove as much excess nail as possible.
- Avoid moist conditions, keeping the effected nail as dry as possible.
- Start working on remedying it as soon as you notice the first sign of the fungus.m.

Tea Tree Oil & Coconut Oil

Tea tree oil is antibacterial and fungicidal, making it the perfect essential oil to use when it comes to warding off nail fungus. Coconut oil contains medium chain fatty acids, which are surprisingly effective as natural fungicides. The fungal membrane is crucial to maintaining the “life” of the fungus, and many antifungal treatments target the membrane. Fatty acids, such as the ones found in coconut oil, naturally insert themselves into the lipid (fat) layer of the fungal membrane. This disturbs the membrane and eventually causes the cell to disintegrate –see ya fungus!

You will need...

- 5-10 drops of tea tree essential oil
- 1 tablespoon of coconut oil
- Cotton balls/cotton swabs

Directions

1. Melt the coconut oil and add tea tree essential oil.
2. Give the mixture a few stirs, and then apply to the affected nails with a cotton ball or cotton swabs. Do this 2-3 times daily, or as needed.

White Vinegar Soak

White vinegar is a natural fungicide. Follow up a white vinegar soak with a little dab of coconut oil to really knock out the fungus-and keep it from coming back.

You will need...

- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- 1/2 cup water
- Coconut oil
- A clean towel

Directions

1. In a suitable bowl or basin, soak the effected nail for 10-15 minutes in a mixture of 50/50 water and white vinegar.
2. Pat your foot or hand dry and use a cotton swab to rub some coconut oil onto the nail. Repeat 3-4 times daily, or as needed. You can try using the vinegar undiluted if needed, but keep in mind that it's actually quite powerful on its own!

Oil of Oregano & Castor Oil

Oregano oil sounds random, but it is a well-kept secret when it comes to knocking out unwanted microbes, including the fungus that infects nails. Mixed with castor oil, which is thought to inhibit the growth of more fungus, it's a great oil to utilize, especially if the more traditional tea tree oil isn't working for you. Be sure to dry your foot/hand thoroughly before applying the mixture.

You will need...

- 1 tablespoon of castor oil
- 5-8 drops of oil of oregano
- Water
- A clean towel
- Cotton balls

Directions

1. Wash affected area with water and pat dry with a towel.
2. Mix castor oil with oil of oregano and apply with cotton balls. Repeat morning and night.

Warts

There is a lot of folklore surrounding warts...poor toads might as well be warts for all the flack they get. While you won't get a wart from a toad, they (warts) are slightly contagious, as they are caused by a strain of human papilloma virus (HPV.) They aren't generally harmful, but many people wish to have them removed because they find them unsightly or embarrassing, although sometimes even after removal they will stubbornly come back.

They appear as small, grainy skin growths that are most common on your fingers or hands, rough to the touch, and may have little black dots. Those little dots are called "seeds" and are simply small, clotted blood vessels. Put simply, warts are bumps of dead skin tissue that surrounds a core infected by the virus. Dermatologists or doctors will remove warts by any number of rather extreme methods, including caustic agents, freezing, and surgery. While those treatments are indeed considered safe, if you don't feel like taking that route, there are home remedies you can try. Sometimes they work, sometimes they don't, but its a lot less hassle than the alternatives.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-You are less likely to have an outbreak if you have a stronger immune system, so focus on building it up if you are prone to getting common warts a lot.

-Avoid touching your wart and then touching elsewhere. Since they are contagious, it's possible they will spread.

-Warts will go away on their own, generally faster in children, but can take months to years. I had one when I was younger that lasted for about 3 years. Oddly, it was on my knee.

-Don't bite your nails or nibble at hangnails-this creates the perfect opportunity for the virus to strike and plant a wart.

Duct Tape

While perhaps not the most “natural” method in the world, duct tape has been quite popular as a home remedy for warts. The reason for this most surely lies in the components of the adhesive-if you have terribly sensitive skin, it may irritate your skin. Either way, it’s a little gentler than liquid nitrogen!

You will need...

- A piece of silver duct tape
- White distilled vinegar
- Pumice stone
- A bandage (optional)

Directions

1. Cover the wars with duct tape and leave in place for 1 week.
2. After a week remove the bandage and soak in a 50/50 mixture of water and white distilled vinegar. Use a pumice stone to gently file away some of the dead skin, and cover again for another 7 days. Repeat until wart is gone.

Castor Oil & Baking Soda

Castor oil is acidic, and for this reason it may help your wart go away faster than it would if it took its own leisurely time.

You will need...

- Castor oil
- cotton swabs

Directions

1. Dip a cotton swab in castor oil and apply directly to wart twice a day. Continue for as long as needed.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C is great for the immune system, and since warts are often times related to the immune system, applying it topically can help chase the stubborn little bugger away. It is also mildly acidic.

You will need...

- Vitamin C tablets
- Water
- cotton swabs

Directions

1. Crush up a vitamin C tablet and add a little bit of water to make a paste.
2. Apply directly to the wart with a cotton swab and let it dry. Cover with a bandage to make sure it doesn't get rubbed off right away. Repeat 3 times a day as needed.

Use Chalk for Kids

The placebo effect is the most powerful remedy against any ailment in my opinion. This remedy is sometimes utilized by doctors for youngins' with warts, as they are still highly impressionable. If it is explained that the chalk will make the wart go away, there is no question in the child's mind that you speak anything but the facts, and voilà la! No more wart. Assuming your child isn't allergic to chalk, why not try it?

You will need...

- A piece of white chalk
- A bandage

Directions

1. Explain that the chalk will make the wart go away (which isn't untrue...it very well could help) and try to fully explain why you are using the color of chalk that you are (e.g. white chalk makes it go away faster because it dries it out really well, or something along those lines.) Sometimes those little details can make all the difference in an imaginative young mind. Put a smudge of chalk over the wart morning and night and cover with a bandage. See what happens.

Beauty

(recipes)

“Your relationship with your body is one of the most important relationships you’ll ever have. And since repairs are expensive and spare parts are hard to come by, it pays to make that relationship good.”

- Steve Goodier

Bath Fizzies

Bath fizzies, commonly known as bath bombs, are one of my greatest weaknesses. When I was quite a bit younger I can clearly remember looking at them longingly on the shelf in all their candy-colored glittery goodness, only to have my parents tug me away at the ridiculous price tag attached. But oh how I wanted them! Imagine my joy then, years later, when I learned I could make my own. Oh happy day! When you first start making these there are a few ups and downs and they do take some patience to get just right, like any other project you may take on, but you will be successful. So with mostly patience, and a few special ingredients, you can make these at home for a fraction of the price you would pay in stores.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- These are the same thing as “bath bombs” or “bath snowballs.” I just prefer to call them fizzies.
- You can use any number of shapes for your molds. I use clear snap together Christmas ornaments (the kind you can fill yourself) or smaller circular molds made specifically for bath bombs.
- Some people use food coloring to color their fizzle, but I would rather not risk my tub getting stained. I use powder soap pigment.
- Don't panic when you use it if some bubbles form that look yellow or oily-that's just because there is all those good oils in the fizzle!
- Start by making smaller fizzies, and work your way up to larger ones, as the larger ones are harder to get to stay together. You can see in the pictures that some of mine are a little crumbly looking-this is because I was using a particularly large mold. Sometimes with the large ones I end up with “half fizzies” because the two halves wouldn't stick together-they may not be perfectly circular, but then you get two instead of one!
- Make sure you pack the mix into your molds firmly. When you remove it from the mold, make sure you lift the halves of the mold apart, don't twist. If you are having a hard time getting your fizzy to slide out, gently tap the bottom of the mold. I will typically lift one half gently off, place my palm over the top of the fizzle, and then tip it upside down so I am left cupping it when the other side of the mold slips off.
- Experiment with how long you leave them in their molds. Bath fizzies are finicky and behave differently in different environments. Some people recommend packing them into the molds and then removing them right away to dry, while others leave them to dry in the molds overnight. In my experience, leaving them in for a little bit, but not too long, is better. I usually pack my molds and let them sit for 30-40 minutes before taking them out and gently setting them out to harden completely. For your first time I suggest making several individual fizzies and removing one shortly after packing, one after letting it sit for a while, and another after sitting overnight, just to get a feel for how it all works.
- The mix should not fizz when you are adding liquid. I find the best way to avoid this is to add no more than ¼-1/2 teaspoon at a time, and to rapidly stir it in the second it hits the powder.
- Sometimes you will have one crumble and fall apart for no good reason. It happens. Carry on.
- Little “warts” on your fizzle after it dries are caused by too much moisture in the environment. Cracking can be caused by too much moisture in the mix, especially if the mixture was fizzing when you were adding liquid.
- The texture of the proper mix is akin to damp, not wet, sand.
- To keep any solid matter from clogging the drain, use a drain cover, or place the fizzle in a tied off square of cheesecloth when you use it.
- If you live in a very humid environment, add 1/3 cup of Epsom or Dead Sea salt to the mix to help keep the moisture balanced.
- Store these in a cool, dark, place, wrapped in cellophane.

Basic Fizzy

This basic fizzie is a good place to start practicing, and incorporates the basic ingredients of citric acid, cornstarch, and baking soda. Once you have this down, the variations are endless. These ingredients are all that you need to make a successful bath fizzie. Citric acid reacts with the alkaline baking soda to create that wonderful fizz that makes these so iconic. This reaction is what happens when vinegar (an acid) and baking soda react to create a massive fizzy explosion. The cornstarch, despite some claims that it will irritate skin, is generally thought of as beneficial for skin. I find it wonderfully softening, but the most important part about it in this recipe, is that it helps your bath fizzies float!

You will need...

- 1 cup of baking soda
- 1/2 cup of citric acid
- 1/2 cup of cornstarch
- 2 ½ tablespoons of jojoba oil, or any liquid oil
- 2 ¼ teaspoons of water
- 1/2 teaspoon essential oil (optional)
- A sieve
- A mister bottle
OR a ½ teaspoon measuring spoon

Directions

1. Carefully measure out the baking soda, citric acid, and cornstarch, and sift them together into a large metal or glass bowl. Stir briefly to mix them all together.
2. In a separate bowl, mix the jojoba oil, water, and essential oil if you are using it. The mixture will separate-that's ok. At this point you can pour the liquids into a mister bottle before adding it to the dry ingredients, or use the ½ teaspoon measurer. I personally use the ½ teaspoon.
3. Slowly, slowly, slowly, begin to add the liquid to the dry ingredients. Give the dry ingredients a quick mist, or use the ½ teaspoon to carefully pour the liquid in, and stir immediately. If your mixture begins to fizz, slow down. It's going to take a while to complete this part, so play the radio or have your favorite T.V. show on in the background.
4. When all of the liquid is mixed in the mixture should feel like slightly damp sand. When you squeeze it in your hand it should just hold together in a clump. Now it's time to pack your molds. Press the mixture into each half firmly. You should have some strength behind it, but there's no need to push so hard your exhaust yourself. Sometimes the mixture slides around a little when you first start pressing it.
5. Pack each half of the mold just about even with edge or a little over. Sprinkle some loose mixture across the top of one half-just a little-and press the two sides together. Squeeze firmly for about 10 seconds or so and carefully set down.
6. Let the molds sit for 30-40 minutes and then carefully slide one half of the mold off. Cup your palm over the top of the fizzie and use your other hand to hold the bottom mold. Gently tip it upside down so the fizzie is securely in your hand as the rest of the mold slides off. Set carefully in a cool dry place out of direct sunlight to harden overnight. After they have hardened, wrap each one individually in crinkly cellophane and tie off. To use, simply fill your tub with warm water and drop one in. Give these as gifts or keep them to spoil yourself!

Lavender Bath Bomb

These are so wonderfully relaxing! This bomb is perfect for unwinding at the end of a long day, with its soothing lavender aroma drawing tension from your body and mind. I added dried lavender to mine to give it a little something extra, but you can opt to leave it out.

You will need...

- 1 cup of baking soda
- 1/2 cup of citric acid
- 1/2 cup of cornstarch
- 2 ½ tablespoons jojoba oil or any liquid oil
- 2 ¼ teaspoons water
- 1/2 teaspoon lavender oil
- 1-2 tablespoons lavender pigment powder
- 1/2 cup dried lavender flowers (optional)
- A sieve
- A mister bottle OR ½ teaspoon measurer

Directions

1. Sift together the baking soda, citric acid, cornstarch, and pigment powder in a large metal or glass bowl. Stir to combine.
2. In a separate bowl mix jojoba oil, water, and essential oil. Add to mister bottle if you are using it.
3. Gradually add the liquid to the dry ingredients. When the correct consistency is reached, mix in the dried lavender buds, if you are using them.
4. Pack firmly into molds. If you would like a little lavender patch on the top, simply place a layer in the bottom of the mold before packing in the mixture.
5. Let the fizzie sit for 30-40 minutes before removing from the molds. Let them dry overnight in a cool, dark, place, before wrapping them in cellophane and storing.

Layered Vanilla Oatmeal Bath Bomb

These luscious bath bombs combine the delicious aroma of vanilla and the skin-soothing properties of oatmeal.

You will need...

- 1 cup of baking soda
- 1/2 cup of citric acid
- 1/2 cup of cornstarch
- 2 ½ tablespoons of jojoba oil
- 2 ¼ teaspoons of water
- 1 teaspoon vanilla essential oil
- 1/2 cup of rolled oats
- A mister bottle or ½ teaspoon measurer.

Directions

1. Sift together the baking soda, cornstarch, and citric acid in a large metal or glass bowl.
2. In a separate bowl mix jojoba oil, water, and vanilla oil. Do not use vanilla extract. Add to mister bottle if you are using one.
3. Slowly add liquid to the dry ingredients until the correct consistency is reached. Stir in the rolled oats and then pack firmly into molds. If you would like a cluster of oats at the top, layer some in the bottom of the mold before packing.
4. Let them sit for 30-40 minutes before carefully removing, and then let them dry overnight in a cool, dark, place. Wrap the fizzies individually in cellophane and store.

