

**The Herbalist Street Medic**  
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Street medicine refers to the health care offered at protests, demonstrations, rallies and similar events. These are generally urban situations, sometimes planned well in advance and other times springing up spontaneously. They may last for just a few hours, or for weeks as with the Occupy encampments.

This handout is geared for 'on the ground' practitioners, meaning those herbalist's who are in the fray of the protests, whether walking with the demonstrators or in a clinic set up for the event.

Herbalists can offer a valuable service in these situations, as herbal medicines can be helpful as primary and adjunct treatments. Individual medics should know their skill limitations and pass along patients to more knowledgeable persons if the situation is beyond them or if it calls for a different treatment modality. It is helpful to have a variety of health care practitioners to assess and treat. Working together is a boon for the patients as well as other staff.

It is common for street medics to need medical care themselves. This is because they will likely not be distinguished from other protesters and may also be hurt during a demonstration. It is also important to realize that many of the street medics at these events are new to practicing medicine and may have difficulty adjusting to their new role and situations.

The herbalist first aid bag should include numerous medicines to help out the protesters as well as other medics. These situations can be stressful and throw off people's diets and sleep patterns. So as well as dealing with injured protestors, you will also be working with stressed-out medics. A cool head and critical thinking go a long way in these circumstances.

Treatment protocol conditions range from being in a stressful environment (which may induce anxiety and insomnia), injuries, asthma, gastrointestinal disturbances, and exacerbations of pre-existing health conditions.

Another consideration is that within urban environments many useful herbal medicines and other supplies are commonly found in supermarkets and shops. These include Turmeric for inflammation, Cayenne as a warming agent, Fennel for indigestion and rubbing alcohol as a wash.

It is important to consider preventative and post-event care. Preventative personal care means bringing along all the medicines (conventional and holistic) that are important to you, as well as items of comfort, such as favorite snacks or a stuffed animal. Also consider having a support network for after-care. This includes medicines for both physical ailments such as injuries, as well as medicines for emotional health.

## Common Health Conditions

- Allergy
- Anxiety/Stress
- Asthma
- Cold/Frigid
- Cold/Influenza
- Dehydration
- Diarrhea
- Digestive disorders
- Emotional crises
- Exacerbations of pre-existing conditions
- Infections
- Injuries
- Insomnia
- Pain
- Skeletal muscle pain
- Soft tissue injuries
- Sun exposure
- Trauma
- Wounds

## General Considerations

1. The majority of the herbal medicines listed below are tinctures (plants in an ethanol alcohol medium). There are a few reasons for this. They are convenient as they are ready-to-go with no further preparation required. As a concentrated plant medicine, less is generally needed. And they are easily dispensed for immediate use and can be put into a container to be given out for later use. There are a few disadvantages. One of the main ones is that some people cannot take alcohol. For this reason, it is helpful to have a few of the most common remedies in glycerin, capsules, tea or other non-alcohol forms. They are also strong tasting dissuading some people from ingesting them. And some plants are not best extracted in alcohol for their medicinal effect.
2. When working with people, ask if they are on any medicines. This can be especially important if they have forgotten to bring along essential conventional medicines or if they are vomiting and cannot hold down their medications.
3. For any specific conditions, ask the patient if there is any medicine that has previously helped with their condition. This can save a lot of time if you have or can obtain the medicine, whether herbal or pharmaceutical.
4. As you prepare for any event, consider what medicines would be most helpful in the situations you will be in.
5. Keep a backstock of medicines somewhere such as a clinic or home to refill the medicines you carry as well as in case of any them breaking or getting lost.
6. Have 'to go' bottles so folks can take their medicines with them. 1 oz plastic bottles with caps are a good size. You can use tape on the bottles to write what is in it so that medicines can be replicated and replaced later.
7. When giving medicines to go, write and let the patient know both how much (quantity) and how often (frequency) to take their medicines. Ask them to repeat this to make sure they understand. This is more important with stronger herbal medicines.
8. Street medics should be aware that they are often asked to 'police' situations at events where there may be violence or people are acting out in harmful ways. Medics are often seen as having quasi-official status and being a part of the community, rather than being an outsider. It is helpful for all staff to understand how to respond in these situations and know when to seek help, as they can be dangerous.

