



# Herbal Medicine For Children

**Safe and Effective Remedies for Kids**  
(And How to Get Them to Enjoy Taking Them)

Parents who want to use herbal medicine with their children face many questions. Is it safe to use herbs with children? If so, what herbs are best for children? How do I adjust the dose for my child's age and weight? And, how do I get my child to take icky tasting herbs, especially if they can't swallow capsules? In this issue of *Sunshine Sharing*, we'll address these questions and provide a list of safe remedies for common ailments that affect children.

## What Herbs Are Safe for Children?

Generally speaking any non-toxic herb is safe to use with children two and older. If an herb has no toxic effects on an adult it should be safe for a child. Children have more sensitive systems than adults, which means that they do well with mild-acting remedies and don't need stronger, more harshly acting remedies.

Because infants (children under the age of two) are especially sensitive you should be more cautious, but there are still many mild herbal remedies that are safe to use.

The general guidelines are as follows. Don't use herbs that are extremely bitter, strongly astringent or pungent (spicy) with small children. Also avoid herbs that are strongly hormonal or are generally used as tonics for the elderly, such as ginseng or black cohosh. Children will instinctively not want to take these stronger remedies anyway.

When using herbs for children choose herbs that have a more food-like action; remedies that people have either eaten as foods or have used to season foods. For example, consider gentle aromatics, alteratives, fruits or mucilaginous remedies. The bottom line is if it's really nasty-tasting to adults, you probably shouldn't give it to children unless it's a small part of a formula containing milder herbs.



## Getting Children to Take Herbs

Because some herbs don't taste good, it can be a challenge to get children to take them. If a child can swallow capsules that's great, they won't taste anything. However, the dose for a child might only be 1/2 half a capsule or less. If this is the case you can empty out part of a capsule or purchase empty capsules to fill. Dosing children with capsules can be tricky, so it may be easier to get the correct dose in a liquid form such as a tea, glycerite, syrup or tincture.

## Herbal Teas

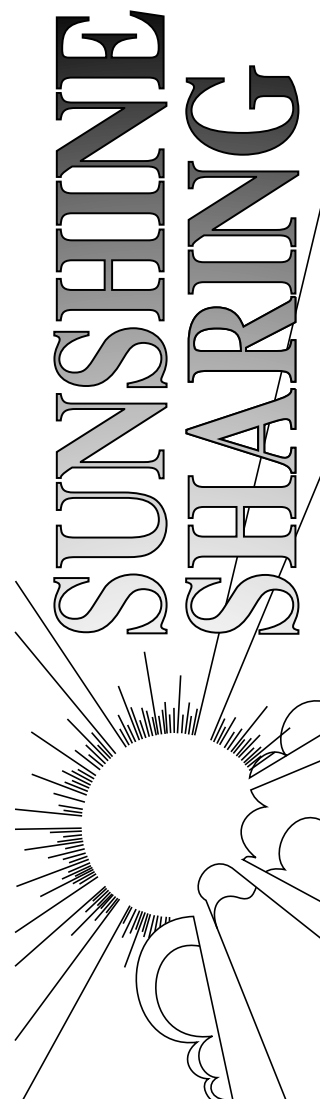
Teas are a great way to take pleasant tasting herbs. You can make a tea from bulk herbs or from capsules by emptying the contents of 3-4 capsules per cup of water. If needed you can sweeten the tea with a little honey, raw sugar, stevia or xylitol. Honey is *not* recommended for children under one year of age.

## Glycerites and Syrups

Glycerin extracts or glycerites are one of the easiest liquid products to use with children. Glycerin is non-toxic and sweet, so it helps to cover up the taste of the herbs without sugar. It also doesn't contribute to blood sugar problems or tooth decay.

Syrups are another option for children. They are water decoctions of herbs preserved with sugar (preferably raw), honey or even corn syrup.

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Your guide to better health the natural way.

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You can easily make a glycerite or syrup from powdered herbs (bought in bulk or emptied from capsules) or cut and sifted herbs. Start by measuring the amount of herb you have. For every ounce of herbs, you'll need five ounces of liquid. The liquid will be half purified water and half glycerin, raw sugar or honey.