Bathing Salt

I am referring to these as bathing salts as the term “bath salts” elicits quite a negative response these days, with people instantly jumping to the conclusion that you’re referring to some sort of underground drug. I would like to clarify that the drug is entirely different than bath salts used in bathing-homemade or store bought. The only reason they share the name is because the drug is sometimes sold under the guise of being true bath salts, since the crystals can look the same.

Now that we’ve cleared that up, let’s get on to the wonderful benefits of homemade bathing salts! Normally the salts are inorganic, developed to mimic the experience one might have in a mineral bath or hot spring. They can soften water, relieve aches and pains, and sometimes utilize aromatherapy. Generally speaking, they just make bathing a more enjoyable and relaxing experience, and we could all use some time relaxing every now and again. The downside to buying them is that you don’t know what kind of additives may have been included, and you can pay through the nose for them. This never ceases to amaze me because they are probably one of the easiest things to make at home, and you get essentially the same results, customized to your liking.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Epsom salt is the best salt to use here. The magnesium it contains helps keep your body running smoothly and feeling top-notch. It is also notoriously good at relaxing tense muscles and relieving aches/sprains/general pain. Epsom salt will also soften skin and relieve discomfort from certain conditions, such as psoriasis.

-Set up a relaxing environment; don’t just throw yourself in the tub. Dim the lights, play relaxing music, and above all else, breathe deeply and slowly.

-You can use either actual herbs/flowers, essential oils, or a combination of the two in your salts. The following recipes have a bit of everything. If you are giving these as a gift they look particularly attractive when the whole herbs/flowers are included. If you do use any loose herbs, use a screen cover in your tub to catch any solid matter before it goes down the drain, or put the salt in a little muslin or cheesecloth pouch.

-Feel free to add more oil to your salt-the minimum amount is just so it can act as carrier oil for the essential oil.

-Stir before use if any oil has settled.

Relaxing Lavender

Lavender is one of the most utilized scents when it comes to relaxation and aromatherapy, having the incredible ability to calm the body and, just as importantly, the mind. It depends on the mood I am in, but I generally like to use dried lavender buds for this one with a drop or two of lavender essential oil. You can disperse the lavender throughout the salts, layer it throughout, or layer it just the top or bottom. Baking soda is added as an additional skin soother.

You will need...

- 1 cup of Epsom salt
- 1/4 cup of baking soda
- 1/4-1/2 cup of dried lavender
- 1 tablespoon of jojoba oil or any liquid oil
- 1-2 drops of lavender oil

Directions

1. Mix Epsom salt with baking soda. In a separate bowl, mix essential oil with your carrier oil. Add the oils to the salt mixture, mashing out any lumps with a fork.
2. Stir the lavender buds thoroughly into the mix and then sprinkle a thin layer on top. Pour into an airtight jar and leave the top open to let the mixture dry overnight. Close tightly in the morning. Add 1/3-1/2 cup to warm bath water, relax, and enjoy.

Invigorating Rosemary

Just like lavender helps you unwind, rosemary has a refreshing scent that will give you a boost of energy and clear your mind. If you are using fresh rosemary, use this within 1-2 weeks.

You will need...

- 2 sprigs of fresh rosemary
- 1-2 drops of rosemary oil
- 1 tablespoon of jojoba oil or any liquid oil
- 1 1/2 cups of Epsom salt

Directions

1. Mix your oils and then stir them into the salt.
2. Put 1 sprig of rosemary in your container and fill it about halfway with salt before adding the second sprig and topping off. Pour into an airtight container and let the salt dry overnight, closing off tightly in the morning. To use, add 1/3-1/2 cup of salt to warm bath water.

Citrus Morning

Citrus is another invigorating scent. It's fresh, somewhat sweet, and has the marvelous ability to clear a cloudy mind. This recipe calls for only a few drops of orange essential oil as well dried orange peels, which are incredibly easy to make on your own. If you plan on taking a morning bath to get ready for the day, this is one of my favorites. You can replace the orange peel and orange essential oil with lemon if you prefer.

You will need...

- The peel of 1 orange
- 1 tablespoon of jojoba or any liquid oil
- 2-4 drops of orange oil
- 1 1/2 cups of Epsom salt

Directions

1. Peel your orange, getting as little of the pith (the white part) as possible. Too much of the pith attached to the peel makes it difficult to dry them out. Cut into thin slice lengthwise.
2. Place on a baking sheet in a 250 F degree oven for 15-20 minutes, or until the edges are curling. At this point you can either store some in the fridge for up to 2 weeks, or you can use all of them. While the peel is drying, mix orange oil into jojoba oil, and stir into the Epsom salt.
3. When the peels are done you can place them right in the salt, or grind them up. I think when you grind them up it imparts more scent, especially since you get the powder in the bathwater along with the salt. Use a mortar and pestle to grind the peels, or a food processor. Stir into salt.
4. Let the mixture dry overnight. Use 1/3-1/2 cup in a warm bath. If you are giving this as a gift, decorate the top with a few whole slices.

Dead Sea Salt Softener

For an extra special touch, get good quality Dead Sea salt, which contains an extra boost of magnesium, potassium, and sulfate. It is also wonderful for softening skin, and helps relax muscles. The baking soda soothes skin, reduces itchiness, and the Epsom salt adds a little bit of extra body so you don't have to use all of your dead sea salts at once.

You will need...

- 1 cup dead sea salts
- 1/2 cup Epsom salts
- 1/2 cup baking soda
- Essential oils (optional)

Directions

1. In a large bowl stir together your salts and baking soda. Stir in the oil now if you are using any, being careful to mix your essential oil with a carrier oil beforehand.
2. Pour into an airtight container and leave the lid open to let them dry overnight, if any oils were added. To use add ¼ cup to warm bath water.

Peppermint Pep

I love this bath salt for two reasons, the first being that it reminds me of the holidays, and the joy of taking a warm bath on a freezing winter night. The second is that it overall lifts the mood and enlivens the senses. You can use liquid soap coloring to make it look like crushed candy canes, or a bit of red food coloring. The problem with the latter is that it can stain if not used carefully, so I don't generally recommend it-although there are people who use it and are fine. Baking soda is added to this recipe since it's a wintertime one for me, when skin is usually dry and itchy.

You will need...

- 1 cup of Epsom salt
- 1/2 cup of baking soda
- 10-15 drops peppermint oil
- 1 tablespoon of jojoba or any liquid oil
- Red coloring (optional)

Directions

1. Mix together the Epsom salt and baking soda. In a separate bowl mix your carrier oil with the peppermint essential oil. Stir the oils into the salt mixture.
2. Drop bits of liquid red coloring in and stir to make it look like crushed candy canes if you like. Let the mixture dry overnight with the lid open. To use, add 1/4 cup to warm bath water.

Body Scrubs

Body scrub is another beauty skin care product that is incredibly expensive in stores but is so easy, and a lot cheaper, to make at home. Body scrub is great for exfoliating your skin and leaving it refreshed and smooth, scrubbing away dead skin cells and built up oils. These scrubs are similar to the bathing salts; however they use more oil to make them less abrasive.

As wonderful as these are, don't overdo the use of them. You can end up drying out your skin and irritating it if you use too much scrub too often. I suggest keeping the use to a maximum of 2-3 times a week. I know, it takes some self-control, especially when you make it yourself and it's so satisfying to use.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Place a catch over your shower or tubs drain to catch any solid herbs or flowers you may have added.

-Always feel free to swap out essential oils for actual herbs/flowers and vice versa. Whether or not you use actual herbs or flowers is your choice-I personally enjoy using them when giving as gifts. Just be sure to use up the scrub within 1-2 weeks if you do fresh herbs or flowers.

-Always give your scrub a little stir before using, as the oil will likely settle to the bottom. I suggest keeping a little wooden spoon on hand just for this purpose.

Basic Body Scrub

This is a basic scrub that you can make as fanciful or as simple as you like. I like these ratios, and use this as a base for most scrubs that I make. For some recipes I may change the ratios slightly depending on what oil I am using or if its sugar or salt in the scrub, but this is a good starting point. The coarse Epsom salt does a beautiful job of sloughing away old and dead skin cells, revealing the soft new skin underneath. The oil will make the scrub overall less abrasive, and also add a little moisturizing power.

You will need...

-4 tablespoons of jojoba or any liquid oil

-1 cup of Epsom salt

Directions

1. Mix jojoba oil with Epsom salt and stir to get everything fully incorporated.

2. Pour into a glass jar and let the mixture sit out overnight with the lid off to dry. Put the lid on tightly in the morning. To use, give it a stir, and scoop some onto your fingers or onto a loofa and scrub over your skin well. Rinse off completely.

Wake Up Body Salt Scrub

If you wake up sluggish and sleepy, this is the scrub to go to. The invigorating smell of peppermint and rosemary will light up your senses and have you feeling fresh and brand new, ready to take on the day. The cooling sensation and smell of peppermint does the most to wake you up “physically” while the smell of rosemary has been shown to increase alertness and brain activity.

You will need...

- 1 cup of Epsom salt
- 4 tablespoons of jojoba or any liquid oil
- 3 drops of rosemary oil
- 2 drops of peppermint oil

Directions

1. Mix essential oils into your carrier oil.
2. Stir the oil blend into Epsom salt, and pour into a jar, leaving the top off overnight to let the mix dry. Put the lid on in the morning.
3. To use, give it a quick stir, scoop some onto your fingers or onto a loofa and massage in a circular motion over your skin. Rinse off completely.

Wake Up Body Salt Scrub (version 2)

If you find the smell of peppermint and rosemary too overwhelming, a somewhat milder but equally delightful wake up scrub is made with citrus essential oils. Citrus is also synonymous with freshness, which is exactly how you want to feel before you go about your day. Like the citrus bathing salts, I use dried orange peel in this recipe for a nice, fresh, touch. You can replace the orange with lemon if you prefer.

You will need...

- 1 cup of Epsom salt
- 4 tablespoons of jojoba or any liquid oil
- Peel of 1 orange or lemon
- 5 drops of lemon essential oil OR 2-5 drops of orange essential oil

Directions

1. Peel an orange or lemon, getting as little of the pith (the white part) as possible. Place the peels on a baking sheet in a 250 F degree oven for 10-15 minutes, or until the edges are curling. Grind into a fine powder and stir into Epsom salt.
2. Mix your essential oils into your carrier oil and then stir thoroughly into the Epsom salt mix. Pour into a jar and leave the lid off overnight to let the mixture dry. Replace the lid in the morning.
3. To use, give it a quick stir, and then scoop some onto your fingers or onto a loofa and massage in a circular motion over your skin. Rinse off completely.

Sensitive Skin Sugar Body Scrub

If you find the grains of salt too abrasive, or if you have sensitive skin, use sugar instead. The finer granules are gentler on the skin, but still effective at exfoliating. You can use white or brown sugar, however I prefer white sugar in body scrubs as it's just a wee bit coarser than brown sugar. This scrub incorporates chamomile essential oil, which is notoriously gentle and healing for virtually all skin types.

You will need...

- 1 cup of sugar
- 4 tablespoons of jojoba or any liquid oil
- 5 drops of chamomile oil

Directions

1. Mix essential oil with your carrier oil and then stir thoroughly into the sugar.
2. Pour into a jar and let dry overnight with the lid off. Replace the lid in the morning.
3. To use, give it a quick stir, and then scoop some onto your fingers or onto a loofa and massage in a circular motion over your skin. Rinse off completely.

Body Spray

Body spray is like perfume or cologne but much less overwhelming, easy to make with natural ingredients, and perfect for people who may be sensitive to certain artificial fragrances. They are sometimes used to double as deodorant, but I don't tend to use them as such. Light, all natural, and simply delightful, these sprays can be customized to your preferences, and cost a whole lot cheaper than store bought stuff.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-These will last for up to 1 1/2 weeks in a cool dark place, or up to 3 1/2 in the refrigerator.

Sunshine in a Bottle

This uplifting spray utilizes grapefruit and orange essential oil to lift your mood. I find it especially handy for those grey dreary seasons when it's easy to forget what the sun looks like.

You will need...

- 1 cup of distilled or filtered water
- 6 drops of grapefruit oil
- 4 drops of orange oil
- 2 ¼ teaspoons jojoba oil or any liquid oil
- A fine mister bottle

Directions

1. Pour water into a bottle and add in the oils. Seal tightly and shake well before every use.

Uplifting Spray

This spray follows along the same lines as “sunshine in a bottle” but is different in that, instead of being energizing, it is more grounding and calming (but just as uplifting.) The blend of orange, lavender, and vetiver (obtained from the root of an indian grass) creates a well-rounded scent that will have you feeling better in no time.

You will need...

- 1 cup of filtered or distilled water
- 2 ¼ teaspoons jojoba oil or any liquid oil
- 6 drops of orange essential oil
- 3 drops of lavender essential oil
- 1 drop of vetiver essential oil
- A fine mister bottle

Directions

1. Add water and oil blend to your mister bottle. Seal tightly and shake well before use.

Orange Dream

The combination of orange and vanilla may seem like a strange one at first, but the sharp, light note of the orange is complimented perfectly by the sweet, rich smell of the vanilla.

You will need...

- 3 drops orange essential oil
- 6 drops vanilla essential oil
- 2 ¼ teaspoons of jojoba or any liquid oil
- 1 cup of filtered or distilled water

Directions

1. Pour water and oil blend into your mister bottle. Seal tightly and shake well before use.

Conditioner

Hair is dead by the time it leaves your scalp; therefore you cannot make your hair healthy. However, you can make your hair look healthy, which is the basic goal of conditioners.

