

# An Herbalist's View

## Digestive Problems in First Aid

7Song, Director

Northeast School of Botanical Medicine

7Song.com

### Conditions

Abdominal pain	Fever/chills	Lack of appetite	Sluggish digestion
Anorexia	Flatulence	Malabsorption	Stomach ache
Bacterial infection	Food poisoning	Nausea/vomiting	Toothache
Constipation	Headache	Pain	Weight loss
Diarrhea	Heartburn	Parasites	Worms
Dysentery	Hives	Protozoal infections	

### Therapeutic Actions

Adsorbing	Antiparasitic	Cathartic	Purgative
Anodyne	Antispasmodic	Demulcent	Refrigerant
Antacid	Antistress	Diaphoretic	Regenerative
Antibacterial	Astringent	Dispersing	Sedative
Antidiarrheal	Bitter	Diuretic	Stomachic
Antiinfective	Calming	Emetic	Tonic
Antiinflammatory	Carminative	Flavoring	Vermicide
Antimicrobial	Carrier	Laxative	Vermifuge

### Constitutional Polarities

1. Acute or Chronic
2. Exogenous or Endogenous
3. Stimulating or Sluggish
4. Sudden onset or Long-time progression

### Materia Medica

**Aloe**–Aloe spp.

**Anise**–Pimpinella anisum

**Black walnut**–Juglans niger

**Blackberry root**–Rubus spp.

**Blue vervain**–Verbena hastata

**Bogbean**–Menyanthes trifoliata

**Buckthorn**–Rhamnus cathartica

**Cabbage**–Brassica oleracea

**Cardamom**–Elettaria cardamomum

**Cascara sagrada**–Rhamnus purshiana

**Catnip**–Nepeta cataria

**Cayenne**–Capsicum annum

**Chamomile**–Matricaria recutita

**Chaparral**–Larrea tridentata

**Chaparro amargosa**–Castela emoryi

**Cinnamon**–Cinnamomum spp.

**Cinquefoil**–Potentilla spp.

**Comfrey**–Symphytum spp.

**Curly dock**–Rumex obtusifolius

**Echinacea**–Echinacea spp.

**Fennel**–Foeniculum vulgare

**Garlic**–Allium sativum

**Gentian**–Gentiana spp.

**Ginger**–Zingiber officinale

**Goldenseal**–Hydrastis canadensis  
**Kava kava**–Piper methysticum  
**Lavender**–Lavandula spp.  
**Licorice**–Glycyrrhiza spp  
**Lobelia**–Lobelia inflata  
**Mallow**–Malva spp.  
**Marshmallow**–Althaea officinalis  
**Meadowsweet** –Filipendula ulmaria  
**Nettles**–Urtica spp.  
**Oak**–Quercus spp.  
**Osha**–Ligusticum porteri  
**Peppermint**–Mentha x. piperita  
**Pink root**–Spigelia marilandica  
**Plantain**–Plantago spp.

**Pussytoes**–Antennaria spp.  
**Rhatany**–Krameria spp.  
**Senna**–Cassia spp.  
**Silk tassel**–Garrya spp.  
**Skullcap**–Scutellaria lateriflora  
**Slippery elm**–Ulmus fulva  
**Spearmint**–Mentha spicata  
**St. Johnswort**–Hypericum perforatum  
**Turkey rhubarb**–Rheum palmatum  
**Valerian**–Valeriana officinalis  
**Wild yam**–Dioscorea villosa  
**Yarrow**–Achillea millefolium  
**Yellow dock**–Rumex crispus

### Materia medica-Non-Herbal

Acidophilous	Cloth tea bags	Licorice roots
Activated charcoal	Electrolytes	Slippery elm powder
Aloe vera gel	Grapefruit seed extract	Throat lozenges
Castor oil	Honey	Ume (sour plum) paste
Clay, powdered	Hot water bottle	

### Tinctures-Singles

Bitters	Echinacea	Peppermint Spirits
Blackberry root	German chamomile	Silk tassel
Chaparro amargosa	Goldenseal	Valerian
Digestive Aid	Neutralizing Cordial	Wild yam

**Formulas**-These are just some ideas of what plants can be used together to make tinctures, teas and other preparations. The formulas you make will be influenced by your herbal knowledge, specific situations and people you may treat, as well as what ingredients you have on hand.

### Tinctures

1. **Antispasmodic Compound**–Black haw, Cramp bark, Wild yam, Skullcap, Cinnamon, Orange peel, Simple syrup
2. **Bitter Tonic**–Wormwood, Yarrow, Blessed thistle, Calamus, Southernwood, Dandelion
3. **De-Stress**–Damiana, Oatstraw, St. Johnswort, Vervain, Rosemary, Lavender, Valerian
4. **Digestive Aid**–Fennel seed, Marshmallow, Chamomile, Meadowsweet, Catnip
5. **Peppermint Spirits**–Peppermint tincture, Peppermint tea, Peppermint essential oil.  
*Preparation:* 4 parts peppermint tincture (made with dried peppermint lf, 1:4 50% ethanol), 1 part peppermint tea (a strong cold infused dried peppermint leaf tea), final menstruum about 20% ethanol. Add peppermint essential oil, 1:20 (i.e., if your final tincture/tea is 20 oz, you would add 1 oz peppermint essential oil).

