

# Herbs And Essential Oils For Aches And Pains

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**Herbs And Essential Oils**

**For**

**Aches And Pains**

**Elizabeth Summers**

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During every stage of life we experience the simple aches and pains of living, be it from a physical job or an especially active day, sports or an injury, or even from some chronic condition. Most people turn to the likes of ibuprofen or aspirin, but the simple fact is that these drugs are unnatural chemicals that have a number of alarming side effects and risks, not to mention an incredible stressful and wasting impact on our liver and other organs. Instead, try turning to natural herbs, which not only are effective and avoid the numerous health risks of pharmaceuticals, but offer many additional health benefits beyond the treatment you are seeking. A regular regimen of the proper herbs does not only keep down unpleasant symptoms, but helps cultivate and maintain a vibrant level of health and lifestyle that allows you to truly thrive.

The herbs we will go over for helping soothe aches and pains will vary in the way they should be taken. Some herbs will easily be taken as a capsule or tablet, while others can be made into an infusion (a tea), or a tincture or decoction. A tincture is an extract of the specific effective chemicals placed in a grain alcohol or oil that can be added in a certain number of drips to water. Always follow the recommended instructions on tinctures, as the concentration varies too greatly for us to make specific suggestions. Decoctions are dry or fresh herbs (use 1.5-2x the amount of herbs when fresh) that are placed in water in a pan and let soak for up to 2 hours as able, and then boiled for 15 minutes. The resulting liquid is then drunk as a tea. With each herb we will

give safe allowances of dried herbs, as they would be taken in teas, decoctions, and capsules/tablets, but always default to the manufacturer's directions for safe limits when available. Some herbs will have several mediums that they can be taken in, we will always list from the most preferred and effective method to the least.

If you are on other herbal medicines proscribed by a medical professional, ask their advice before adding more herbs to the mix. Most herbs should not interact strongly with pharmaceuticals unless noted, however if the medications and herbs you are taking or are considering taking have the same effects they may very well be cumulative, so we highly suggest always seeking professional medical advice before mixing treatments. Naturopathic doctors are the most likely to have an adequate grasp of both pharmaceuticals and herbal remedies, but always default to your medical practitioner's opinion.

# Herbs For Aches And Pains

## Birch – *Betula alba*

One of the most overall and medicinally useful trees, the birch offers many benefits for herbal treatments through its bark and leaves. For aches and pains the birch tree has a lot to offer, with similar chemicals to those used in aspirin, which will help relieve overall pain and inflammation, but it also helps increase the removal of waste liquids and inflammation from joints, making a considerable improvement in joint pains. Birch is a Northern European and Scandinavian favorite, frequently used in twig bundles in steam rooms and hot showers, the vapors of which penetrate into the skin to soothe sore and aching muscles. The oils of the birch tree are extracted from the leaves and twigs and are well used as a topical application for rheumatic aches and pains.

Birch is a very safe herbal option, with no known side effects. You can take 5-15 grams a day, most effectively as an infusion (tea), which can be applied topically, though you can also take a tincture or capsule, which are not as effective. For tinctures and capsules, follow the manufacturer's dosage instructions.

## **Willow Bark, White Willow – *Salix alba***

A truly ancient traditional herbal treatment for aches and pains, as well as fevers and rheumatic conditions, willow bark contains some aspirin like substances that are very effective at reducing pain and inflammation. The specific chemicals and actions of the compounds in willow bark are not identical to aspirin, but can be used to similar effect. Especially useful for longer term conditions where the side effects and risks are substantially less than pharmaceutical aspirin, especially the load on the liver, willow bark is also commonly used for temporary pain aid for back pain, headaches, and toothaches, in addition to general aches and pains.

Willow bark should not be taken if you are breast feeding, or if you are allergic to aspirin. You also should not give to children who are battling viral infections. Allergic reactions are possible, mostly from ties to aspirin like chemical allergies, and can occasionally cause some gastrointestinal upset. Otherwise a safe herb which can be taken at dosages of 5-15 grams a day, or follow the manufacturer's dosage instructions, through a tincture, capsule, or infusion.



## **Devil's Claw – *Harpagophytum procumbens***

Frequently used with willow bark, devil's claw is one of the most scientifically validated treatments for rheumatic and arthritic pain conditions; it has been found to actually slow or prevent the deteriorating symptoms. Devil's claw is also effective for general muscle and joint pain relief, lowering inflammation, and offering relief for other such pain conditions as fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis and back pain.

Devil's claw does unfortunately come with some important notes of caution: if you have gallstones or peptic ulcers, this herb should only be taken on the direct advice of an herbal or other appropriate medical practitioner. It should not be taken while pregnant, and it may cause diarrhea or interact with medications so if you are on any other medications you should always consult your prescribing physician. It can otherwise be taken as a tablet in the dosages recommended by the manufacturer.

## **Prickly Ash – *Zanthoxylum clava-herculis***

A common North American herbal remedy, prickly ash has been well used for such pain conditions as toothaches, rheumatic conditions, and cramps. Prickly

ash acts by promoting local blood flow, increasing the expulsion of waste products, helping relieve pain where tension or poor circulation may have caused rheumatic or other pain symptoms. It is most effective when combined with an anti-inflammatory herb, which will together help with normal aches and pains but also work exceptionally well for rheumatic and fibromyalgia conditions.

Prickly ash bark or fruit can be taken as a tincture, capsule or a tablet in dosages of 2-4 grams a day. Avoid when pregnant or breast feeding.

