

Herbal First Aid

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Being prepared is important whether you are traveling around the world or across town. An herbal first aid kit is a good ally to have on hand to address the cuts and bruises that are a part of daily life. A well-stocked first aid kit will give you the piece of mind that is necessary for healthy living and safe traveling.

I have traveled all over the world and have stayed healthy due to my herbal remedies and smart choices. I always travel with a small first aid kit and many times I have needed to use it for others who I encounter or with whom I am traveling. It is good to anticipate situations that may arise and that would be benefited by herbal skills. For example, if you are traveling in far off places you should have remedies for digestive disorders, herbs for infections, insect bites and wounds, altitude sickness, jet lag, etc. Think ahead and plan accordingly.

I have learned greatly in my travels by observing how the local people use plants and by asking questions whenever possible. There are many plants around the world that can be used for first aid situations and getting familiar with some of them can be incredibly beneficial. Plus, if you have run out of something specific then you may need to rely on the knowledge of the local plants and people.

Your first aid kit should be compact and easy to access. It should be designed for your special needs as well as contain some general remedies. Since my daughter was born, I have also incorporated some items that are specific for her (homeopathic pulsatilla and chamomilla, cough elixir, elderberry spray). It is good to be prepared for what you may encounter along the path of life's daily experiences.

Ideas for the First Aid Kit

Lavender Essential Oil: It is very versatile. Lavender is effective for headaches (rub a few drops on the temples and/or nape of neck). It can be used in a spritzer to calm and relax as well as a few drops of the oil can be put on the pillow at night to help one sleep. Use it directly on bee and other insect bites to reduce inflammation. It is also an effective burn aid. Use externally.

Peppermint and/or Ginger Essential Oil: They are good for stomach stress. They can be used for nausea, after vomiting as a mouthwash to clean the palate and for motion sickness.

Rescue Remedy: Good for many things – trauma, accidents, anxiety. Take a few drops under the tongue every few minutes.

Adaptogens: My favorite blend is a tincture mixture of Aralia (californica – California Spikenard) berries and hawthorn berries. It is good for jet lag, altitude changes and the overall stresses of traveling and daily life. It is very good to have

when flying and when gaining altitude rapidly in a short period of time. Take ½ to 1 dropper 3x/day, beginning two days before traveling and continuing one to two days after the flight or altitude gain. (Rhodiola, Reishi and Ginkgo can be helpful for this purpose as well).

Echinacea and/or Oregon grape root Tincture: They boost the immune system and prevent illness and infection. Use them at the first sign of infection for any sickness. Take a full dropper every hour. Long-term use of Echinacea (over 5 days) may decrease its effectiveness. I personally use Oregon grape root more since it grows in large stands where I live and I find it more versatile than Echinacea. I use Oregon grape externally as well to disinfect wounds.

Goldenseal Powder (organically cultivated): Goldenseal is a powerful disinfectant and natural antibiotic. It is excellent for mucus type infections and digestive infections. It can be used directly on open wounds, infections, insect bites and stings. Mix a small amount with water and take internally for infections and stomach problems.

Cayenne Powder: It stops bleeding and is excellent for circulation. It is also helpful to keep the bowels moving. Apply topically to stop bleeding. Use internally for heart problems. Add a small amount of water for a decongestant and/or to move bowels.

Blackberry Tincture/Blackberry root powder: This is good to use with diarrhea and dysentery. Use 1 tsp. of tincture every hour. You can also use goldenseal and clay.

Clay: It is good for a poultice to draw out infections and foreign objects. It can also be used for stomach toxins. Use it for things that need drawing and drying (slivers, cuts, wounds). For diarrhea, mix 1 tsp. with a glass of water and drink 1x/2x daily.

Salve, all purpose such as plantain/comfrey or goldenseal/myrrh: This is good as a soothing emollient that is used for chapped lips and skin, soothing burns, abrasions, cuts and wounds (may need to disinfect first).

Homeopathic Arnica and Apis: Arnica is good for trauma to tissue. It can be used on bruises, sharp jagged wounds, torn ligaments, pulled muscles. Apis is good for relieving the pain and swelling of stings and bites. Can be really helpful for reducing the inflammatory process.

Valerian, Hops and/or Passion Flower Tincture: These are good for sleep and anxiety. They are used as pain relievers, sedatives and sleep aids.

Pain Relieving Tincture: I like to use meadowsweet or white willow bark for headaches, muscle pain, tooth pain (although spilanthes is also really good for tooth pain), back pain, etc.

Charcoal Tablets: These are good to help settle and detoxify the stomach and bowels after any type of toxicity.

Triphala Tablets and/or Traditional Medicinals Smooth Move Tea: These are good for constipation. Use 2-3 tablets in the evening and drink with lots of water. Add a small amount of cayenne. Don't use all the time. Use for several days if necessary and then discontinue use.

Arnica/St. John's Wort Oil or Ointment: This can be used topically for muscle strains and pulls, bruises and blunt trauma on wounds that are not open.

Acidophilus Tablets: Good for stomach stress, constipation and diarrhea. It reintroduces friendly bacteria into the system.

Emergen-C or Vitamin C blend: This is good for bursts of energy if you are tired or exhausted. It helps boost the immune system. Use this at the first sign of infection, for colds, long trips where energy needs to be sustained or for stress.

Spirulina: It has 80% digestible protein, B Vitamins and is rich in many nutrients. It can be used as an emergency food, if you have low energy, are feeling sick or don't have enough protein. Take 6-8 tablets with lots of water.

Digestive Bitters or Papaya Enzymes: These will help aid digestion that can be especially challenging when traveling. They ease stomachaches and bloating.

Garlic/Mullein flower Oil: This oil is useful for ear infections and pain.

Other useful items: bandages, sterile gauze, cotton swabs, tweezers, small scissors, nail clippers, insect repellent, sunscreen, ace bandage.

Recommended books to reference for ideas:

- The Naturally Healthy Traveler by Susan Kramer (Lotus Press)
- Natural First Aide by Brigitte Mars (Storey Books)
- Herbs for the Home Medicine Chest by Rosemary Gladstar (Storey Books)
- Herbal First Aid by Gerard Strong