

# Herbal Preparations

**Acettract:** A herbal preparation that uses vinegar to extract minerals and aromatic compounds from fresh or dried plant material.

**Carrier oil:** Vegetable oils derived from seeds, kernels, or nuts of a plant, such as avocado, sunflower, apricot, or coconut. Carrier oils are used to dilute concentrated essential oils so they can be “carried” safely into the skin for therapeutic benefits.

**Cordial** Stimulating beverages shared between friends and loved ones to invoke a sense of well-being. They are meant to warm, stimulate, and aid digestion.

**Cream:** A semisolid emulsion of oil (often herb-infused) and water (often an infusion or decoction).

**Decoction:** An extract, often referred to as a tea, made by simmering dense plant material (primarily the bark, rhizomes, roots, and seeds) in water. Natural dyes are often made this way also.

**Electuary:** Powdered herbs combined with enough honey to create a spreadable paste.

**Elixir:** A clear, sweet liquid containing at least one active ingredient, used for medicinal purposes; contains honey or simple syrup and may contain alcohol (brandy or vodka).

**Essential Oils:** Highly concentrated aromatic volatile oils extracted via steam distillation from the leaves, flowers, bark, and other parts of plants that contain high amounts of the essential oils. Therapeutic use generally includes dilution of the highly concentrated oil in a carrier oil.

**Eyebaths/eyewash:** Using gentle herbs as a dilute, cool infusion to bath the tissue surrounding the eye to reduce itchiness, redness, or infection. Care must be taken to ensure that no plant material remains in the eyewash.

**Fluid extract:** A concentrated liquid herbal preparation containing equal parts herb or crude drug with a hydro-ethanolic solvent made so that each 1 mL of liquid contains 1 g of the herb or crude drug that is used.

**Gargle:** Swishing a disinfectant or anti-inflammatory liquid herbal preparation as a herbal mouthwash.

**Gel:** A semi-solid colloidal dispersion of a solid substance with a liquid or gas, such as a jelly.

**Glycerite:** A liquid preparation of a herb or medicinal substance dissolved in or mixed with vegetable glycerin.

**Herbal Compress:** Soaking a clean soft cloth in a strained, strong herbal infusion or decoction, used warm or cold, held in place onto the affected area to alleviate pain or reduce inflammation.

**Infused Oils:** A process of extraction in which the volatile oils and other fat-soluble compounds of a plant are obtained by soaking the plant material in a carrier oil for two to four weeks or via gentle heating. The oil is then strained off and used alone or in making therapeutic skin salves, ointments, lotions and creams.

**Infusion:** An extract, often referred to as a tea but more accurately a tisane, made by pouring boiling water over fresh or dried plant material (usually flowers, fruit, or leaves), which is allowed to steep for 10-20 minutes before drinking. Cold infusions are prepared when the goal is to extract polysaccharides, mucilage, and nutrients often reduced or damaged by hot water. Infusions are an easy and affordable way to administer herbs. They may be used therapeutically or as a beverage tea, depending on the herb(s) and amounts used.

**Liniment:** A plant extract prepared in a base of alcohol, witch hazel, or vinegar to be applied topically to sore muscles, sprains, bruises, boils, burns, or sunburns to soothe pain and reduce inflammation.

**Lotion:** A liquid preparation containing water and/or alcohol that is used to emulsify or suspend insoluble plant material, to be used topically for skin conditions that are itchy, inflamed, infected, or painful.

**Oxymel:** A remedy from ancient Greece and Persia that combines a herb infused vinegar with honey; *oxy* means acid and *mel* means honey.

**Percolation:** A process to extract the soluble constituents of a plant with the assistance of gravity. The material is moistened and evenly packed into a tall, slightly conical vessel; the liquid (menstruum) is then poured onto the material and allowed to steep for a certain length of time. A small opening is then made in the bottom, which allows the extract to slowly flow out of the vessel. The remaining plant material (the marc) may be discarded. Many tinctures and liquid extracts are prepared this way.

**Plaster:** A medicated or protective dressing that consists of spreading powdered, slightly moistened herbs onto a cloth and covered with plastic to protect clothing and trap body heat.

**Poultice:** A therapeutic topical application of a soft, moist mass of plant material (bruised fresh herbs), usually wrapped in a fine woven cloth and applied to the affected area.

**Salve:** A semi-solid medicinal ointment prepared by combining an herb infused oil with beeswax.

**Suppository:** A solid, conical-shaped medicinal substance designed to melt at body temperature within the rectum or vagina to deliver localized herbal treatment.

**Syrup:** An herbal preparation that combines an infusion or decoction with an equal amount of simple syrup (concentrated sugar solution) or honey.

**Tincture:** An extract of a plant made by soaking (macerating) herbs in a solution of alcohol or of a specific ratio of alcohol to water. Tinctures macerate for two to six weeks in a dark place after which the liquid extract is strained from the plant material and used therapeutically.

**Tisane:** Originally from the Greek *ptisanē*, to crush, tisanes are infusions of fresh or dried herbs used as a medicinal beverage.