

Ayurvedic Kitchen Remedies

By Dr. Shaun Matthews

The use of traditional kitchen remedies is still very much alive in India today, just ask any Indian grandmother about how to treat an infant's colic and she'll be quick to tell you which herb to use and how to prepare it. They draw from a rich and ancient pharmacopoeia passed down from mother to daughter over thousands of years. Using simple formulations of herbs and spices available in their larders Indian women are able to manage most common ailments in the family. More difficult cases being left to the local healer or Ayurvedic physician or vaidya.

Many of these herbs and spices are also available in Australia from Asian spice shops and your local green grocer. Kitchen remedies have the advantage of having virtually no side effects, are made from natural substances, are cheap and save inconvenient trips out of the house to the pharmacist. Included below are a number of simple kitchen remedies using herbs and spices commonly available in Australia. These remedies are particularly useful in the relief of symptoms and as first-aid measures. When using them common sense should prevail at all times, so if symptoms persist despite treatment do consult your trusted local health care practitioner for further assessment and treatment.

Digestive problems:

Nausea and vomiting

Both conditions are best treated by abstaining from further food or liquid. Sucking on the seeds of a cardamom pod or drinking a tea made with a few slices of fresh ginger is helpful. Both are safe for use in the nausea of pregnancy.

Belching, stomach ache and flatulence

Wild Indian celery seed or Ajwan is excellent either taken as a tea (2 tsp to a pot for 4 people) or chewing a tsp of seeds and following this with a drink of warm water.

Fennel seeds, one tsp chewed after meals, are excellent for stimulating digestion and are useful in stopping abdominal cramping and wind.

Diarrhoea

Nutmeg powder helps to increase absorption in the small intestine, a pinch of nutmeg added to a cup of buttermilk with a little fresh ginger works well in stopping diarrhoea. Alternatively nutmeg powder mixed with honey can be given as needed.

Constipation

Depending on the severity of the constipation different remedies are indicated. For mild constipation a teaspoon of ghee in a glass of warm milk taken at bedtime will often suffice.

During the daytime a mixture of yoghurt, a little rock salt and cumin seeds taken before meals is also effective.

Psyllium husks are an excellent bulk laxative, one to two tsp in a cup of warm milk or fruit juice help to stimulate bowel motions.

For more intractable constipation, castor oil made from the seeds of the castor plant can be used, two to three tsp before meals acts as a lubricant and irritant to the bowels helping evacuation.

Respiratory problems:

Sore throat

Make a paste by mixing one tsp of liquorice powder with honey which can be licked throughout the day.

Toothache

Ground cloves in powder form are soaked in brandy for three days; this mixture can then be applied on a piece of cotton wool to the affected tooth.

Cough

Ginger juice and honey is useful in reducing phlegm. Also decoction of liquorice root given with a little sugar in doses of one to two ounces helps reduce cough.

Special Hot Ginger Drink for Colds and Bronchitis

A half tsp of dry ginger powder, 4 whole cloves, one quarter tsp of turmeric, one tsp of black pepper and 2 tsps of coriander powder are added to 3 cups of water. This mixture is boiled for five minutes. A little milk and sugar can be added to taste. A quarter of a cup can be drunk up to three times per day.

Miscellaneous ailments:

Boils

Apply basil leaves ground with water several times daily.

Ring worm

Drink fresh juice of basil and apply the juice mixed with lemon or lime juice as a paste.

Cystitis, urethritis and prostatitis

Collect water obtained from washing organic rice before it has boiled, this can be mixed with one tsp of coriander to treat the above mentioned disorders where burning urine is experienced.

Menstrual cramps

One tablespoon of aloe vera gel with a pinch of black pepper can be taken orally three times a day until relief is obtained.

Insomnia

A ripe banana, cut in the centre with cumin seeds added, eaten at bedtime helps promote sleep.

One can also make a tea using a tsp of poppy seeds, a half tsp of dry ginger and a quarter to a half tsp of nutmeg powder to be taken just before retiring to bed.

Earache

Gently fry a clove of garlic in sesame oil, strain and cool, the resultant oil has antibacterial properties and can be dropped in the ear canal.

Conjunctivitis

Pour boiling water over fresh coriander seeds or chamomile stems and flowers, let steep overnight, strain with muslin gauze and use the water to bathe and wash the eyes.