

The Outpost Exchange
2005 Wellness Guide
“Herbal Medicine Cabinet”
Maggie Jacobus
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Looking to treat common ailments naturally? Here are the top remedies to have on hand in your herbal medicine cabinet, according to experts David LaLuzerne, herbal pharmacist with Green Earth in Madison, and Meredith Young, N.D., of Integrative Health Services in Shorewood.

- **Arnica**—Arnica is actually a homeopathic remedy that is excellent to have at the ready for minor soft tissue injuries and muscle pain. LaLuzerne also recommends taking it before such procedures as dental work or surgery to aid with healing. Arnica is safe for children. Follow the dosage on the bottle.
- **Astragalus**—A good tonic herb to strengthen the immune system, especially in winter and/or after an illness or chronic colds and infections, astragalus is best taken as a tincture. It’s considered to be better at bolstering the immune system than echinecea. It is not be taken continuously; rather, do three-four weeks, then take a break for two weeks before starting again.
- **Bitters**—This combination of herbs is good for digestive problems, such as gas, indigestion, constipation, bloating and irritable bowel syndrome. LaLuzerne recommends a liquid form and suggests the brand name Zand, which includes bitter herbs, licorice, fennel and ginger.
- **Calendula extract or St. John’s Wort extract**—These two are topical ointments good for healing cuts, bruises, scrapes, eczema, psoriasis and more. They are excellent topical first aid creams to have on hand.
- **Capsicum**—Young recommends capsicum to enhance circulation, especially in the winter months. Capsicum can be taken as a tincture or in capsule form.
- **Dandelion Root**—This is a good herb for liver and gall bladder issues, according to Young. It is used as a tonic and detoxifier of the blood and liver. It comes in several forms—dried roots or leaves to make tea, tincture and capsules.
- **Echinacia**—Primarily used to reduce the symptoms and duration of colds and flu-like illnesses, echinacia should be taken at the onset of symptoms and not for more than two weeks at a time. Astragalus is a better preventative herb. Echinacia can be taken in tincture or capsule form.
- **Ginger**—This versatile herb helps with digestion and is especially effective for nausea, vomiting, motion sickness or morning sickness. Any form—fresh ginger root, tea, tincture or capsules—is effective, although tea (which can be made by steeping fresh root) may be the best option for nausea and vomiting. Ginger is a warming herb, so it’s a good option for colds or to improve circulation. Do not take it when you have a fever, however. As an anti-inflammatory, ginger can be used for pain relief of headaches, backaches and

arthritis. For these conditions, LaLuzerne recommends a high dosage, such as three-four capsules two-three times a day.

- **Hawthorn berries**—Young suggests this herb as a heart tonic in tea or capsule form for anyone with a history of heart disease. The herb is not to be used, however, in lieu of conventional medical care of heart disease.
- **Lavender oil**—Lavender is an anti-inflammatory as well as a calming herb that promotes relaxation and sleep. Apply topically or add several drops to a warm bath or your pillow. Sweet dreams!
- **St. John's Wort oil**—LaLuzerne suggests this anti-viral topical oil for nerve pain or treating shingles.
- **Valerian**—A multi-faceted herb, valerian is often recommended for sleep issues, especially because it is not addictive and does not have a narcotic effect. LaLuzerne says one-and-a-half to three grams for sleep. Although the herb is safe enough even for children, it's not recommended as a continuous sleep aid, but rather to treat occasional sleeplessness. Young recommends getting a blend that includes other herbs such as skull cap or chamomile, as valerian can make people groggy. Valerian is also a muscle relaxant, making it ideal for stress, anxiety and the onset of tension headaches. Take two-three capsules two-three times a day for stress symptoms or chronic pain.

The above suggestions are for minor health issues. Be certain to consult an herbalist or naturopathic doctor for chronic or serious health issues or if you have questions on the best form or dosage for your specific needs.

LaLuzerne, the herbal pharmacist, has a degree in pharmacology. "I function like a regular pharmacist, but I don't sell drugs anymore," he said. Instead, he instructs consumers on how to use herbs correctly. There's been much attention in the conventional medical community paid to the topic of drug-herb interactions. According to LaLuzerne, "This is made more of than it should be. You're more likely to have a drug-drug interaction," he said. "In fact, there's often a synergy between drugs and herbs and doctors who look into it could often lower the dose of drugs" when used in conjunction with herbs.

Maggie Jacobus is a freelance writer and Holistic Lifestyle Coach. Comments can be directed to her at mjacobus@execpc.com