If you think hair conditioner is straight forward, well, think again. Your hair is not terribly simple to begin with, so let's take a look at its structure to understand how your conditioner works. A single strand of hair is made up of three layers, the cuticle, the cortex, and the medulla. These layers work together to provide you with a head full of precious locks. The cuticle is the outside of the hair shaft, and it protects the thickest part of the hair shaft, the cortex, which is the name for the middle part of the hair shaft made up of keratin. The thin medulla is the innermost part of the hair shaft and remains a bit of dark sheep, as nobody can really figure out what it does.

For conditioners, the main focus is generally on repairing the cuticle. The cuticle is made of over-lapping dead keratin (protein based) cells that are shaped like scales or roof shingles. This provides the first line of defense for hair. When those cells get damaged or disrupted, be it by weather, blow drying, styling products, and so on, hair appears dull and dry. Picture those shingles lying nice and smooth, and then picture them all bent up or broken, and it's easy to imagine how it would affect the entire appearance of your hair.

There are 4 groups that conditioners fall into to, each one designed to repair, smooth, detangle, and generally make hair look shiny and fabulous by repairing the damaged cuticle scales. The following recipes are "normal" conditioners, which will focus a little bit on each of those aspects without a heavy emphasis on one or the other.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Conditioners tend to be more acidic in pH, which affects amino acids and provides the hair with more hydrogen bonds amongst keratin scales. Translated, this means that conditioners keep the scales of the cuticle strong and fitting neatly together. This is why some of the recipes call for something acidic, such as vinegar.

-Generally it is best to use conditioner on the lower half or tips of your hair, where a lot of breakage takes place. If you have dry hair and a dry scalp, you can experiment with using the conditioner over your entire head.

-Avoid straightening your hair, or similar practices, as best as you can. This will mess up your cuticles over time. Hair is surprisingly good at maintaining itself, so long as we don't mess with it too much.

Coconut Oil Conditioner

-Take out just as much coconut oil as you will use prior to getting in your shower, and take it with you in a separate container. If you use damp fingers to scoop any out directly from the jar, or condensation forms in the jar, you risk mold and other microbes growing on it.

- Start with a little and then work your way up-if you overdo it your hair can look greasy. You will probably need far less than you think you do.

Rosemary/Chamomile Coconut Oil

-If you are prone to greasy hair, feel free to lessen the amount of coconut oil or omit it completely. If you do the latter your hair will still get a healthy shine, but will detangle as easily. In this case rub a little coconut oil separately into your ends after you are done with the rinse.

Coconut Oil Conditioner

Coconut oil is full of medium-chain fatty acids and amino acids. Since keratin is made up of amino acids, coconut oil is the ideal substance to repair it, and it doesn't get easier than just using one ingredient. Plus, it smells divine. It is solid at room temperature, but should soften easily if you scoop some out with your fingers.

You will need...

-Coconut oil

Directions

1. Rub coconut oil thoroughly into hair, focusing on the ends, and let it sit for 5-10 minutes while you go about sudsing, shaving, etc. Start with a little and then work your way up-if you overdo it your hair can look greasy.

Apple Cider Vinegar

Apple cider vinegar is a great conditioner, leaving hair nice and shiny, and helping to reduce dandruff. After your hair dries, it will not smell like vinegar. Add a few drops of essential oil in if you want to give it a unique scent, or if you have dandruff, try tea tree oil.

You will need...

- 1/2 cup of water
- 1/2 cup of apple cider vinegar
- essential oil (optional)

Directions

1. After shampooing, pour your diluted apple cider vinegar over your head, massaging it into your scalp and hair. I find it easiest to put it in a spray bottle first so I can control how much I end up using.

Rosemary (or Chamomile) Coconut Oil

If you have dark hair and want to give it some extra shine, melting some coconut oil into a rosemary tea is a pleasant and natural approach to take-alternatively, if you have fair hair, simply replace the rosemary with dried chamomile flowers. You can make a large batch in advance and keep in the fridge, for a week, warming it up to soften the coconut oil before using.

You will need...

-2 teaspoons of dried rosemary or dried chamomile flowers

-1 cup of water

-1 teaspoon of coconut oil

Directions

1. Pour boiling water over dried rosemary or dried chamomile flowers. Let it steep for 15-30 minutes before straining and stirring in the coconut oil. Use as you would any other conditioner.

Deodorant

Body odor has been something humans have tried to mask since the earliest civilizations. Ancient Egyptians, the Romans...everybody had some way to mask odor, be it excessive bathing or dousing themselves in “aromatic oils.” It wasn’t until the late 18th century that deodorant was developed, and it has since grown into an 18 billion dollar industry.

Despite the incredible boom in its popularity, many people have reserves about using store-bought deodorants, and opt for a more natural, chemical-free version. Sadly, society makes it tough to make your own deodorant. People wrinkle their nose at you if you just tell them you make your own, even though you don’t smell! Don’t pay any attention to that nonsense, there is no shame in making your own.

These are recipes for deodorants, not antiperspirants. Deodorants are different from antiperspirants –antiperspirants are classified as a drug by the FDA and they both affect odor and perspiration, as they affect the sweat glands. Deodorants are classified as cosmetics. In the vast majority of cases it is best to avoid deodorant that also doubles as an antiperspirant. Suppressing the body’s natural method of regulating body temperature is not a good thing to do.

Most sweat is actually odorless. The body has two types of sweat glands-eccrine and apocrine. Eccrine glands cover the body and produce mostly “salt water” that is odorless. Apocrine glands, located in the underarm and groin area, become active during puberty. These glands produce sweat that also has lipids and proteins in it, and which will eventually get smelly as bacteria feeds on it. So, most sweat is actually odorless, until it becomes fermented because of the bacteria thriving in warm and humid conditions. Your body odor is also affected by genetics, diet, and environment.

Store bought deodorants often times suppress odor by trying to decrease bacteria count, but it does so by using chemicals such as aluminum compounds. Natural deodorant strives to achieve the same goal, but through the use of essential oils and natural ingredients. For those who suffer from contact dermatitis related to deodorant, or who don’t want to apply certain chemicals to their skin, natural deodorant can be a good alternative. One major plus is that your underarms get incredibly soft and smooth because of how nourishing the ingredient’s in these homemade versions are.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Eating a healthy diet can greatly reduce body odor, as can staying hydrated.

-Wearing breathable under-arm pads will help keep excessive sweating under control, and keep any moisture from soaking or staining your clothes.

-For stick deodorant you can purchase empty deodorant tubes, or you can save an old deodorant stick, rinse it out, and repurpose it.

-If you cannot get arrowroot powder, cornstarch will work in a pinch.

-Balance is crucial in the human body, and this is well-represented in our natural Ph. Ph. will vary from person to person. If you get irritated by the baking soda in the recipe, omit it. It could be that your Ph. is more acidic; in which case the alkaline baking soda will cause a small chemical reaction that may be irritating. Use more arrowroot powder in this case.

Gel Deodorant

-This will be quite liquid at first. Give it a full 12-24 hours to solidify. It will soften again when it comes in contact with body heat.

-Allow the deodorant to dry a minute or two before pulling your shirt on.

Solid Deodorant

Arrowroot powder, beeswax, jojoba oil, shea butter/coconut oil, and essential oils are all such simple ingredients that can yield such wonderful results for a homemade deodorant. Tea tree oil (one of my preferred essential oils for this recipe) has antimicrobial properties, which will help cut down on the bacteria count that's causing odor. The arrowroot powder works to keep your underarms dry, but not interfere with your sweat glands job, and it is notoriously good at absorbing odor-you can also add baking soda if you like. Beeswax lends this natural stick deodorant some stiffness to keep its shape. As does the shea butter or coconut oil. I myself use shea butter.

You will need...

- 2 ¼ teaspoons shea butter/
coconut oil
- 1 tablespoon grated beeswax
- 2 ½ tablespoons of jojoba oil
- 1 tablespoon of arrowroot
powder
- 1 teaspoon of baking powder
(optional)
- Empty deodorant sticks
- 3 drops of tea tree oil, plus
any other essential oil of your
choosing

Directions

1. Use a 2 cup glass Pyrex to make a double boiler by setting it into the pan with water. Add beeswax and jojoba oil and melt. If you are using coconut oil instead of shea butter, add it now.
2. When everything has melted, turn off the heat and quickly stir in shea butter and arrowroot powder before adding your essential oils. Use whichever scent suits your fancy.
3. Work quickly but carefully to pour the mixture into your deodorant sticks, setting the cap lightly on each of them.
4. Allow the deodorant to cool completely before twisting it up. Use as you would any other deodorant! This will keep for up to 4 months.

Powder Deoderant

This is about as easy as it gets-baking soda and arrowroot powder are all you need for an odor-absorbing powder deodorant. Adding dried herbs such as lavender, or even a few sprigs of rosemary, makes a great addition if you want it scented.

You will need...

- 1/2 cup of baking soda
- 1/2 cup of arrowroot powder
- 2 tablespoons of dried lavender, or herb of choice

Directions

1. Stir the baking soda and arrowroot together, and pour into the container you are storing it in. When the container is about halfway full add your herbs if you are using them, and then pour in the rest of the powder.
2. Use a powder puff to apply to underarms. I suggest keeping a few puffs on hand in case you need to apply after you've already started sweating.

Homemade Gel Deoderant

This gel deodorant is softer than the others, and easier to apply if you are a man and have a hard time traversing your underarm...terrain. It still has the same core ingredients-baking soda, arrowroot powder, and coconut oil-plus vegetable glycerin for the “gel” factor and any essential oils you want to add for scent.

You will need...

- 1/4 coconut oil
- 2 tablespoons vegetable glycerin
- 2 tablespoons of jojoba oil
- 3-4 tablespoons of baking soda
- 3-4 tablespoons of arrowroot powder
- Essential oil for scent (optional)
- An empty deodorant stick

Directions

1. Use a 2 cup glass Pyrex to make a double boiler. Melt your coconut oil and jojoba oil together and remove from heat.
2. Stir in vegetable glycerin, baking soda, arrowroot powder, and 10 drops of your chosen essential oil if you are using it.
3. Pour into a deodorant stick and let cool for 24 hours. This will keep for up to 4 months.

Face Scrubs

These are loose scrubs, not made into bars or cubes like the others (although I do love those!) A face scrub is the same as a body scrub in that it exfoliates skin, sloughing away old built up cells, dirt, and oil, and leaves your skin smooth and cleansed. The difference is that face scrubs are gentler than body scrubs, which tend to involve coarse salt as the main means of exfoliating. These scrubs use sugar instead, which works in a gentler manner than, say, Epsom salt. There isn't a whole lot of difference between brown sugar and white sugar, just that brown sugar is softer, which is something to keep in mind if you particularly sensitive skin.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-The recipes involving fresh fruit should be kept in the refrigerator and will last up to 5 days. I recommend making these in smaller batches so you can use them up in time.

-Do not use a face scrub more than 2-3 times a week (maximum), otherwise you risk drying out or irritating your skin.

-Feel free to double or triple the batches, keeping the ratios the same. I make smaller batches for myself since I find I don't need very much for it to exfoliate my skin well.

-I usually put the shelf life of the scrubs up to 2 weeks, since chances are wet fingers will be scooped into it, and water encourages the growth of micro-organisms. This is, again, why I make small batches. If you were to scoop some out prior to your shower, and take it in in an individual bowl, then the shelf life would be that of the oil you are using.

Kiwi Sugar Scrub

While I tend to favor essential oils in scrubs, I love the refreshing smell and sensation of this particular one, which uses fresh kiwi. Another bonus-the little kiwi seeds also work to exfoliate! This will leave your skin clear and bright, and it's perfect for use in a morning shower.

You will need...

- 2 tablespoons of white sugar
- 1 tablespoon of jojoba oil or any liquid oil
- 1/2 kiwi

Directions

1. Cut your kiwi in half and scoop out the fruit, avoiding the core as best you can. Mash up the kiwi well.
2. Mix sugar and oil in separate bowl, adding in the kiwi at the very end, and blend the entire mixture.
3. To use simply scoop some up with your fingers in the shower and apply to face, massaging over your skin in a circular motion with your fingertips. You may also scoop a little into the empty kiwi skin and use it as a sort of natural loofa to apply.

Vanilla Brown Sugar Scrub

This classic combination never gets old, but it's imperative that you don't add too much vanilla essential oil; otherwise you end up with a scrub that smells too sweet. If you're giving this as a gift, a whole vanilla pod nestled on top adds a lovely touch. You can also scrape the seeds into the scrub itself. Vanilla extract isn't generally a good idea to use as the alcohol in it can dry your skin out.

You will need...

- 5-8 drops of vanilla essential oil
- 2 tablespoons of brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon of jojoba oil or any liquid oil

Directions

1. Blend jojoba oil and vanilla oil.
2. Stir the oil blend into the brown sugar.
3. Store in a container with a tightly fitting lid out of direct sunlight.

Soothing Lavender Scrub

While using a scrub is generally an invigorating experience, there's no reason to shy away from scents that are more relaxing. This pleasant lavender scrub can get you in a calm and relaxed mental state that's appropriate for the beginning or the end of the day.

You will need...

- 2 tablespoons of white sugar
- 1 tablespoon of jojoba oil or any liquid oil
- 3-5 drops of lavender essential oil

Directions

1. Mix your essential oil and jojoba oil, and then stir thoroughly into sugar.
2. Store in a container with a tightly fitting lid.

Lotion Bars

When I first made lotion, I was all about the soft, scoop up type. I still love the “classic” kind of lotion, but my new-fangled obsession with lotion bars has been growing rapidly. I think I like the longer shelf life, how fun it is to play around with shapes, the ease of carrying around, and the ease of use. It takes a bit of getting used to the feeling when you apply it though, as it needs to be more solid than other lotion to hold its “bar” shape. The following recipe adheres to my preferred consistency of the bar. If you find yourself unhappy with how soft or hard your lotion bar is, tweak the amount of beeswax you are adding. Keep in mind that if it is too solid your lotion bar will not soften in your hands and go on smoothly-rather it will rub in the most irritating way over your skin and leave waxy clumps. If it is too soft, you have a slippery mess. When you get it just right though, lotion bars are lovely, versatile, skin-care companions.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- A little beeswax goes a long, long, way in lotion bars.
- Use soap or silicon baking molds to experiment with fun shapes (they make perfect gifts!) They also make it easy to remove your bars.
- Hold the lotion bar in your hands to warm and soften it before applying.
- If you are using a baking pan for the soap bars, designate one for this use, as the beeswax is hard to get completely off. If you make them often in a baking pan, a silicone baking mat makes them easier to cut and remove.
- Use wooden popsicle sticks to stir so you can keep your spoons from getting all waxy, and then compost them!