### **Cramp Bark, Guelder Rose – *Viburnum opulus***

Well fit to its name, cramp bark is a traditional treatment for menstrual pains or other conditions where muscle spasms or tension are causing discomfort. Some pain conditions, such as rheumatic type dysfunctions, can result not just from inflammation, but from high tension in muscles, and in these situations cramp bark excels at offering effective relief, opening up circulation, clearing out built up toxins and byproducts, and calming muscles. Take in combination with anti-inflammatories, or specifically willow bark and prickly ash for an effective treatment for rheumatic symptoms or fibromyalgia, as well as spasmodic period pains and digestive cramps.

Cramp bark can be taken as a decoction, tincture, or capsule in dosages of 3-7.5 grams per day, and has no known side effects.

### **Bogbean – *Menyanthes trifoliata***

Another treatment for rheumatic type symptoms, bogbean is used specifically for its effect on the muscles instead of the joints, it is an excellent solution for a wide variety of aches and pains, be them occasional or chronic. Bogbean is also well used to help support kidneys in clearing out waste products and supporting the kidneys in cases of kidney disease or dysfunction, which can help reduce pain by eliminating a painful buildup in liquids and toxins.

Bogbean leaf can be taken in doses of 2-4 grams a day, but should be taken as a tincture, following the manufacturers dosing instructions. Bogbean may cause diarrhea, and should be avoided while pregnant or breast feeding.

### **Celery – *Apium graveolens***

A popular vegetable, the juice from the stem and leaf of the celery plant, or the oil from the seeds stimulate the kidneys to clear out bodily waste products, as

well as the accumulated salts that can be found in joints, which can be quite painful (a common problem in gout)! Celery seed can help general clearance of built up liquids in the skeletomuscular system, easing arthritic and rheumatic pains. 1-2 grams of celery leaf/seed/stem can be taken per day as a tincture, capsule, or tablet. The seeds should not be consumed in any form during pregnancy or in the presence of any kidney disease. Celery can occasionally cause an allergic reaction, which includes contact dermatitis.

### **Meadowsweet – *Filipendula ulmaria***

Meadowsweet was the first plant to yield aspirin-like substances during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, imparting mild anti-inflammatory actions and fighting rheumatic symptoms. In particular meadowsweet can help stiff, sore, and aching muscles and joints, helping stimulate the clearance of acidic residues in the tissues. When these symptoms get worse when waking or for sitting for long periods of time, combine meadowsweet with celery seed to ease inflammation and assist pain free movement.

The flowering top of meadowsweet can be taken as an infusion or tincture in safe doses of 5-15 grams per day. If you are allergic to aspirin or aspirin-like substances, avoid meadowsweet. It can also cause some gastrointestinal

discomfort.

### **Turmeric – *Curcuma longa***

A powerful anti-inflammatory, turmeric is a natural treatment for many chronic illnesses that may be causing body wide waves of draining inflammation and stress on the whole system. Also highly effective as an antioxidant, a liver protectant, a stimulant for upper intestinal function and bile flow, and has come to be used for a supporting treatment for those with cancer, as well as offering many other benefits. For pain, the strong anti-inflammatory actions can prevent or minimize some pains, especially for chronic pain and inflammatory conditions (autoimmune diseases in particular).

Turmeric is one of our most suggested herbal remedies for pain conditions, though it may not be as helpful for occasional acute pains. It can be taken in doses of 3-7.5 grams per day as a tablet, powder, or tincture. If you are taking blood thinning medications, or if you have gallstones, only take turmeric on the advice of an herbal or appropriate medical practitioner.

### **Butterbur – *Petasites hybridus***

Perhaps one of the most effective treatments and preventatives for headaches and even migraines, butterbur root is also useful for relieving joint and menstrual based pains. If you suffer regular headaches or migraines, this is by far one of your best options. Butterbur can only be taken as a standardized extract tablet, at the dosage instructed by the manufacturer. The wild plant itself is toxic to the liver, but the extract is quite safe, so make sure to only purchase and use products where all of the liver toxic compounds have been fully removed. Avoid altogether when pregnant or breastfeeding. Butterbur may rarely cause gastrointestinal upset or drowsiness. Some countries actually restrict or ban the purchase of; for example it is not legally available in Australia.

## Essential Oils For Aches And Pain

For nerve and joint based pains, such as autoimmune conditions like multiple sclerosis, the mixture listed below can help ease the symptoms, though is not a cure. For sciatic pains it can be applied on the back or hip, on the wrists for carpal tunnel, or on the point of irritation for pinched nerves.

### Nerve And Joint Pain

4 drops lavender

3 drops helichrysum (if available)

3 drops marjoram

2 drops chamomile

1 ounce vegetable oil

### Arthritic Pain Mixture

4 drops birch

3 drops lavender

3 drops marjoram

2 drops ginger

1 ounce vegetable oil

### **Menstrual Cramp and PMS Mixture**

12 drops lavender

6 drops marjoram

4 drops chamomile

4 drops ginger

2 ounces vegetable oil

### **Additional Essential Oils For Cramps and PMS**

- ☪ Garlic
- ☪ Cinnamon
- ☪ Melissa
- ☪ Cloves
- ☪ Thyme



## About The Author

Elizabeth Summers has been working with herbs and natural medicine for over twenty years, starting by working with friends and family and eventually branching out into the community and the world of medicine out of a profound need to help people. We live in a sick world, and her written work is one way to try to spread the simple but profound health inherent in nature to those who need it. Elizabeth has written on dozens of natural and homeopathic topics, from acute injuries and disease, to diet, pregnancy, and simply trying to thrive in a world of plenty that unfortunately usually leads to dysfunction instead of health. Look for her many other natural remedies pieces here on Amazon!