

Herbal Therapy for Oral Diseases

“ There is a way that nature speaks. Most of the time we are simply not patient enough, quiet enough... to pay attention to the story”



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A (n) herb is a plant that is valued for qualities such as medicinal properties, flavor, scent, etc. Herbs have a variety of uses including culinary, medicinal, or in some cases even spiritual usage. General usage differs between culinary herbs and medicinal herbs. In medicinal or spiritual use any of the parts of the plant might be considered "herbs", including leaves, roots, flowers, seeds, resin, root bark, inner bark (cambium), berries and sometimes the pericarp or other portions.

Generally speaking, herbs are used to cleanse the blood, warm and stimulate the body, increase surface circulation, increase elimination of wastes, reduce inflammation, and calm and soothe irritation. Herbs may be used internally as pills, syrups, and infusions, or externally as poultices, plasters, and liniments. An external application of clove oil, for instance, will stop odontogenic pain, as will tincture of hops. Herbs are commonly used as additives to bath water—either full body baths or baths for the foot, eye, or face. Moist herbal wraps, either hot or cold, can be used on specific affected parts of the body. These wraps are especially effective for sore, tense muscles such as those in the neck, shoulders, back, or jaw when temporomandibular joint syndrome (TMJ) is present.

History of herbal remedies is very old. Since old times before modern medicine, people became ill and suffered from various ailments. In absent of modern medicinal remedies people relied on herbal remedies derived from herbs and spices. Many cooked foods contain spices. Some minor ailments like common cold, cough, etc. may be cured by herbal remedies with use of medicinal properties of spices. Herbal remedies can be taken in many forms. Infusions are steeping herbs or spices, with parts like leaves and flowers with boiling water for some time. Filtered or unfiltered use this water extracts of spices as herbal remedies. Decoction is boiling roots, bark and hard parts of herbs and spices with water for along time. Infusion and decoction both are known as herbal teas.

Some times essential oil of herbs and spices are also used as herbal remedies. Action of herbal remedies may vary from human to human and care should be observed in using it.

The herbs most commonly used for dental problems are described below.

Aloe Vera : It is commonly called as “Plant of immortality” .It has several therapeutic benefits like it is used in Angular cheilitis, ulcers, dry lips, sore throat, post operative pain, bleeding and swelling .It anesthetizes tissues and also act as a haemostatic. Applied externally, aloe Vera gel is excellent for soothing inflamed gums and sores in the mouth.

Anise : Chewing fennel seeds whole eliminates bad breath.

Annatto : A small tropical American tree, annatto is a rich source of vitamins A and D—richer than cod-liver oil. The pulp of the seeds, which is used in cooking, yields a yellowish-red dye. The pulp is also used medicinally. It can be applied after tooth extraction and gingival surgeries.

Arnica : A mountain plant that grows to about twenty inches in height, arnica has yellow-orange flowers that bloom in the summer. Arnica flowers are commonly used to combat fever, and to stimulate the heart, circulation, and digestive system. Arnica is also a homeopathic remedy. It is available in creams and ointments and can be externally applied to relieve bruises, strains, sprains, pain, and muscle tension.

Burdock : A common plant that grows in almost any moist soil, burdock grows from two to six feet high and has burst .Burdock is considered an excellent blood purifier. Its roots and seeds contain a variety of chemicals and nutrients, including biotin, copper, iron, manganese, sulfur, zinc, and vitamins B1, B6, B12, and E. These plant parts are commonly used to treat skin disorders and

stimulate the immune system. Burdock poultices are excellent for the relief of muscle tension and headaches associated with temporomandibular joint disorders (TMJ).

Chamomile : Chamomile grows in well-drained sunny soil in temperate regions everywhere. Commonly used as a nerve tonic, sleep aid, and digestive aid, chamomile is also a homeopathic remedy. It contains calcium, iron, magnesium, manganese, potassium, and vitamin A. It is used as a poultice for pain and swelling and as a mouthwash to soothe inflamed, irritated gingiva.

Chickweed : The most common of weeds, chickweed is found throughout the world. Its leaves are used to soothe skin irritations. Chickweed mouthwash soothes inflamed, irritated mouth tissues associated with oral cancer; it also helps to relieve pain from canker sores and other mouth sores.

Cloves : The dried flower buds of an East Indian evergreen tree, cloves are popularly used as a spice. They also yield a volatile oil used medicinally and in perfumes. Cloves have antiseptic, stimulant, and anti emetic properties and are used to treat the mouth, stomach, intestines, circulation, and lungs. Oil of cloves can be rubbed on sore gums and teeth to relieve pain. Cloves can be chewed to diminish bad breath.

Comfrey : The comfrey plant grows in rich, moist areas and has prickly green leaves along its stalk, which can reach three feet in height. Its leaves and roots have traditionally been used to treat the lungs, stomach, and intestines. Comfrey contains phosphorus, potassium, starch, tannins, and vitamins A, C, and E. A washcloth soaked in warm comfrey tea can be compressed to ease jaw tension and relieve the pain of jaw and tooth fractures or adjustments to braces.

Dandelion : The leaves, roots, and tops of this weed are used to treat a variety of internal organs and to purify blood. It also increases the production of bile and urine. Dandelion contains biotin, calcium, choline, fats, iron, magnesium, niacin, PABA, phosphorus, proteins, sulfur, zinc, and a variety of vitamins. Dandelion is useful for treating abscesses in the mouth.

Eucalyptus : A tall tree native to Australia, the eucalyptus yields a powerfully antiseptic essential oil that

has long been used medicinally. As its leaves have commonly been used to lower fevers, the eucalyptus is sometimes known as the "fever tree." Eucalyptus oil is rubbed on sore, inflamed gingiva for temporary relief

Marigold : An annual herb that grows to two feet in height, the marigold has a "hairy" stem and leaves. Commonly used as a homeopathic remedy (Calendula, called "the homeopathic antiseptic"), marigold flowers have been used internally as a diuretic, a stimulant, and an antispasmodic. Externally, they are used in the treatment of burns, wounds, and impetigo of the scalp. It is used as a mouthwash to help relieve ulcers, wounds, or inflamed areas, and to relax muscles associated with tension in the jaw joint and pressure from braces.

Alfalfa : One of the richest sources of trace minerals and an antioxidant, alfalfa is high in calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, chlorine, and vitamin K. It is useful in cases of hemorrhaging and fungal infections. Available in liquid form, it is an excellent choice as a mineral supplement.

Green and black tea : Catechins and theoflavins are polyphenolic compounds derived from tea. They have a wide range of biologic activities including prevention of dental caries and oral cancer. In a double blind trial, people with leukoplakia took 3grms per day of a mixture of whole green tea, green tea polyphenols and green tea pigments orally and also painted mixture of tea on their lesions three times per day for six months. It was observed that patient had significant improvement in healing of their lesions. It has also been seen that people with oral leukoplakia can reduce their risk of oral cancer by drinking black tea.

Black raspberry gel : Black raspberries are full of anthocynins [potent antioxidant that gives raspberries their brown color] and they have role in silencing cancer cells. The gel prepared appears to be a valid means of delivering anthocyanins directly to precancerous cells.

St. John's wort oil [hypericum perforatum] : It is helpful in any kind of muscular and neurologic pain. It has shown beneficial effects in the management of burning mouth syndrome.

CONCLUSION

Plants contain photochemical that have effects on the body. There may be some effects even when consumed in the small levels that typify culinary "spicing", and some herbs are toxic in larger quantities. However, large amounts of these herbs may lead to poisoning, and should be used with caution. Using herbs for oral disease combined with good oral hygiene is an effective way to stop the progression of these diseases.