Basic Lotion Bar

This bar gives a versatile base from which you can play around with scents and varying ingredients.

You will need...

- 1/4 cup of beeswax pastilles or grated beeswax
- 1 cup of coconut oil
- 4 teaspoons of jojoba oil or any other liquid oil
- Molds or a baking pan

Directions

1. In a double boiler melt all of your ingredients together and stir to blend.
2. Pour into molds or a lined baking pan and let cool overnight. Pop out of molds, or cut into bars.
3. To use, hold the bar in your hands to soften the it up a bit. Glide over skin, rubbing it in as you go, or just after use.

Calming Lotion Bars

Who doesn't need some stress relief every now and again, or a helping hand to wind down before bedtime? This chamomile lavender lotion bar's soothing aroma will work wonders for your wellbeing, all while making your skin super soft.

You will need...

- Basic lotion bar recipe
- 10 drops of lavender essential oil
- 8 drops of chamomile essential oil
- A small handful of dried lavender buds

Directions

1. After all your ingredients are melted, stir in the dried lavender and essential oils. If you have a hard time gauging the scent of each bar in big batches, add 3-5 drops of each essential oil to the mixture after it's been poured into each individual mold.

Masks

Face masks are a lovely way to pamper yourself, but they also serve practical purposes as well. Depending on what is included in them they can remove dirt, oil, tighten pores, prevent or reduce breakouts, reduce puffiness, moisturize, and exfoliate. It's up to you to decide which kind of mask is best for your skin type. For something that is so easy to do at home, with completely natural ingredients, it's amazing how much you pay when getting one done professionally!

Tips & Troubleshooting

-No matter which recipe you are using, always use a steam bath or a washcloth with warm water on your face first. This will open up your pores and let the mask do its job with the utmost efficiency. For the steam bath simply fill a bowl with boiling water and lean over it, being careful not to get burned by the steam, with a towel draped over your head to form a tent for 3-5 minutes. Whether using a washcloth or steam, pat face dry before applying mask.

-After removing your mask, apply a light moisturizer to restore any moisture that may have been lost.

-As fun as they are, do not use a mask more than once a week, otherwise you might end up irritating your skin or drying it out.

Break-Out Buster

This mask combines honey and strawberries to reduce current break-outs and prevent future ones from popping up. Honey has anti-bacterial properties that can help reduce acne, while strawberries naturally contain salicylic acid, an ingredient found in many prescription/OTC acne treatments that helps rid the skin of excess oil and correct any abnormal shedding of skin cells.

You will need...

- 5-6 large strawberries, rinsed
- 2 teaspoons of organic raw honey
- A head band or hair binder

Directions

1. Soften your honey and mash the strawberries, combining the two before using the steam bath or a warm washcloth.
2. After the steam bath, hold your hair back with a headband or hair binder and apply the mask in a thin layer over your face, leaving some space at your hairline so it doesn't get stuck in the mixture.
3. Leave on 10-15 minutes and then gently wash off with warm water. Apply a light moisturizer.

Break-Out Buster (sensitive skin version)

This mask is similar to the first one but uses a combination of yogurt and honey, and so is friendlier to sensitive or dry skin. The yogurts lactic acid can gently help slough off dead skin cells and exfoliate in place of the strawberries salicylic acid.

You will need...

- 2 teaspoons of organic honey
- 2 tablespoons of plain yogurt (with probiotics)

Directions

1. Mix together yogurt and honey before using the steam bath or warm washcloth.
2. Afterwards, hold your hair back with a headband or hair binder, and apply a thin layer to your face. Let the mask sit for 10-15 minutes before washing off with warm water and applying a light moisturizer.

Sunburn Soother

This is a classic face mask-the kind where you lay cucumbers over your eyes-that's great for those summer days when you've spent a little too much time in the sun. It's not just limited to sunburn either-this is a great mask to relieve stress, reduce puffiness, and liven up tired eyes. Cucumber also contains silica, which replenishes skin and leaves you fresh-faced and care free. Honey, yogurt, and rolled oats add acne fighting, exfoliating, and extra soothing properties.

You will need...

- 1 cucumber, peeled and sliced
+ 2 slices for eyes
- 2 teaspoons of honey
- 1/4-1/2 cup of rolled oats
- 5-6 tablespoons of yogurt
- A blender
- A place to relax

Directions

1. Peel your cucumber and slice it into cubes, saving 2 slices as rounds to rest on your eyes.
2. Put cucumber, honey, and yogurt into blender and process until smooth. Blend in the oats and then pour the entire mixture into a bowl, cover it, and place it in the fridge so it thickens and cools (put the extra 2 cucumber slices in the fridge too.)
3. When it's chilled, about 30 minutes later, use the steam bath and apply across your entire face-this layer can be a little thicker than the previous masks called for. Lie back, cover your eyes, and relax. Let it sit for 15-20 and then rinse off with cool water. Follow up with a light moisturizer.

Mud Mask

I love bentonite clay. It makes a great base for homemade calamine lotion, soothes bug bites and poison ivy, and makes a dandy 'mud mask' much like the ones given in spas. It's great at absorbing excess oil that is clogging pores and reducing the appearance of acne, and will leave your skin feeling smooth and nourished.

You will need...

- Roughly ¼-½ cup of bentonite clay
- Water

Directions

1. Add water slowly to clay until it becomes a thick (but spreadable) paste.
2. Use the steam bath, and then have a headband or hair binder to hold hair back. Apply in a thin layer over face. Let sit for 15-20 minutes and then wash off with warm water. Apply a light moisturizer.

Wrinkle Reliever

This mask mixes bananas and apple cider vinegar, the latter of which Helen of Troy and Cleopatra used as toners (and look how they turned out!) ACV tightens up and tones skin, as well as fights acne and blemishes. Bananas are often used as the “Botox” of the natural world, relieving fine lines and wrinkles; much to the endless delight of those who indulge it (the exact mechanism of how it works isn’t known yet.) It is also incredibly moisturizing. You can add some yogurt if you want to thicken the mixture a bit.

You will need...

- 1 ripe banana, peeled
- 5 tablespoons of apple cider vinegar
- 5 tablespoons of yogurt (optional)

Directions

1. Thoroughly mash a ripe, peeled banana and mix in apple cider vinegar and yogurt (if you are using it.) It will be relatively thin-it’s supposed to be.
2. After using the steam bath have a headband or hair binder to hold your hair back, and apply the mask to your entire face. Let it sit for 20-25 minutes before rinsing with cool water. Apply a light moisturizer.

Mouthwash

Mouthwash is quite handy when it comes to fighting bad breath and reducing the bacteria count that contributes to it. But I always wonder when I see it in stores...why exactly is it such blinding neon colors? To me, that's just a red flag as to what the wash actually contains-which is generally a mouthful of artificial coloring, flavors, and not so hot ingredients. Many kinds of mouthwash contain ethyl alcohol, which can weaken the lining of your gums, and possibly erode enamel. While still considered "inconclusive", studies conducted at Stanford University, as well as in various countries, link alcohol containing mouthwashes to an increased risk of oral cancer. In addition to this, there are cases of accidental poisoning in children. That right there is enough to make me want to make my own!

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Mouthwash is great, but it is no substitute for brushing or flossing, even though mouthwash commercials make it seem like 20 seconds of swishing is the same as going to the dentist for a teeth cleaning.

-Do not use tap water, as it contains various chemicals that can affect teeth and gums negatively. Use filtered or distilled water instead.

-Some of the recipes below include essential oils-be sure to avoid adding too much or swallowing these, as it could cause some digestive upset (I have never had a problem personally, but some people might.)

-If you would rather avoid essential oils, you can boil herbs to draw out their beneficial properties. These mixtures should be kept in the refrigerator for a maximum of 2 weeks.

Rosemary Mint Mouthwash

This refreshing mouthwash contains peppermint and rosemary, the former to give that cooling tingly minty fresh sensation so many people love, the latter because it contains constituents that may help fight odor causing “germs” in the mouth. The anise seeds can also eliminate bacteria that contribute to odor.

You will need...

-2 ½ cups of water

-1 ½ tablespoons of fresh rosemary leaves OR 3 drops of rosemary essential oil

-1 ½ tablespoons of fresh chopped mint leaves OR 4-5 drops of peppermint essential oil

-1 teaspoon of anise seeds

-A container with a tightly fitting lid

Directions

1. If you are steeping the herbs, place the rosemary, peppermint, and anise seeds in 2 ½ cups of water in a pot over medium-low heat. Infuse for 20 minutes, strain, and bottle once cooled. To use, swish a tablespoon around in your mouth for 1 minute. Keep in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

2. If you are using essential oils, omit the anise seed and simply add 4-5 drops of peppermint and 3 drops of rosemary essential oil to 2 ½ cups of water. Swish 1 tablespoon around in your mouth for 1 minute. Be sure to give the bottle a good shake before using-this will last up to a month.

Cinnamon Mouthwash

Perhaps my favorite mouthwash, this recipe contains cinnamon powder, honey, baking soda, and lemon juice. Unlike mint, which tends to simply mask the smell of bad breath, cinnamon truly kills off odor causing bacteria, reducing it by up to 50%. Honey sweetens the flavor a little bit, without adding a bunch of artificial sugar to the blend. It also has antibacterial properties. The best kind of honey to get is Manuka honey (from New Zealand) as it contains 127 times the amount of methylglyoxal, the antimicrobial agent that kills off bacteria, than other types of honey. Lemon juice has a refreshing citrus smell, and also stimulates the salivary glands-helpful, since a dry mouth contributes to bad breath. Baking soda also works against bacteria, and may help whiten teeth.

You will need...

- 2 lemons
- 1/2 teaspoon-1 teaspoon
baking soda
- 1 ½ teaspoons of honey
- 1 cup of warm water
- 1/2 tablespoon of cinnamon
- A bottle or jar with a tightly
fitting lid

Directions

1. Put cinnamon, baking soda, and warm water into your container.
2. Stir in the lemon juice and honey.
3. Shake well to combine everything. When you need to freshen your breath swish/gargle 1-2 tablespoons for 1 minute. Shake before each use in case any cinnamon has settled on the bottom. This will keep for 2-3 weeks in the refrigerator.

Tea Tree Peppermint Mouthwash

Tea tree oil has antimicrobial properties, while the peppermint helps masks the smell of bad breath and the flavor of the tea tree oil. Be sure not to swallow this mixture, as the internal effects of tea tree oil have not been carefully studied.

You will need...

- 1-2 drops of tea tree oil
- 2-3 drops of peppermint oil
- 1 cup of water

Directions

1. Pour the water into your container and add the essential oils. Swish 1 tablespoon for 1 minute. Shake before each use. This will keep for up to 3 weeks in the refrigerator.

Shampoo

Shampoo has some incredibly convincing tricks that it plays on the unassuming buyer. While it can be tempting to buy fancy bottles of shampoo, with their alluring names and grand promises of perfect hair, there are good reasons to steer clear of it. First, it's expensive! At least, the "good" stuff is. Second, there's a good chance you're paying for a bottle that probably has some sort of irritating chemical in it, one that is counter-productive in the long run for what you're trying to achieve. Third, when you make your own shampoo you do not just yourself, but the environment, a huge favor. The packaging, the plastic bottles, the process of making the shampoo, all of it is wasteful and polluting.

At its core, setting aside any other claims commercial products dish up, shampoo is here to keep hair looking and feeling clean. A secretion called sebum is produced by oil glands in the scalp that keeps hair healthy, shiny, and full. When too much sebum accumulates, hair starts to clump and look greasy. Shampoo works by breaking down that oil and making possible to wash out, because no matter how much water you use, it will not wash oil out-dust and dirt perhaps, but not oil.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Don't over wash your hair. If you are prone to greasy hair, you may need to shampoo every day, but if not, skip the shampoo one day and see what happens. This doesn't mean you have to forego a shower, by the way. Where too much sebum can make hair greasy and your scalp itchy, too little sebum and your hair will be frizzy, prone to breaking, and/or dull. There's a reason our scalp makes sebum, and it's actually your friend when it comes to good looking hair.

-Lather does absolutely nothing when it comes to how well a shampoo cleans your hair/scalp. It is a marketing hook that keeps consumers coming back because they are satisfied with the foamy lather-if its lathering it must be doing something right? No. It makes no difference. It's the same as foaming toothpaste.

-Keeping your hair looking good isn't just dependent on your shampoo-washing habits, any other products you use in your hair, and heat treatments like blow-drying and straightening all contribute to damage or dullness.

Homemade Liquid Shampoo

This recipe calls for liquid castile soap, vegetable glycerin, and optional essential oils for scent. The castile soap is what does the grunt work, breaking down oils and what not. The vegetable glycerin keeps your hair looking healthy, shiny, and prevents it from totally drying out-it also nourishes your scalp as well. Castile soap on its own tends to leave hair feeling a little dry and tangled, which is where the coconut milk comes in, softening and nourishing your hair and scalp even further. It also adds a nice, rich, sulfate-free lather...and even though lather doesn't do anything on its own, it's still nice to have.

You will need...