Bring the liquid to a boil, reduce the heat and add the herbs. Simmer the herbs for 20-30 minutes, then strain and bottle. Store in a cool, dark place or refrigerator.



### Tinctures

If you use alcohol tinctures, you can remove some of the alcohol by combining the dose of tincture in a cup with one or two tablespoons of boiling water. Allow this to sit and cool for a few minutes. Since alcohol evaporates at a lower temperature than water, much of the alcohol will evaporate. When the mixture cools, you can give it to the child, sweetening it a little, if needed.

### Giving Herbs to Kids in Food

There are other ways of disguising the taste of herbs. If the herb isn't too nasty you can mix it with some cereal, apple sauce or yogurt. If that doesn't work, you can mix herbs with a spoonful of honey.

You can also make herbal nut butter balls. The basic recipe is very simple. Just blend 1/4 cup of a nut butter (i.e. almond butter or peanut butter) with 2 teaspoons of herbal powders and mix in 2-4 tablespoons of honey (or equivalent healthy sweetener). Additional ingredients like raisins, cocoa powder or coconut can be added to make them even tastier.

Once everything is thoroughly blended, measure out heaping tablespoons and roll them into small balls. You can then give the kids the balls to eat as their medicine. This is a great way to give kids tonic herbs like astragalus, spirulina, blue-green algae, ashwagandha, elderberries, bacopa or medicinal mushrooms.

## Adjusting Dosages for Children

When administering herbal remedies to children, you have to adjust the dose so it's appropriate for a child. This is pretty easy to do by using the child's weight as a guide. Simply assume that the adult dose is for a person around 150 pounds. If your child weighs 75 pounds, then you would use half the adult dose. If they weigh 50 pounds you'd use one third of the adult dose. An infant, weighing only 10 pounds would get only 1/15 of the adult dose, which is usually going to be just a few drops of an extract diluted in water or a small amount of tea.

Another tip for using herbs with children is to give them smaller, but more frequently repeated doses. Often 5-10 drops of a glycerite or tincture or a few sips of tea repeated every 30-60 minutes will work better than a larger amount given every 2-4 hours.

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## Great Herbal Remedies for Children

There are many safe and effective herbal remedies for children. Here are a few of the best single herbs and some good herbal formulas for children ages 2-12. Many of these can also be used with children under age 2, but if you're not experienced in using herbs you should talk to a professional herbalist about what is safe to use. It's also a good idea to keep some of these remedies on hand so you're prepared to use them at the first sign of illness.

### Single Herbs for Kids

#### Astragalus

Astragalus boosts the immune system to help prevent wintertime colds and flu. It is particularly helpful to keep the lungs healthy when the air is cold and dry. It's a pleasant tasting remedy and makes a tasty syrup or glycerite. It can also be added to foods like rice or soup to fortify them.

#### Black Walnut

This is one of the best herbs to give children if they have parasites. It's mild acting and thus suitable for kids and pets. If you have both, you may want to give them black walnut daily for a week or two twice a year to prevent parasitic infections. It can also be a helpful remedy for viral infections like cold sores, bacterial skin infections like impetigo and fungal infections like athlete's foot.

It works both topically and internally for these conditions.

#### Catnip and Fennel

The combination of these two herbs is a traditional remedy for children with colic, indigestion and gas. It can be made as a tea or taken as an extract with a little warm water. It may also help with fever. Adding a little chamomile or peppermint can make it even more effective for both fevers and indigestion.

#### Chamomile

Chamomile is a traditional remedy for fussy children and infants. It helps to calm the nerves and settle tummy aches. A little bit of weak chamomile tea can help fussy teething infants. However, it's easier to use homeopathic chamomile with infants. Chamomile also helps children with viral infections like colds, flu and fevers. It's a soothing remedy for intestinal inflammation and can also help children sleep when given at bedtime.