6. **Tooth & Gum Tonic**—Yerba mansa, Echinacea, Goldenseal, Rhatany, Myrrh, Self-heal, Vegetable glycerine
7. **Tummy Tincture**—Catnip, Fennel seed, Anise, Peppermint, Vegetable glycerine

### Teas and Powders

1. **Nervine Tea Blend**—Lemon balm, Skullcap, Oatstraw, German chamomile, Passionflower, Meadowsweet
2. **Nutritive Tea Blend**—Nettles, Alfalfa, Red clover, Dandelion leaf, Oatstraw
3. **Trikatu powder**—Black pepper, Long pepper, Ginger

### Therapeutic Categories

**Antimicrobials**—inhibit or kill microorganisms

Baptisia	Echinacea	Myrrh
Barberry	Garlic	Oregon graperoot
Calendula	Goldenseal	Osha
Chaparral	Licorice	Yarrow

**Antiinflammatories**—herbs that reduce inflammation (which often reduces pain).

Chamomile	Licorice	Wild yam
Ginger	Meadowsweet	Willow

**Antispasmodics**—relax smooth muscle spasms

Black haw	Neutralizing cordial	Wild yam
Crampbark	Silk tassel	
Marijuana	Valerian	

**Astringents**—tighten gut tissue

Blackberry root	Potentilla	'Tea'
Geranium	Rhatany	Witch hazel
Oak	Rose	Yellow dock

**Bitters**—stimulate gastrointestinal secretions

Artemisia	Chicory	Goldenseal
Bogbean	Dandelion	Vervain
Chaparro amargosa	Gentian	

**Carrier/Flavoring**—soothing to the GI tract and to help palatability of medicines

Anise	Cinnamon	Slippery elm
Cardamom	Fennel	
Cayenne	Ginger	

**Digestive Nervines**—specific gut nerve soothing remedies

California poppy	German chamomile	Vervain
Catnip	Peppermint spirits	

**Demulcents**-soothing mucilaginous plant

Aloe	Mallow	Slippery elm
Comfrey	Marshmallow	
Licorice	Plantain	

**Laxatives-Mechanical**—bulking agents

Bran	Flax	Psyllium
Fiber	Metamucil	

**Laxatives**—stimulate peristalsis

Buckthorn	Senna	Yellow dock
Cascara sagrada	Turkey rhubarb	

**Laxatives-Lubricating**

Aloe	Mineral oil	Castor oil
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**Pain**-for a variety of digestive pain

Aloe	Fennel	Licorice	Silk tassel
Skullcap	Chamomile	Lobelia	Skullcap
Valerian	Ginger	Meadowsweet	Valerian
Catnip	Kava kava	Peppermint	Wild yam

**Restoratives**

Catnip	Nettles	Peppermint	Yogurt-live
Comfrey	Marshmallow	Slippery elm	
Fennel	Oatmeal	Miso	

**Selected Conditions**

**Tips for Travelers**

1. Start taking medicines beforehand, use strengthening digestive (and immune) tonics before your journey
2. Be cautious of drinking water in unfamiliar locales. If staying in one place for a while, you may want to slowly work your way towards drinking local water by incrementally incorporating small amounts into your diet, thereby allowing your gut to adjust to local microorganisms. Though this may not help.
3. Bring your own cup, bowl and utensils so you can maintain control of them. Stainless steel is easy to disinfect by heating. Be cautious about sharing any containers that held food or water.
4. Try to avoid overindulgence and famine/feast patterns; this may set up an opportunity for digestive disorders. Carry snacks to avoid overt hunger which may induce one to toss caution to the wind.
5. Try to find local digestive remedies. These are common in most regions and traditions. They are often bitter.

6. Occasional short fasts (1/2-1 day) may be helpful to help accommodate new foods and water.
7. Be cautious using some digestive remedies with infants, pregnant and nursing women. Many of these may work on smooth muscles and taste quite strong
8. Discriminate between acute and chronic conditions

### **Considerations for Diarrhea**

1. Determine reason for diarrhea whether it is a microorganism, stress, flare up of chronic digestive disorder (i.e., ulcerative colitis) or something else.
2. Is there blood present?
3. Does the patient have a fever?
4. Don't impede diarrhea unnecessarily at onset, it may be important to evacuate the bowels initially.
5. Rehydrate continually—drink plenty of water.
6. Cleanliness: avoid contracting and spreading infectious agents by practicing scrupulous washing habits
7. Rehydration fluid: 1-quart water, 1 1/2 tablespoons sugar, 1/4 teaspoon salt.
8. Fasting from solid foods can be initially helpful.
9. Vomiting and diarrhea can quickly lead to dehydration and debilitation. This situation can spiral downward fast. If this combination continues for any protracted period take action and seek help.
10. During recovery, eat small amounts of easily digestible foods and herbs such as Oatmeal and Slippery elm

### **Activated Charcoal**

1. Charcoal is carbon, left over from burning organic matter. Activated charcoal is when it is burnt at a much higher temperature with oxygen excluded.
2. This process gives the activated charcoal many more surface pores and increases its effectiveness.
3. Hence activated charcoal is much more effective than 'campfire' charcoal, though the latter charcoal can be used if needed (though much more may be necessary).
4. Burnt food (through and through, until utterly black) works the same as campfire charcoal.
5. The dose of activated charcoal varies depending on the reason for taking it. Probably take more than you think you need to be on the safe side, it is non-toxic.
6. Activated charcoal comes in a variety of forms including capsules, pills and powder. The least expensive way is purchasing it in bulk in powder form. The powder can be stirred into water and drunk. Capsules can also be prepared from the powders.
7. Charcoal has a strong affinity for adsorbing a diversity of toxins from the digestive tract including many of the pathogens associated with food and water sicknesses.

8. It forms a strong bond with these organisms and they are then carried out with the charcoal during a bowel movement.
9. Charcoal will color the feces (and tongue, teeth) black. Let people know whom you give it to, so they don't worry when they see it.
10. After charcoal use, use soothing gut agents (demulcents) and nutritious food and herbs as restoratives.