- 1/2 cup of liquid castile soap
- 5-8 teaspoons of coconut milk
- 3 teaspoons of vegetable glycerin
- 1/2 cup of water
- 10 drops of essential oil

Directions

1. Stir together all the ingredients and store for up to 1 week in the refrigerator.

Simple Baking Soda Shampoo

This requires one ingredient that everybody should have in their home-baking soda! The fine grains scrub away excess sebum, dirt, dandruff, you name it. Baking soda is very alkaline, so to keep your hair from becoming too dry or brittle, follow up with an apple cider vinegar rinse. The vinegar will also wash any baking soda residue out of your hair-just make sure to use it after you have rinsed the majority of baking soda out.

You will need...

- Baking soda
- 1 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 cup of water

Directions

1. Mix baking soda with water to form a paste, or add to your regular shampoo. Use as you would normal shampoo, rinse, and then use 1 cup of apple cider vinegar diluted with 1/2 cup of water to balance pH levels and leave hair shiny and healthy.

Sugar Cubes

Instead of scooping the scrub out of the jar, I made it into cubes. I can't get enough of these little guys. It's so easy to just grab one and hop in the shower, and I feel like I am utilizing the right amount and not wasting any. The main reason we use a sugar scrub is to exfoliate, or slough off dead skin cells. We shed about nine pounds of skin a year- it's no wonder we need help getting rid of it sometimes!

Tips & Troubleshooting

-If you are making these in a "sheet" form in a baking pan and then slicing it into smaller cubes, line the pan first with parchment or wax paper. If you have made the face scrub cubes, be aware that the temperature of your hand will soften the coconut oil, so try to steady the pan with one hand and cut with the other to avoid touching them too much.

-If you feel like the cube melts too quickly in the shower, face away from the stream of water.

-If you find your cubes have softened, simply store them back in the freezer (even the refrigerator will do) or in a cool, dark, place such as your pantry. Coconut oil is solid up to 76 degrees Fahrenheit, after which it begins to melt.

- The first version of this recipe yields a softer cube, as it has a higher amount of coconut oil. I use these for my face. The second recipe (body scrub sugar cubes) results in a coarser cube, as the amount of coconut oil is lessened, so I use these for body scrub.

-Feel free to add essential oils to these. I usually opt to leave them out because I just love the natural aroma of shea butter and coconut oil.

-You are more than welcome to leave these in your freezer until needed if you are worried about them holding their shape, however, I am quite pleased with this recipe because they hold together so well even when left sitting out. In the wintertime I have no problem leaving out even in my kitchen (except for my dog, who once swiped one and ate it) but come the hot and humid summer, I place them in my pantry which is cooler.

Sugar Scrub Face Cubes

-After you've had your cubes popped into the freezer for about 5-10 minutes, pull them out. You will likely notice a layer of oil that seems to have separated and formed a layer on the top. Use a fork to mash up the scrub again, blending as much of the oil back in as you can.

-I make these much smaller than the body scrub cubes because the delightful coconut oil is so rich. You may feel like your face is "slick" after using the cube. Don't worry-once you are rinsed and out of the shower the coconut oil quickly absorbs, leaving your skin soft and moisturized.

Sugar Scrub Face Cubes

You will need...

-An ice cube mold, a soap mold, a baking pan, or a muffin tray

-1 1/3 cups of white sugar

-1 cup of coconut oil

-2 tablespoons of shea butter

-Several drops of essential oil (optional)

Directions

1. In a double boiler melt your coconut oil completely. Remove from heat and quickly stir in shea butter.

2. Add sugar, stirring until everything is incorporated. Pop into the freezer, taking out 5-10 minutes later and stirring any settled oil back into the mix.

3. Remove from the freezer and take out of the molds. Cut them into small cubes and let them dry for about 30 minutes before placing into an airtight container. These will last, properly stored, up to 4 months. If left in the freezer, they will last for a year.

Sugar Scrub Body Cubes

You will need...

-An ice cube mold, baking pan, muffin tin, or soap molds

-1/2 cup of coconut oil

-4 tablespoons of shea butter

-1 1/3 cups of white sugar

Directions

1. In a double boiler melt the coconut oil completely. Remove from the heat and quickly stir in the shea butter.

2. When the coconut oil and the shea butter are combined, stir in the sugar.

3. Scoop or pour the mixture into your mold and let them solidify in the freezer for 45-60 minutes. Cut them into smaller sizes if desired.

Toothpaste

There are plenty of reasons to make your own toothpaste. Many people have sensitivities to various ingredients, or worry about their kids accidentally swallowing too much. Some kinds of toothpaste sold in stores and labeled as natural still contain nasty ingredients. One such ingredient is sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS.) SLS is used in a hundred and one different cosmetic products like shampoos, conditioners, lotions, and toothpaste. It is a detergent, which right away makes me leery, and is responsible for all that great foaming bubbling action we all know and love. That bubbling, whether it's shampoo or toothpaste, does absolutely nothing except keep consumers going back for more. SLS is a known irritant, and numerous studies have shown it as harmful to human skin, eyes, and when swallowed.

While some people may not notice the difference, many people who are more sensitive to ingredients are irritated by it. I would also rather not give my kids toothpaste with something in it that I could only cross my fingers and hope they didn't swallow. A lot of people use toothpaste, obviously, and don't have a problem, but for those who want to steer clear of putting unknown ingredient's in their mouth, homemade toothpaste is easy, cheap, and works quite well.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-If you cannot stand the taste of toothpaste without a sweetener, you can add some xylitol (a sugar alcohol, sugar substitute) to make the paste taste good. I am putting this in here simply because I know of other people who enjoy it, but it is completely optional. If you DO use xylitol, be very aware that it is quite toxic to dogs. While it doesn't affect human blood sugar, it will quickly throw a dog into hypoglycemic shock with a dangerous wave of insulin. If enough is consumed, liver failure is imminent. This goes for any gum containing the stuff, cough drops, etc. Keep it labeled and away from curious canines. I do not use xylitol myself.

-Another option, and my preference, is a little bit of food grade vegetable glycerin. It will act as a mild sugarless sweetener, and give your toothpaste a nice consistency. Make sure that you are getting food grade.

-Baking soda is abrasive; however it pales in comparison when it comes to regular toothpaste. There is something called the relative dentin abrasion scale (RDA), which is used to classify the damage done to dentin, the stuff that makes up the bulk of a tooth, due to friction. Anything below 70 on the scale is classified as low-abrasive. Baking soda scores a 7. Some commercial toothpaste, especially when whitening agents are used, has an RDA of 189. The maximum RDA rating toothpaste can get and still be sold to the public is 250, with anything between 150 and 250 regarded as the "harmful limit." The reason people may struggle with baking soda being too abrasive is likely caused by the fact that they are not making it into a thin enough paste with water. The grains will be irritating if you do not thin them out with some water first.

-While you may be tempted to scrub your teeth as hard as possible, don't! This damages enamel and can negatively affect your gum line.

- Another topic of tension is the use of fluoride, be it in toothpaste or systematic water fluoridation (adding fluoride to public drinking water supplies.) Fluoride compounds are used to prevent tooth decay, and it is widely accepted by many. Some people, however, have sensitivity to fluoride that can be hard to steer clear of.

-The contention of systematic fluoridation is mainly in North America, as continental Europe ceased the practice. Some issues include the cost outweighing the benefit, uncontrollable dosage, and the inability to choose plain and simple whether someone wants to drink fluoride. This raises debate over "mass medication" and opponents argue that there is no way to get consent from all water consumers, nor can the effects be accurately monitored. This is to say nothing of the impact that it has on the environment. I myself do not support the use of fluoride in our drinking water.

Coconut Oil & Baking Soda

Coconut oil has wonderful antimicrobial properties that make it perfect for toothpaste, as it holds back odor causing bacteria, as well as cavities. On top of that, some people find it helps whiten their teeth naturally. Baking soda also helps with bacteria and whitening, plus its slightly abrasive texture can scrub away things caught between teeth. Be sure not to go overboard with it though-a little goes a long way. The essential oils add flavor/scent (I stick to peppermint/cinnamon.) Only a few drops are needed, with coconut oil being the diluting carrier oil.

You will need...

- 1 cup of coconut oil
- 1-2 tablespoons of baking soda
- 2 drops of peppermint or cinnamon essential oil

Directions

1. Soften coconut oil and stir in baking soda and essential oil. Store in a mason jar indefinitely.
2. To use you can place the jar in warm water or the microwave to soften it, or you can use a little measuring spoon to scoop some onto your damp toothbrush. Brush as usual, using a pea sized amount for little ones.

Baking Soda Paste

This is a simple paste that requires only baking soda and water. Make sure you dilute it enough that the grains of baking soda aren't overly abrasive.

You will need...

- Baking soda
- Water
- Peppermint oil (optional)
- 1/8 teaspoon of Food grade vegetable glycerin (optional)

Directions

1. Mix a little bit of water with about a 1/4 teaspoon of baking soda until you reach desired consistency. If you'd like, add a drop of peppermint oil to 1/8 teaspoon of food grade vegetable glycerin and mix that into the baking soda and water.
2. Dip damp toothbrush in and brush as usual.

Sea Salt Scrub

Sea salt contains trace minerals that can help re-mineralize teeth. It also helps cut down on bacteria count, whiten teeth a bit, and freshen breath. Use this to brush your teeth 2-3 times a week, as it is too coarse to use on a daily basis.

You will need...

- Sea Salt
- Water

Directions

1. Mix a little bit of water with about ¼ teaspoon of sea salt, dip your damp brush into it, and brush as usual 2-3 times a week.

Household

"It was not until we saw the picture of the earth, from the moon, that we realized how small and how helpless this planet is - something that we must hold in our arms and care for." - Margaret Mead

Abrasive Cleaners

Sometimes grime gets incredibly stuck to surfaces, and an all-purpose cleaner just can't seem to get it off. In this case, something that creates a little bit of abrasion is needed. I really don't like the powders sold in stores, and have found that baking soda works a treat in its place. Because it is made up of very small granules, it's great for scrubbing through anything gunked onto a surface. In addition it's an alkaline substance, and therefore neutralizes the acidic oils that are keeping the grime caked on. It also has fantastic anti-microbial properties, and you can make it smell wonderful with a wide variety of essential oils.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Sprinkle baking soda over (damp) crusty dishes and you'll be able to scrub them easily after letting it sit for several hours.

- Dampen the surface you are cleaning (slightly) when you use baking soda before putting the baking soda down.

- If you are going after a really tough spot, let the baking soda sit for 10 minutes on the surface (after you've dampened it.)

- After using the baking soda, use some vinegar to dissolve any bit of powdery residue that may be left over.

- Always test your surface before going all out, especially if you suspect it may scratch.

Soda & Sponge

The title for this recipe sounds like the title of a very bad romance, but baking soda and sponges are truly a beautiful combination. The scratchy side of the sponge combined with the power of the soda works wonders!

You will need...

- 1 damp sponge, with a coarse side
- Baking Soda
- Vinegar (optional)

Directions

1. Dampen a sponge that has a coarse side-it doesn't have to be wet, just damp-and pour a little baking soda into a clean bowl.
2. Dip the sponge into the baking soda and scrub away! Alternatively, you can sprinkle baking soda directly onto the surface that needs cleaning, and scrub from there.
3. You can follow this treatment with a spritz of vinegar to rinse away any leftover baking soda that may have snuck into little cracks.

Soda & Salt

Not the drama-filled sequel to Soda & A Sponge, baking soda and salt make a good abrasive cleaner if you need a little extra “scrub” power. Use sea salt here, with coarser flakes. Avoid using this on surfaces that scratch easily.

You will need...

- Baking Soda
- Coarse sea salt
- A damp sponge
- Vinegar (optional)

Directions

1. Mix the baking soda and salt in a bowl at a 1-1 ratio, and dampen your sponge. Dip it into the mixture and scrub, following up with a vinegar rinse if you like.

Air Fresheners

It has always seemed a bit odd, in my opinion, to spray chemicals into the air to 'freshen' it. To me, fresh air isn't about crazy scents that make a home smell overwhelmingly artificial. I like clean, pure, and simple. Of course one of the best ways to keep air fresh is to clean regularly, but no matter how much you do this, your house will still have a signature odor-which you probably don't notice since you become so used to it. I have a lot of dogs coming through my house as fosters, not to mention all the dirty saddle pads, muck boots, and horse blankets I schlep back and forth from the barn. Needless to say, I fret a lot about how my home smells to other people, so I find these air fresheners a particular blessing.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- The most natural way to freshen, filter, and purify air is through the use of plants. Truly. NASA even went so far as to compile a list of the best air-filtering plants as part of the NASA Clean Air Study. Plants use a process to move chemicals in the air to their roots. The leaves absorb certain chemicals and impurities, and transport them through plant tissue into the roots. All of this leaves (no pun intended) the surrounding air clean and fresh.

Simmering Smells

By simmering ingredients on a stovetop, you release their lovely scents into the air. The beauty of freshening air this way is that you can come up with pretty much any combination of smells that you want to, at a very low cost. The downside, of course, is that you can't leave your stove unattended and duck out for a quick shopping trip.

Fresh Citrus

You will need...

- 1 sliced orange
- 2 sliced lemons
- Several drops of lemon or orange essential oil
- 2-3 cups of water

Winter Warmth

You will need...

- 1-2 tablespoons of cloves
- 5 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tablespoon of vanilla extract
- Several drops of pine essential oil
- 2-3 cups of water

Peppermint Twist

You will need...

- Several drops of peppermint essential oil
- A handful of fresh mint leaves
- 1 sliced lime
- 1-2 drops of eucalyptus essential oil
- 2-3 cups of water

Directions

1. Combine all of your ingredients on the stovetop in a pot and pour in 2-3 cups of water (or enough to cover them) and bring to a boil.
2. Simmer for as long as you can be home and have an eye on the stove. When you are done, you can put the ingredients and liquid in a jar and keep it in the fridge for up to 7 days to reuse. Have fun experimenting with your own spices and oils, the above are just to give you some ideas. Honestly, if you wanted to keep it simple, you could just throw some cinnamon sticks in and call it a day.

