

Herb Glossary and Preparation

Capsule

In today's world it seems that this is the most popular way to intake herbs (kind of like holding your nose to eat your vegetables, I think). You can make up your own by buying gelatin or vegi-gelatin capsules at your local health food store and either weighing or estimating your dried herb dosage. Talk to a store clerk to help you with how much you should take of the herb(s).

Decoction

This technique is primarily used for hard to extract herbs. Use the 1-1 or 1-1&1/2 ratio of herb to water and simmer for 15min. not covered. Make sure you strain the herbs afterward!

Drying

Drying is a fairly simple process. Choose an area in or around your home which is dry but doesn't get any sun. The sun draws the essence of the herb out of it and weakens its potency. Hang the herb up on a line and leave it for 6-12 weeks. It is easy to tell when the herb is ready. Use in capsules, for infusions or for fomentation.

Extracts/Tinctures

Extracts/Tinctures are very simple to make. A high percentage alcohol is necessary, anywhere from 150% to 200%. Use a small glass or plastic container and fill about 1/3 with the herb of your choice. Fill the container the rest of the way with the alcohol. Shake vigorously. Keep this mixture somewhere accessible because you will need to shake it once a day for 6-8 weeks (a shorter time is necessary if the herb is powdered). This activates the alcohol to extract the potency from the herb. After the process has ended, be sure to strain the tincture from the herb residue in the bottom of the container. Pour it into a clean container and use the remaining herb as compost. To intake the herb, pour one dropper full (about 20 drops) into hot water and let it sit for 3-4 minutes. This allows the alcohol to evaporate, so you don't have any effects from it, only the herb.

Fomentation

To create a fomentation it is necessary to make a large infusion (see tea/infusion) of the herb of your choice. You then soak a cloth in the tea and place it on the affected area after it is at a hot yet tolerable temperature. These are especially good for sprains, swelling, general aches and pains, and bronchial problems.

Oil

If the flowers and leaves are the part of the herb you are supposed to use, add them to a jar and fill the jar with olive oil. Seal it tightly, shake often and leave in a warm place or in the sun for six to seven weeks, or until potent. After this length of time has passed, strain the oil from the decaying plant through a cloth. Siphon off the watery layer that may appear over time. Store in a dark container for up to two years.

Poultice

Poultice is a very direct form of healing. This is very simple and good in emergencies. It only requires the herb of your choice and a hot towel. Heat a towel in a microwave by moistening first or use any other method you see fit. The towel must be hot, but not so hot that it would damage the skin. Lay the herb on the skin and cover it with the towel. Repeat as necessary.

Salve

Salves are easy to make and are very versatile in their uses. You can make a pleasure balm with edible love herbs, or a balm that helps heal burns, rashes and cuts such as comfrey and goldenseal. I will use the measurement in parts because it is up to you how much you want to make. 1-2 pt beeswax, 7 pts cocoa butter, and 3 pts. herb powdered. Mix these together and heat on the stove for 1-2 hours on a low setting. Let cool and use!

Syrup

A syrup is made with the juice of a fruit, and sugar. Mix 7pts. juice to 10pts sugar and cook over low heat until you reach desired consistency.

Tea/Infusion

This is a very common way to ingest herbs. Some herbs smell and taste very bad and in those cases this is a harder path to follow. Use 1 teaspoon dried herb to 1 cup of boiling water. Steep for 5 minutes. Add fructose, sugar, or honey to sweeten. Some herbs don't need sweetening such as liquorices, so know what your herb tea tastes like before you add sweetener.

Vinegar

To make an herbal vinegar concoction, it is necessary to follow one of the previous steps. Mix 1 part syrup with 2 parts wine vinegar.