#### Charcoal, Activated

Although it's not an herb, activated charcoal is an important remedy to keep in your home first aid kit, especially if you have children. It's pretty tasteless and can be mixed with a little water and drunk like a tea. It's one of the best remedies for diarrhea and



is also helpful for mild jaundice in infants. On advice of a poison control center, it can be administered orally for food or chemical poisoning. It can also be applied topically to insect bites by moistening it with a little aloe vera gel or colloidal silver gel.

### **Elderberry**

Elderberries are a very pleasant tasting remedy for children, especially in the form of a syrup, glycerite or chewable tablet. They are valuable for preventing and recovering from colds and flu because they inhibit viral replication. They also act as a mild decongestant to clear the sinuses and lungs of mucus.

### **Echinacea**

Echinacea boosts the immune system to fight both viral and bacterial infections. Small amounts taken during cold and flu season reduce the risk of catching these infections. It's also helpful when taken at the first sign of viral infection to help the body fight it off more quickly.

### **Dulse**

Liquid dulse is a source of iodine, trace minerals and other nutrients. A small amount (1/4 teaspoon or less) daily can help children have a strong immune system and supply minerals for healthy teeth and bones. It also supplies iodine for the thyroid.

### **Garlic Oil**

Garlic oil is a great remedy for earaches in children. Simply warm the oil to body temperature and put it in the ear. It can also be rubbed onto the chest for respiratory congestion or the throat for sore throats (if you can stand the smell). Garlic has been called nature's penicillin and along with echinacea is one of the best natural antibiotics for bacterial infections. It is also helpful for viral, fungal and parasitic infections in the digestive and respiratory systems. Older children can swallow tablets of garlic with stabilized allicin.

### **Licorice Root**

Licorice root has a naturally sweet flavor which makes it an excellent addition to other liquid herbs to improve their flavor. It helps to reduce sugar cravings in both children and adults, which can help to stabilize a child's mood. It is anti-inflammatory which can help to ease minor aches and pains, plus it is a moistening decongestant making it helpful for dry cough and irritated throats.

### **Lobelia**

Although lobelia is a strong herb, it is useful for many problems in children. It can be applied topically to relax cramps and muscle spasms. You can even rub it into the back to help a distressed child go to sleep. It can be used internally in small doses of 3-10 drops, to relax the bronchials in asthma attacks and croupy cough. Repeat every 10-15 minutes until relief is obtained. In larger doses it can be used to induce vomiting in instances of food or chemical poisoning. However, call a poison control center before inducing vomiting in any case of chemical poisoning.

### **Oregon Grape**

This plant contains the antimicrobial alkaloid berberine, which helps fight both bacterial and fungal infections. Oregon grape is less bitter than other plants with berberine like goldenseal. It combines

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## **When to Go See a Doctor**



It's great to use home remedies as first aid for minor injuries or to help children recover from common viral ailments like colds and flu, but there are times when parents should seek medical attention for their children. These include all of the following:

Severe allergic reactions to foods or insect bites

Animal bites by wild or unknown animals

Severe burns (3rd degree), broken bones, puncture wounds and deep cuts; also wounds that become infected

Prolonged diarrhea or explosive or persistent vomiting, especially where there is abdominal pain, irritability and fever. Diarrhea for 10-15 hours can cause dehydration.

Sudden fever over 104° or prolonged low grade fever lasting more than two days

Poisons such as household cleaners, gardening chemicals, drugs and even houseplants. If a child ingests a potentially harmful substance call a poison control center immediately for advice.

If your child isn't showing signs of improvement or is getting worse after 24-48 hours it is time to seek medical help

Traditional herbal medicine has some important wisdom when helping children get well. So, before seeking medical help there are a few things that you should know.

First, most respiratory congestion, sinus problems, ear infections, coughing and minor sore throats are viral in nature. If you go to the doctor, he may prescribe an antibiotic even for a viral infection. Antibiotics are very useful for bacterial infections but primarily act as placebos for viral infections. They should be avoided unless they're really necessary because they weaken the immune system by disrupting the friendly bacteria in the intestines.