Spray Air Freshener

I shy away from anything “aerosol” that you can buy in stores, but don’t mind it when I’ve made it myself! All you need is essential oils, water, and a spray bottle-preferably one with a fine mist setting. To make any air freshener, simply drip however many drops of essential oil you wish to use into a spray bottle, fill with water, shake, and spray! You can play around with whatever blends you want, but I’ve included some of my favorite below. Your mister bottle should be either PET plastic, or glass, so the essential oils do not degrade the container.

Summer Spritz

You will need...

- 5 drops of orange essential oil
- 5 drops of lemon essential oil
- 2 drops of lavender essential oil
- 1 drop of rosemary essential oil
- A small mister bottle
- Fresh water

Cabin Fever

You will need...

- 1-2 tablespoons of cloves
- 5 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tablespoon of vanilla extract
- Several drops of pine essential oil
- 2-3 cups of water

Relaxing & Warm

You will need...

- Several drops of peppermint essential oil
- A handful of fresh mint leaves
- 1 sliced lime
- 1-2 drops of eucalyptus essential oil
- 2-3 cups of water

Directions

1. Blend your essential oils and then pour them into your mister bottle. Fill the bottle with water.
2. Shake well before use and spray! If you are worried about it coming in contact with your skin, add 1 tablespoon of carrier oil-I have never had a problem with it personally.

Diffuser

I love setting diffusers around the house and letting them slowly release their wonderful smell into the air. I like that they last a lot longer than spray air fresheners, and I don't feel like I am using too much at once, just to have it dissipate. Oil diffusers work with a base oil, essential oils, and reeds. The base oil is what carries the scent of the essential oils up the reeds and out into the air, and reeds are "sticks" that transport the aromatic oil. You can use whichever essential oils you like, but you will need safflower or sweet almond oil to work as the diffuser. These are the best because they are light oils, and travel up the reeds easily. If you don't have any oil, you can use water, but it will not last as long. You also have to add at least a teaspoon of high proof alcohol, such as vodka, to bind the essential oils to the water. As far as the jars go, choose a glass one that has a narrow neck and wide base. I collectively refer to these as "squat jars."

You will need...

- Several squat jars
- Reeds
- Essential oil/s of choice
- Base oil (safflower or sweet almond)

Directions

1. Fill the squat jar halfway full with your base oil, and then add in your choice of essential oils. If you aren't sure where to start, try equal parts cedarwood and orange essential oil-a very uplifting blend!
2. Insert a reed and use it to stir the oils together. Add 3 or 4 more reeds to get more scent traveling into the air. Change the reeds whenever they become saturated, and check the oil every now and then to make sure it still smells good.
3. Place these all around the house! Just make sure to keep them out of reach of curious critters and children

All Purpose Cleaner

Everybody needs that one trusty cleaner they can turn to for most jobs around the house, and this is mine. It's nothing miraculous, but it's a steady-fast little mixture, and I use it on all different surfaces-tile, wood, you name it.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Get a 2 gallon jug and mix up a giant batch, keeping the ratios the same. Store it under your sink and re-fill your spray bottle as needed. In this case, don't add any water. Simply add a 1-1 ratio of the vinegar mix and water when you do pour it into an individual bottle.

-This is an acidic mixture. Test a small patch of the surface you are cleaning before using it over everything.

-This particularly good at getting rid of soap scum build up.

All Purpose Cleaner

First and foremost this contains vinegar (of course!) to act as the body of the cleaner, distilled water, and witch hazel. The witch hazel makes a good cleaning substitute for rubbing alcohol, disinfecting but gentle. Finally there's lemon essential oil to add grease cutting power, and tea tree oil for an extra antibacterial kick.

You will need...

- 1 cup of white distilled vinegar
- 1 cup of fresh filtered or distilled water
- 15-20 drops of lemon essential oil
- 1/2 cup of witch hazel
- 5-10 drops of eucalyptus or tea tree essential oil
- A spray bottle

Directions

1. Add your essential oil to your spray bottle and then pour in vinegar, water, and witch hazel. Shake well before each use. If you are cleaning a particularly stubborn spot, let it sit for 5-10 minutes first. It is safe to leave this out with water in it for 3 weeks. It could probably go longer because of the vinegar, but I don't want to risk the nasties growing. If you make a large batch in advance, don't add the water until you pour it into your spray bottle so you can use it all up in time.

Carpet Cleaner

With my own rowdy dogs, muddy yard, and so many fosters coming through my house, I am familiar with pet stains of all varieties. I don't think there's any stain I haven't had to deal with at this point. I have put more into the costly store-bought variety of pet-stain removers than I want to think about, but always ended up frustrated, with a big stain anyways once the stuff had dried.

If there is one thing I have learned over the years, it's that there is no perfect stain remover. Getting a stain cleaned up is a combination of timing, thoroughness, and then a good cleaner. It's extra work, but if possible, soak up the stain immediately and don't skimp! Blotting it a few times really isn't going to do the trick-you'd be surprised at how quickly and how deeply spills or pet accidents penetrate the carpet. I can't emphasize how important it is to draw out as much as you can while it's fresh. Once a stain has set, there are things you can try to get rid of it, but they won't work nearly as well. That's just the reality of it.

I do sometimes use vinegar in carpet cleaning, especially for deodorizing, but most dirt and oils are acidic, so using alkaline cleaners (such as baking soda and castile soap) are the most effective at breaking them down and pulling them out.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- Follow up any cleaned spot with a spritz of scented vinegar to get rid of odor.

- Don't rub at a stain when first absorbing it, blot it. Rubbing only pushes the stain in deeper and spreads it around. However, it is ok to gently and carefully rub your cleaner into the stained area.

- If you catch the stain when it's fresh, neatly fold a (thick) square of paper towels and set it over the mess after any solids have been removed. Place a heavy book (a really boring one-one you don't like to read) on top of the paper towels and stand on it. It sounds ridiculous, but it gets a lot up! Repeat until the paper towels stop absorbing.

- Soap attracts dirt-it wouldn't work very well if it didn't! Make sure you have no residue left in the carpet if you use soap to clean it so you don't end up drawing more dirt to the spot. A spritz of vinegar will take care of soap film that may still be on the fibers.

- Always spot test your carpets before using a new cleaning solution.

Liquid Castile Soap

Castile soap is real soap-I would classify most soap nowadays as detergents. It is natural, gentle, effective, and alkaline to break down dirt and oils. It has an olive oil base, and is available in liquid and solid form. For carpet cleaning, I use the liquid kind. It's well worth having this stuff around! This recipe can be used for just about any stain, old or new.

You will need...

- 1 part pure liquid castile soap (amount will vary with stain)
- Cold water
- A toothbrush
- Paper towels or a rag
- White distilled vinegar (optional)

Directions

1. Remove any solid matter and soak up as much of the stain as possible.
2. Pour a small amount of cold water over it (don't soak the carpet) followed by as little liquid castile soap as possible for the size of the stain you are cleaning.
3. Let it sit for a minute, then take an old toothbrush (I have a lot of extra toothbrushes lying around for cleaning purposes-a very handy tool!) and gently scrub the soap into the stain. Be careful not to be too vigorous or careless with your motions, since you don't want to spread the stain.
4. At this point, if the stain is stubborn, you can let the soap sit briefly and then scrub it some more (gently) before using something to blot up any moisture. Follow with a spritz of vinegar to deodorize/break down any soap residue.

Castile Soap & Baking Soda

Baking soda and castile soap are both alkaline, and make a great cleaner when combined. The baking soda will also help absorb any odor if the stain is the result of an unwanted present left by your beloved pet.

You will need...

- Liquid castile soap
- Baking soda
- Vinegar
- Water
- Clean rag
- Toothbrush

Directions

1. Blot up any excess liquid or solids.
2. Mix equal parts liquid castile soap and baking soda to form a paste. Cover the stain with the paste and, using an old toothbrush or damp rag, gently scrub. Use some scented vinegar to rinse the soap and baking soda out.

Bring Out the Borax

In case of a really heavy duty stain, I will turn to borax. Although I don't consider borax completely non-toxic, I do consider it a much better alternative to many other cleaners. I can't tell you whether or not you should use it, but I did write about it under the "That Sounds Scary" section so you can make your own decision. If I do use it, I will vacuum the spot thoroughly before I let any pets on or near it.

You will need...

- Borax
- Baking soda
- Water
- Toothbrush

Directions

1. Make a paste of equal parts borax and baking soda, using just enough water to get it to stick and spread, but not watering it down too much.
2. Work the paste into the carpet fibers with your toothbrush, and then let it sit until it's dry.
3. Vacuum up the powder, and use some vinegar to get any residue off. Make sure to not let kids or critters near the spot while there is still borax on it!

Liquid Dish Soap

This recipe contains castile soap, baking soda, washing soda, vegetable glycerin, and optional essential oils for scent. The castile soap is the soap part (duh) that cuts through grease and grime, while the baking soda and washing soda are both water softeners to help boost the cleaning efficiency of the castile soap and reduce any soap film that could be left clouding your dishes. Vegetable glycerin is water soluble, and gives this soap its smooth gel factor, while cornstarch also helps thicken the consistency and ensures a streak free clean on glassware.

You will need...

- 5 cups of water
- 2 1/2-3 tablespoons of grated castile soap
- 1/4 teaspoon of baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon washing soda
- 1 teaspoon vegetable glycerin
- 15-20 drops of essential oil (optional)
- 3 tablespoons of cornstarch
- White distilled vinegar (optional)

Directions

1. Put the cool water in a saucepan and stir in the cornstarch. Over medium heat add grated castile soap, and washing soda. Stir until all the ingredients have completely dissolved.
2. Remove from the heat and allow the mixture to cool for a minute or so before stirring in baking soda and vegetable glycerin.
3. Pour into a jar and allow it to cool overnight. In the morning give it a good stir and pour into your container.
4. If you have hard water, spritz some vinegar onto your dishes after cleaning them to make sure no film or soap scum gets left behind.

Drain Cleaner

While routine maintenance and active prevention are the best methods to keep drains flowing smoothly, sometimes, clogs happen. Although homemade drain cleaners may not work with the blast-through fast acting efficiency of something store bought, I find the benefits far superior. You don't get the fumes or the negative environmental impact, and your family and household is safer for not having the toxic chemicals lying around. On top of all of this, I find they do work quite well; you just need a touch of patience.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-If you have a garbage disposal, toss peelings from citrus fruits such as lemons and oranges down the drain, and grind them up. This will make your drain and sink smell wonderfully fresh.

Drain Cleaner

This recipe contains vinegar and lemon juice which are both acidic by nature, and help break down certain materials that may be causing the back-up. Because they are acidic they also create foaming action with baking soda. Remember those volcanoes you would build in grade school with baking soda and vinegar? You're doing a similar thing to your drain. All that vigorous bubbling from the baking soda really does the trick when it comes to breaking stuff down. Follow up the mixture with boiling water to soften and flush away fats that may have become hardened in the drain-if you're cleaning the kitchen sink, just think about bacon fat! The lemon juice is optional-it can be a nice touch, but isn't necessary.

You will need...

- 1 cup of baking soda
- 1/2 cup white distilled vinegar
- 1/4 cup of lemon juice (optional)
- 2 kettles worth of boiling water (or 6-8 cups)

Directions

1. Pour a kettle full of boiling water down the drain (roughly 3-4 cups)
2. Sprinkle 1 cup of baking soda down the drain, shaking it back and forth as you pour so it doesn't just go straight down, but gets on the sides of the drain as well.
3. Pour 1/2 cup of vinegar down the drain and wait until the bubbling has subsided. When it stops, another 3-4 cups of boiling hot water down the drain.

Fabric Softener

Have you ever heard the saying “Minnesota nice?” Well let me tell you- Minnesota is not nice. Oh the people are lovely, but this state makes every winter as mean and harsh as it possibly can, and part of that means sucking any and all moisture out of the air. The result for me is hair that looks like I’ve been electrocuted on a daily basis, and two dogs and horse that look at me like I am the wickedest person alive when I accidentally give them a shock.

But even if you don’t have a one thousand pound animal getting jumpy around you, you still probably don’t like static, especially when it fills your clothes. That moment when you go out in public and then realize a sock (or worse-underwear) is clinging to your back? Or you pull a shirt over your head and your hair looks like you just got struck by lightning? It’s no fun. I don’t use fabric softener during the warmer months, but come wintertime, it’s vital for me. In addition to reducing static, these softeners also do their job just as their name implies and leave fabric soft and snuggly.

Fabric softener works by coating the fibers of clothes with a thin layer of lubricant chemicals that make the fibers feel smooth and prevent static electricity from building up. There’s a much more detailed explanation of what exactly is going on, but that’s the gist of it.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-If your clothes are still static-y, after you put them on, run over the problem spot(s) with the long side of a rust-free wire hanger. The metal diffuses any built up static charge instantly.

Liquid Fabric Softener

This recipe isn't any great secret-its vinegar, water, hair conditioner (optional) and essential oil. Vinegar is an amazing all-purpose cleaner, and the core of the many homemade cleaners that I use. In this fabric softener it works as the vinegar's hydrogen ions bind to negatively charged ions on the outside of the fiber, neutralizing their charge. The water isn't needed unless you add the conditioner-I usually opt out of the conditioner as I try to steer clear of as many chemicals as possible, but it does add a little extra something if you want to use it.

You will need...

-3 cups of white vinegar

-5-8 drops of your favorite scented essential oil

-If you are using it, add 1 1/2 -2 cups of hair conditioner and 6 cups of water

Directions

1. Get a container that seals well and add 3 cups of white vinegar before putting in a few drops of essential oil. Give it a stir, seal it off, and keep it in a cool dark place out of direct sunlight. It will keep for up to a year.

2. If you decide to use the conditioner, mix it in a pot with 6 cups of water and warm it over the stove briefly, stirring constantly, until well-blended.

3. Add 1/4-1/2 cup to an average size load with conditioner, and 1/2-1 cup if you are just using the vinegar.

Fabric Softener Crystals

I think I may prefer the crystal/powder form of fabric softener-it was the first variety I ever made, and it's probably the one I use the most today. It only requires salt, essential oil, and baking soda. It does help with static a little, but not quite as much as the liquid softener.

You will need...

-2 cups of Epsom salt of course sea salt

-20-30 drops of your favorite essential oil or blend of scents

-1/2 cup of baking soda

-A marker

-A container with a tightly fitting lid

Directions

1. Mix together salt and your favorite essential oil.

2. Add baking soda and stir until everything is completely blended. Store in a labeled container with a tightly fitting lid out of direct sunlight.

3. Use 2-3 tablespoons and toss in with your clothes before starting the wash. Put directly in the drum with the load.

Dryer Sheets

All you need to make your own dryer sheets is a batch of the above powder fabric softener!

You will need...

-1 batch of powder fabric softener

-2 soft, clean, cotton cloths (I use small dishcloths)

Directions

1. Run each cloth under water and wring out excess liquid.
2. Lay one side of the cloth in the powder, pressing it in a little with your fingertips, and then flip and repeat with the other side. Shake off any excess powder and toss in the dryer with your clothes.
3. Repeat with the other cloth.

Floor Cleaner

Most people know they want a sparkling clean, perfectly polished floor, but what very few people know is that you really don't need anything fancy (or toxic) to get the results you want. Truly. These floor cleaners take a little extra elbow grease, but work beautifully.

Tips & Troubleshooting

Mild Mop

-If you have a truly sticky spot on your floor, use an abrasive cleaner before using the vinegar spray.

Mild Mop

This mild mop mixture contains nothing more than vinegar, peppermint essential oil, and water. If you have a really dirty floor, let the solution sit for 15 minutes or so (after testing a small part of the floor first) or toss on some baking soda for those truly sticky smudges.

You will need...

- 1 cup of distilled water
- 1 cup of white vinegar
- 15-20 drops of peppermint essential oil
- A mop or rag
- Baking soda (optional)

Directions

1. Mix vinegar, water, and the essential oil in a spray bottle and shake well.
2. Spray onto the floor and let it sit for up to 15 minutes before scrubbing with a mop or rag.

Extra Tough Floor Cleaner

This is almost more of a scrub than a cleaner, and utilizes liquid soap to give it an extra boost. This can also double as a tile/tub cleaner.

You will need...

- 1 ¼ cups baking soda
- 1/2 cup liquid castile soap
- White vinegar
- 1/3 cup water
- Peppermint essential oil
- A spray bottle

Directions

1. Mix baking soda, soap, peppermint oil, and water. Pour into a spray bottle and squirt onto the floor, and scrub.
2. Rinse with scented vinegar diluted with warm water to get rid of any baking soda or soap residue.

Pine Scrub

For those of us who need to smell pine to feel like something is truly clean.

You will need...

- 1 cup liquid castile soap
- 1/8 cup water
- 20 drops of pine essential oil

Directions

1. Mix together water, soap, and essential oil.
2. Shake well, apply to the surface that needs cleaning, and scrub with the rough back of a sponge. Rinse with scented vinegar if you have a hard time getting all the soap off.

Glass Cleaner

I love glass in all its forms, especially the big windows that let sunlight stream into our homes. I am a huge fan of natural light, and can't have enough windows in a room, but they are sadly fragile, and extremely prone to smudging and clouding. Let me elaborate on that smudging bit-I have two dogs. Two big, mushy-faced dogs that like nothing better than to stare out the windows-breathe on them, press their big wet noses up against them, and lick them (don't ask me why on that last part.) This results in some serious crusting and smudging. But the last thing I want to do is reach for store bought cleaner. I despise using it, and I know my pups are going to be right back at smooshing their faces up against the glass when I am done cleaning, and I don't want that on their precious mugs. So I needed an alternative-something that would get the goobers off, but not harm my four-legged children- and discovered that this natural glass cleaner does a better job than any I've used before. Even better than how well it works is that when I use this, I no longer have to worry about my window-lickers window-licking. They are free to smudge and smoosh away and I will carry on with peace of mind to clean my windows again...and again...and again.

This recipe contains a rather random ingredient-cornstarch. Made from the ground heart of the corn kernel, there's something about it that reduces any streaking on your windows after you clean them. When you first spray this cleaner on and wipe with your cloth, it will look streaky/cloudy, and you will curse my name for tricking you into putting corn starch on your windows. Just wait-it does get better. After you've sprayed and cleaned with your first cloth, go over with a second clean cloth to wipe away any little smears you see. Voila! You will be left with the most gloriously clean windows you've ever had, and totally satisfied that you made it all yourself.

You will need...

- A spray bottle
- 1/4 cup of white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons of cornstarch
- 2 cups of warm water
- 2 clean soft cloths

Directions

1. Mix together white vinegar and cornstarch in a spray bottle.
2. Add 2 cups of warm water to the mixture and shake to get everything well mixed.
3. Spray onto windows/ glass surfaces and wipe with a clean soft cloth for a sparkling finish. If you prefer, you can also spray directly onto your cloth and wipe.
4. If needed go over the window a second time with a dry, soft, cloth to get it perfectly sparkling.

Jewelry Cleaner

When you have jewelry you want it to shine and sparkle, not look dull-or worse-tarnished. Recently I had a wedding to go to and pulled out a silver necklace I hadn't worn in a while, and lo and behold, it was so discolored and ancient looking it could have been from the Shang Dynasty back in 1675 BC. I dug up an old bottle of jewelry cleaner, but wasn't able to go through with using it when the fumes just about knocked me unconscious after uncapping it. A quick brainstorming session later led me to the conclusion that some old faithful household items would do just as dandy a job as the toxic stuff I held in my hand (albeit they did take a bit longer.)

Shining Silver

For silver jewelry, a thick paste of baking soda and some elbow grease will do the trick to get it shining and looking new again.

You will need...

- Baking soda
- White vinegar
- Water
- 2 clean, soft, cloths

Directions

1. Mix baking soda with just enough water to form a thick paste.
2. Dip a slightly dampened clean, soft, cloth into the mixture and polish away.
3. Dunk the silver into a bowl of white vinegar to dissolve any leftover baking soda residue, and dry/buff with another clean, soft, cloth.

Gleaming Gold

For gold you have two options-vinegar and baking soda, or beer. Make sure you don't use these on pearls or gem-stones, as it could loosen glue or damage their surface.

You will need...

- 1 tablespoons of baking soda
- 2 teaspoons of white distilled vinegar
- a bowl

OR

- Beer (not dark ale)
- A soft cloth

Directions

1. Set jewelry in a bowl and sprinkle baking soda over it. Add vinegar and let it fizz for a minute or so, and then polish with a cloth or damp sponge.
2. If using beer, simply pour it onto a clean cloth and polish jewelry. Make sure you use a light ale.

Shimmering Gems

A little club soda will gently make your gems look fantastic again.

You will need...

-1/4 cup of freshly cracked
open club soda

-2 soft clean cloths

Directions

1. Dampen a clean cloth with club soda and polish gems. Follow this by drying with another cloth.

Laundry Detergent

Because of “trade secrets” manufactures who make laundry detergent are not required to list exactly what they put in their products. Hmm. Whenever I can’t figure out what’s in something, my suspicions are aroused. There’s no way that (most) mass-produced detergent is anything but harmful to the environment, and there are more than a few people out there that will vouch for the fact that it can be harmful to us too. While there have been lower levels of 1,4-dioxane, a carcinogenic (i.e. cancer causing) chemical found in leading brands of detergent, nothing has been done about it, despite private testing showing that it leads to cancer and other health problems in rats. Now I am not saying using these products will give you cancer guaranteed, but for me, even a “trace” amount of these chemicals is too much. Making your own detergent does take more effort, but the peace of mind-not to mention the cost difference-makes it more than worth it.

Tips & Troubleshooting

-Manufacturers tend to overestimate how much detergent you need to use, as they try to strike a balance between the different types of water people have. Better to have too much than too little right? No, too much detergent not only costs you more, but will make your clothes dirtier. If you use too much detergent, I can almost guarantee it’s not all washing out. Run a load like you normally would and then do a rinse cycle with only water. About halfway through the cycle, or a little before, take a peek at what’s going on. You will probably see suds, and those suds are proof that there is still detergent in your clothes. Not only does this equate to it sitting against your skin-highly detrimental to those who are sensitive-but your clothes are still dirty! Detergent works by binding with dirt and oils and pulling them out of your clothes before getting rinsed away. What happens to the dirt when the detergent is still on your clothes? You’ve probably guessed by now-it’s still there as well.

-These recipes do not suds up much, and I have had no trouble with my HE front loading washer, or any build up. If you are worried about build up, you can add ¼ cup of white vinegar to the final rinse cycle. Vinegar during the rinse cycle will also soften clothes and help with static.

-Base your detergent off of your water and your clothes. Hard water contains mineral salts that interfere with soap doing its job properly, while soft water doesn’t. If you have hard water, you may have to use more than someone with soft water. In this case borax is very helpful, as it breaks down those pesky minerals, ensuring your detergent is cleaning at the utmost efficiency.

-If you reduce the amount of water, don’t forget to reduce the amount of detergent as well.

-Not quite ready to make the leap to making your own laundry detergent? Use less of the kind you buy and add borax or baking soda. Baking soda softens fabric and removes odor, while Borax just gives an overall cleaning boost, brightening any dingy clothes and increasing effectiveness if you have hard water. For liquid, add ½ cup of baking soda or borax at the same time as the liquid detergent (for a regular to large load.) If you use powder detergent, add ½ cup of each during the rinse cycle. Use less if the loads are smaller-even several shakes will help. In terms of the baking soda, too much can leave a pesky white residue, so start with less than you think you need and go from there.

Liquid Laundry Detergent

No secrets here-the first ingredient in this liquid detergent contains castile bar soap, an olive-oil based soap popular in homemade detergent recipes. Next on the list is washing soda. A highly alkaline compound that is similar to baking soda, but not quite the same, washing soda is known as sodium carbonate, and is a salt of carbonic acid, which is what produces the wide range of salts colloquially known as carbonates. A common source of washing soda is actually the ashes of plants. When used to wash laundry, the high alkalinity acts as a solvent, removing stains and breaking down grease, dirt, and oils. I use Borax personally, as I find it makes the detergent more effective, but you can leave it out if you prefer. The food grade vegetable glycerin is also optional-it can help with stains, and help keep your detergent “gelled.” It is water soluble and will not leave stains.

You will need...

- 1/2 bar of solid castile soap
- 1-2 cups of washing soda
- 4 cups of water
- 2 1/2 gallons of separate water
- 1/2 cup of Borax
- 2 tablespoons of food grade vegetable glycerin (optional)

Directions

1. Grate your soap. Castile soap will actually flake quite nicely if you ‘shave’ it with a knife (cut thinly) and don’t want to bother with a grater or food processor.
2. Get a pot. Add your grated soap, vegetable glycerin (if you are using it), and water, and then slowly pour in the washing soda and Borax. Make sure to continue to stir as you add the washing soda-it can clump and take a while to break down. Stir occasionally until no chunks of any kind remain.
3. In the meantime, boil 2 1/2 gallons of water, and then let it cool for 10 minutes. If you do not have enough space (or a big enough pot) to boil it, you can use very hot tap water. Add this water to a 3 gallon bucket.
4. Now stir the melted soap mixture into the bucket with your water until everything comes together. Leave the lid halfway ajar for 1 1/2-2 hours after you have mixed everything to allow any evaporation or steam to escape. If you cover the detergent when it’s toasty warm, condensation can form on the inside of the bucket lid and excess water will drip into your detergent.
5. After you’ve waited a bit, cover it completely and let the mixture sit for 24 hours. In the morning, stir in either a 1/2 cup of washing soda, or a 1/4 cup of Borax. It may look either too solid, or too watery, but don’t worry. Give it a good stir and it will come together. Funnel out into re-purposed detergent containers, or leave it in the bucket. Use 1/4 cup for regular loads, and up to a 1/2 cup for large loads. If you have an HE machine, use 2-3 tablespoons for a regular load, and 5 tablespoons to 1/4 cup for large loads. This will keep for up to 3 months in a cool, dark place, in an airtight container. If you won’t use all of this by that time, feel free to halve the amount.

“Lazy” Liquid Laundry Detergent

For those times you just don't feel like bringing out the pot and melting the soap and stirring it into a bucket and blah blah blah.

You will need...

- 1 cup of liquid castile soap
- 1 cup of water
- 2 tablespoons of baking soda
- 1/2 cup of washing soda
- 1/2 cup of Borax

Directions

1. Mix everything together thoroughly, and use the same ratios per load as the regular liquid laundry detergent. Store in an airtight container in a cool dark place for up to 3 months.

Powder Laundry Detergent

I have to say I prefer liquid laundry detergent over powdered, but here's a version for those of you who prefer powdered! This recipe uses castile bar soap (grated), washing soda, baking soda, and borax. This is also a good alternative if you struggle with getting the proper consistency of liquid detergent.

You will need...

- 1 cup of finely grated pure castile bar soap
- 2 cups washing soda
- 2 cups borax
- 1/2 cup baking soda

Directions

1. Grate the bar soap finely (or use a food processor) until you have 1 cup.
2. Mix this together with the washing soda, baking soda, and borax, and store in a container with a tightly fitting lid.
3. Use 2 tablespoons for small to regular loads, and up 5 tablespoons if a load is large and the clothes are heavily soiled. This will keep indefinitely.

Metal Cleaner

Metal cleaner is nasty stuff, and used to get me particularly freaked out when I used it on any grubby metal pots or pans. I was so paranoid that I would always toss out the sponge I used to scrub with afterwards, scared of what might happen if it came in contact with my dishes-even after being rinsed for minutes on end! These metal cleaners are similar to the “abrasive cleaners” but slightly more specialized to fit the task. Use them without fear!