Second, it's a good idea to avoid using aspirin or OTC pain remedies to bring down a low grade fever (102 or below). These fevers are typically generated to inhibit viral replication and activate the immune system. Suppressing the fever actually helps the virus spread faster. If the fever lasts more than a couple of days or gets worse (104 or above) seek medical attention.

Finally, it's also a good idea to use herbs to gently support the body's efforts to fight the infection and expel the irritants than it is to use symptom relieving medications to dry up mucus secretions or suppress coughing. The symptoms are generated by the immune system to help clear the body of the disease. Try using herbal decongestants and expectorants and have the child drink extra water to help the body get rid of the irritants.

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well with echinacea to help fight infections and also helps to clear the lymph when a child is congested.

### Slippery Elm

Slippery elm is a mild nourishing food that can help with intestinal irritation, diarrhea and dry cough. It can easily be mixed with apple sauce, yogurt or other foods to take internally. You can use a blender to mix the powder with apple or orange juice. Sprinkle a little of the powder into a baby's diaper to soothe diaper rash.

## Herbal Formulas for Kids

These are some herbal formulas that are safe and effective for kids. Many contain the single herbs and nutrients listed previously.

### Antispasmodic Ear Formula

This liquid formula contains black cohosh, chickweed, passion flower and valerian, making it both relaxing and analgesic. It can be given orally to help children calm their nerves. Warm it to body temperature and place a few drops in the ear to relieve earaches.

### Blood Purifier Formula

When children have skin problems like eczema, rashes or acne, they often benefit from taking a blood purifier formula. The best blood purifiers for kids are red clover, burdock, dandelion and pau d'arco. Adding a little licorice root and/or sarsaparilla will make these slightly bitter herbs taste better.

### Children's Cold and Flu Formula

You can reduce the risk of catching colds and flu by using a combining elderberry, astragalus, echinacea and medicinal mushrooms along with nutrients like vitamin C, vitamin D and zinc. This formula can also be used to help kids recover more quickly from colds and flu.

### Chinese Wind-Heat Evil Formula

Developed by a Chinese medical doctor, this anti-viral formula is very effective against cold sores (herpes virus) and other viral

infections like chicken pox and measles. It may be helpful for other viral or bacterial infections where there is fever or inflammation present. It contains assam indigo leaf and root, dandelion, purslane, thlaspi, bupleurum and cinnamon.

### Jeannie Burgess Allergy-Lung Formula

This blend is great for any type of respiratory congestion in children. It contains boneset, fenugreek, horseradish and mullein. For best results it should be used in frequently repeated small doses (1/4-1/2 teaspoon every 15-30 minutes). It is not a cough suppressant, but helps the cough become productive so the mucus will be expelled from the child's lungs and sinuses. For a croupy cough, add a drop or two of lobelia.

### Jeannie Burgess' Stress Formula (Liquid)

When children are anxious or stressed a mild nervine formula containing passion flower, feverfew, hops and chamomile can be helpful. It can also be given before bedtime to aid sleep.

### Papaya Enzyme Tablets

These pleasant tasting, chewable tablets contain papaya and peppermint and are great for helping children with indigestion and stomach upset.

## Additional Help and Information

For more information about using herbs with children contact the person who gave you this newsletter. They can offer you additional guidance and suggestions. You can also consult the following resources:

*Modern Herbal Dispensatory* by Steven Horne and Thomas Easley

*The ABC Herbal* by Steven Horne

*Herbs for Children's Health* by Rosemary Gladstar

[stevenhorne.com/article/Sealed-Simmer-Glycerites](http://stevenhorne.com/article/Sealed-Simmer-Glycerites)

[mywildvibrations.com/herbal-butter-balls-how-to-easily-get-children-to-take-herbs-internally/](http://mywildvibrations.com/herbal-butter-balls-how-to-easily-get-children-to-take-herbs-internally/)

[theherbalacademy.com/choosing-safe-herbs-for-your-kids/](http://theherbalacademy.com/choosing-safe-herbs-for-your-kids/)