Tips & Troubleshooting

-These cleaners are suitable for brass, bronze, and copper (not silver or jewelry though.) They could also be used on stainless steel.

-When using salt, make sure that the surface you are cleaning will not scratch easily.

Salt & Vinegar

Salt and vinegar makes for more than just good chips, it makes a great metal cleaner too. The abrasiveness of the salt and the acidity of the vinegar do a good job at removing grime, soap scum, and tarnish.

You will need...

- White distilled vinegar
- Sea salt
- A soft cloth

Directions

1. Dampen a cloth with vinegar and then dip the cloth in a small bowl of sea salt. Gently rub surface in a circular motion to clean.

Lemon, Flour & Salt for Rust

I have a tendency to procrastinate when it comes to doing the dishes sometimes, but when I accidentally left my cast iron pot in the sink overnight, I paid for putting it off with a giant rust stain on my lovely white sink. The solution? A salty paste of lemon juice, flour, and salt, left to sit and rubbed off with the lemon rind!

You will need...

- 1 lemon
- Flour
- Salt

Directions

1. Wet some flour (about tablespoon, depending on the size of the stain) just barely with water.
2. Finish creating a paste by adding the juice of one lemon, and then stir in sea salt.
3. Apply the paste to the stain and let it sit for 30 minutes, or several hours. Take the rind of the lemon you used earlier, and rub the solution off. Repeat as needed.

Salt, Vinegar & Flour Paste

This is kind of a cross between recipes 1 and 2, and works as a wonderful polish as well as a cleaner.

You will need...

- 1 tablespoon of flour
- 1 tablespoon of sea salt
- White vinegar
- A damp cloth or sponge

Directions

1. In a small bowl combine the flour and salt, and then make a thick paste by adding the vinegar a little bit at a time. Using a cloth or sponge dampened with water, smear on the paste and rub in gently (but not off.)
2. Let it sit for 30 minutes to 1 hour, and then rinse with a cloth dipped in warm water. Buff dry with a soft cloth.

Scented Baking Soda

The second staple of natural household cleaning is sodium bicarbonate- or baking soda. What exactly is this miraculous substance anyways? A chemical compound that is both naturally occurring and obtained by artificial means, sodium bicarbonate is alkaline, which means it neutralizes acids, breaks down proteins, and raises pH levels. Something that is extremely alkaline will dissolve and eat through what it comes in contact with-many drain cleaners are highly alkaline. Baking soda is great on its own for a number of reasons, but no matter what you're doing, adding some scent can add a lot to the cleaning experience-and yes, it will still absorb odor with essential oils added to it. There's such a variety of things baking soda is used for I only listed a few below, but plenty of other recipes in this book will call for it and give you many more reasons to love it!

Tips & Troubleshooting

-One of my favorite uses for baking soda is sink stains. Just sprinkle some in your sink and let it sit for a few minutes before scrubbing it around with the coarse side of a sponge. Your sink will be pearly white in no time!

-I always keep the baking soda I am using in a shaker-the kind you see at restaurants that usually have sugar/parmesan/hot pepper flakes in. That way I don't have to get frustrated trying to deal with the box, and I can control the amount used.

-Use baking soda for regular drain maintenance to avoid having to turn to something harsher later on. When it's scented it adds a nice fresh smell and helps keep drains smelling fresh as well.

-Add some baking soda to your usual shampoo. Especially when scented, it makes a lovely addition to your hygiene routine. Simply sprinkle a little pinch in your palm along with your shampoo.

-Try coordinating your scented baking soda with your scented vinegar, either for a fresh mix of smells or matching them.

-Just a reminder-don't mix baking soda and vinegar directly as they will neutralize each other.

Lemony Baking Soda

If this is your first time experimenting with scented baking soda, start with lemon! There's a reason it's added to so many cleaners-it just has such a wonderful, refreshing, scent.

You will need...

- 15-20 drops of lemon essential oil
- 1 ½ cups of baking soda
- Fork
- A shaker
- A bowl

Directions

1. Fill your shaker with plain baking soda, and then pour the amount into a clean bowl.
2. Make indents in the baking soda by pushing your finger into it, and add the essential oil into these little wells.
3. Using a fork, carefully stir the baking soda and essential oil together and pour back into shaker.

Jasmine Baking Soda

I absolutely adore the smell of jasmine-if you haven't added it to your collection of essential oils, I would highly recommend you do so!

You will need...

- 10 drops of jasmine essential oil
- 1 ½ cups of baking soda
- A fork
- A shaker
- A bowl

Directions

1. Fill your shaker with baking soda, and then pour it into a bowl.
2. Make little indents with your fingers in the baking soda, and fill them with essential oil.
3. Mix thoroughly with a fork, and pour back into shaker.

Citrus & Rosemary Baking Soda

This is a particularly invigorating blend of smells that will brighten up any room you use it in.

You will need...

- 10 drops of citrus essential oil
- 5 drops of rosemary essential oil
- Baking soda
- A fork
- A shaker
- A bowl

Directions

1. Fill the shaker with baking soda and then pour into a bowl.
2. Create indents in baking soda with your fingers, and add essential oils to them.
3. Mix well with a fork and pour back into shaker.

Scented Vinegar

White distilled vinegar-the golden child of natural home cleaning! This bio-degradable acidic liquid is the natural bi-product of fermented vegetables, fruits, and grains. It breaks down odors, helps kill off germs, bacteria, mold, and cuts through grease and grime. On top of all of this you don't have to wear rubber gloves and a heavy duty mask when using it! I love it because I don't feel guilty using it around the many dogs that come through my home (mine used to sneeze at the offensive smell of toxic cleaners!) and I know it is much safer for little ones than pretty much any other option. Some people hesitate when it comes to using vinegar ("won't it smell bad?") but I can guarantee you it smells a whole lot better than the other stuff out there. I actually think that the smell of plain vinegar is nice and clean-and it doesn't linger like you think it might-but this scented vinegar, along with scented baking soda, is truly my staple cleaner. These are three of my favorite kinds.

Tips & Troubleshooting

- As an acid, vinegar it can even break down some mineral/lime deposits.

- Use vinegar to get rid of any dried baking soda residue in little nooks and crannies that might stick after you clean with it.

- Experiment with scents, and you know you can always adjust the amount according to your preferences.

- Pour a little of your scented vinegar onto a clean cloth and wipe a surface-smelling it directly from the bottle doesn't always give the most accurate idea of what it will smell like when you are using it.

- Buy vinegar in gallon jugs and scent the whole thing at once-this is easy and cost-effective.

Citrus Vinegar

I love the fresh smell of citrus with vinegar; it just adds a little extra something that makes it feel like things are that much cleaner. The citrus I am referring to is orange, although you can use lemon if you prefer.

You will need...

-1/2 teaspoon of citrus essential oil

-1 gallon of white distilled vinegar

Directions

1. Drop the essential oil into the vinegar, close the lid, and give it a good shake. Add more or less if you prefer.

Tea Tree Oil Vinegar

To add a little extra germ-killing/disinfecting power to your vinegar, mix in some tea tree oil.

You will need...

-3/4 of a teaspoon of tea tree essential oil

-1 gallon of white distilled vinegar

Directions

1. Add the tea tree oil to a gallon of vinegar. Replace the cap on the vinegar and shake well.

Lavender Vinegar

This relaxing scent is probably my favorite to use when cleaning the bathroom-I think it's an old association I have with keeping a little lavender sachet in the bathroom for as long as I can remember.

You will need...

-1/2 teaspoon of lavender essential oil

-1 gallon of white distilled vinegar

Directions

1. Add lavender essential oil to 1 gallon of vinegar. Replace the cap on the vinegar and shake well.

Fir Vinegar

If you like a piney scent, adding fir essential oil to your vinegar is a great way to get it. I enjoy using this to clean floors.

You will need...

-1/2 teaspoon of fir essential oil

-1 gallon of white distilled vinegar

Directions

1. Mix essential oil into vinegar. Replace cap and shake well.

Shoe Polish

You're being force-I mean happily attending-a wedding. How are you going restore your dusty, scuffed, leather shoes to the beautiful shiny creations they once were without using something toxic when many commercial products can contain things like turpentine? Short of painting them or going over them with a permanent black marker, as I once watched a friend of mine do, it seems hard to naturally restore luster to leather. Luckily, it's not- and there are no markers involved.

Olive Oil & Lemon Juice

Olive oil and lemon juice just have a way of restoring the shine to your shoes.

You will need...

- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- 2 teaspoons of lemon juice
- Two soft clean cloths

Directions

1. Mix olive oil and lemon juice.
2. Soak cloth and then wring out extra moisture.
3. Polish shoes. Let the mixture soak into the shoes for a minute or so and then buff them to a high shine with a soft, clean, cloth.

Coconut Oil

Same concept as the olive oil in the above recipe, but coconut oil has a slightly different make-up.

You will need...

-1 tablespoon of coconut oil

-2 clean soft cloths

Directions

1. Warm coconut oil to a consistency that is easy to apply to your shoes. Dip cloth in it and shine, letting the oil soak in before buffing with a dry, soft, cloth. You can also simply scoop out a solid bit of coconut oil and rub it in without warming it first.

Banana Peel

I know, shoes and banana peels don't usually go well together, but when it's on your shoe and not under it, a banana peel can really be a good thing. The natural oils on the inside of a banana peel can help bring out the best in our shoes, so don't throw that peel away yet.

You will need...

- 1 banana peel
- A dry, soft, cloth

Directions

1. Take a banana peel and rub the inside of it in a circular motion over your shoes. Let it sit for a minute, and then buff your shoes with a clean soft cloth. Make sure there is no leftover banana bits on your shoes when you're done.

Stainless Steel Cleaner

Stainless steel looks great in the kitchen-until it gets all smudged up with grease and fingerprints. The cleaners can get expensive though, especially if you have a lot of steel. The alternative? Vinegar, baby oil/olive oil, dish soap, and water. The acetic acid in vinegar cuts through anything left behind from the soap (instead of just smearing it around) while the soap also cuts through the smudges. A few drops of olive oil will give your appliances a fabulous shine to have them looking new and polished again.

You will need...

- 1/2 cup of water
- 1/4 cup of baking soda
- A spray bottle
- 2 or 3 good squirts of dish soap or liquid castile soap
- White distilled vinegar
- A few drops of olive or baby oil (optional)

Directions

1. Mix water, baking soda, and several good squirts of mild dish soap or liquid castile soap in a spray bottle, and give it all a good shake.
2. Spray onto surface and let it sit for a minute.
3. Using a slightly dampened cloth scrub the steel clean.
4. Follow this with a spritz of vinegar to polish it off. A few drops of baby oil or olive oil on a clean soft cloth rubbed on afterwards will give it a nice, healthy, glow as well.

Toilet Bowl Cleaner

I am going to share a rather embarrassing story with you about chemical toilet bowl cleaner. Before making the switch to natural cleaners, I had bought some in a spray can and thoroughly filled my toilet with it. I had lit a match (one of the best deodorizers in an emergency!) and tossed it into the toilet, not realizing the implications. With a whoosh flames erupted all around the rim of the toilet bowl. Frantically huffing and puffing I blew them out and flushed the toilet. It was a terribly unnerving experience, not helped by my ever-thoughtful significant other who said afterwards, “what if you had been sitting on it?!”

Granted this was just an all-around silly situation, and looking back I really only have myself to blame for being so ignorant, but you live and you learn. Your toilet bowl erupting into flames is probably one of the less-likely scenarios you’ll have to worry about when using the chemical laden cleaners found in stores, but it still makes you wonder what on earth you are putting into the environment that makes it so combustible!

Tips & Troubleshooting

-For a quick touch up sprinkle scented baking soda in the toilet. Let it sit for 10 minutes, and then give the sides a quick scrub and flush.

-Invest in a good toilet brush-it makes all the difference in the world.

-A little elbow grease goes a long way here. Just remember that. While cleaning the toilet is not a fun task, it’s better than keeping dangerous chemicals around the house.

-Get gloves that go up to your elbows if you are squeamish about the toilet. Check for punctures before using them.

Tea Tree Oil Toilet Bowl Cleaner

This recipe contains tea tree oil for its disinfecting properties, vinegar, mild liquid soap, and baking soda for odor and general cleaning. The eucalyptus scented vinegar adds a nice finishing touch and is my preferred one to go to for this particular task, but it is not added to the cleaner, as the soap will simply break down.

You will need...

- 1/2 teaspoon of tea tree oil
- 2 tablespoons plain vinegar
- 1 ½ - 2 cups baking soda
- 1/2 cup mild liquid soap
- Eucalyptus scented vinegar
(see Scented Vinegar Chapter)
- 1/4 cup of water
- A spray bottle

Directions

1. Mix liquid soap and baking soda together, doing your best to get rid of any lumps that form. Add the water to dilute, and lastly, add the tea tree oil.
2. Mix the whole solution and then pour into a squirt bottle and give it a good shake. Spray the inside of the toilet with the mixture and let it sit for a few minutes. Take a good toilet brush and scrub away as needed, and finish up by spritzing with eucalyptus scented vinegar (if you want to give it a little scrub after the vinegar that's you can, but it's usually not necessary.)

Resources

Mountain Rose Herbs

A wonderful website to order your herbs, carrier oils, butters, etc. They make a point of using raw, organic, and unrefined products, all while keeping sustainability and the environment in mind. ([click here to visit](#))

Aromatics International

Another great resource to order all of your ingredients from, I recommend Aromatics International's essential oils in particular. They get their essential oils from small distilleries around the world and work directly with them to ensure they are pure and only of the highest therapeutic grade quality. Each oil comes labeled with the plants scientific name as well, so you can be certain of what exactly you are getting-for example, there are many different types of lavender out there, and they are not all the same! ([click here to visit](#))

Bulk Apothecary

A wonderful website to order your herbs, carrier oils, butters, etc. They make a point of using raw, organic, and unrefined products, all while keeping sustainability and the environment in mind. ([click here to visit](#))

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