## Tincture Considerations

1. Before giving anyone a tincture, let them know it has alcohol in it. For some people, no amount of alcohol is acceptable internally. Since many people do not know what tinctures are, it is helpful to say something such as “I would like to give you this tincture. Tinctures have alcohol in them, is that okay for you?” Many folks will be puzzled by this question, but for those who do not drink alcohol for health or religious reasons, they will appreciate you asking.
2. Below are approximate dosages for using these tinctures. There is a lot of individuality when it comes to how much to use of a specific medicine for an individual. To help establish personal protocols, ask if the patient has previously tried herbal medicines and/or if they are sensitive to any medicines in general.
3. For medium to larger tincture dosages, it is helpful to dilute the medicines in water or other fluid before administering. You can also offer a chaser.
4. It can be helpful to initially try small doses of a medicine to see if they help with acute conditions such as pain. Sometimes one can see/feel an immediate effect and this can help make decisions on which medicines are helpful as well as figure out how much of a specific medicine to use.
5. The below guidelines are recommendations for safety reasons and also to guide the hands for those newer to administering herbal medicines. It can be helpful to initially work with someone more knowledgeable to gain a finer understanding of how to use these medicines.
6. Be cautious using medicines for anyone pregnant. Consult if unsure.
7. The term ‘plateau’ is used here to mean a medicinal effect has been reached from a tincture and more does not make the situation better. An example, someone takes 5 drops of Lobelia for their asthma, and finds some relief. They then take another 5 drops and feel better yet. They then take another 5 drops and there is no further change. They have reached their plateau dose.
8. Loading dose is a term that describes how much you may initially give of a specific medicine. It is often larger than later doses as you are looking to effect a bigger change. For instance, if you are giving activated charcoal for a gut infection, your first dose might be 1 teaspoon (in water), where future doses might be ½ teaspoon.

## Tincture Calibrations

Below are some basic calibrations describing approximately how many milliliters (ml) and drops are in a **half full dropper** of the three most common sizes for dispensing tinctures. Half dropper full is being used here as a measurement as it is difficult to fill a dropper to the top, so this seems more practical.

- 1 oz dropper-½ full is about 1 ml (about 20 drops).
- 2 oz dropper-½ full is about 1 ml (about 20 drops). Yes it is the same as a 1 oz dropper.
- 4 oz dropper-½ full is about 1.5 ml (about 30 drops).

## Tincture Dosage Key

- **Drop dose**-these strong medicines should be used with caution and in small amounts as they can have harmful effects. A possible dosage is 3-5 **drops** (not droppers) a few times a day. See *low dose* below for comparison.
- **Low dose**-these medicines often work well at lower dosages. While these work best at smaller doses, they usually cause minimum (if any) harmful effects if more is taken. 3-5 drops is often a useful starting dose with more given as needed until a desired effect or a plateau is reached. The difference between this and *drop dose* is about toxicity. More of the low dose medicines can be given immediately to reach a desired effect, while the drop dose tinctures have to be curtailed after a small amount is taken to avoid harm.
- **Medium dose**-these medicines are relatively safe and medium to larger doses can be taken. The plateau is often reached earlier than with *large dose* botanicals. ½-1 ml is usually a good loading dose.
- **Large dose**-these tinctures are very safe and often work best in larger doses. The loading dose is often around ½-2 ml and more is taken as needed. Many of the immune tonics such as Echinacea fit into this category so you would not be looking for a plateau response, as their function is not seen immediately.

## Tinctures

1. **Anemone** (*Anemone spp*)-low dose. For panic and acute anxiety. A useful trauma and panic attack remedy.
2. **Arnica** (*Arnica spp*)-drop dose (use with caution). Antiinflammatory, useful immediately after soft tissue injury (sprains, etc.) to speed recovery.
3. **Chaparral** (*Larrea tridentata*)-low to large dose. For internal and external infections, bacterial, viral and protozoal.
4. **Echinacea** (*Echinacea spp*)-medium to large dose. Immune system medicine, useful for viral and bacterial infections and as a preventative.
5. **Eyebright** (*Euphrasia spp*)-medium dose. Antihistamine-type tincture for allergic reactions. See Ragweed for details.
6. **Goldenseal** (*Hydrastis canadensis*)-low to large dose. For bacterial, viral and other infections. Internal and external use.
7. **Immune combination tincture**-a combination of immune herbs for infections and as a preventative.
8. **Jamaican dogwood** (*Piscidia piscipula*)-medium to large dose. Good general pain remedy. Combines well with other pain remedies. Also helpful for insomnia and menstrual cramps.
9. **Kava kava** (*Piper methysticum*)-low to large dose. For pain and as a sedative. Good for frayed nerves and relaxing after a hard/busy day.
10. **Lobelia** (*Lobelia inflata*)-low dose. Asthma remedy, also helpful for some types of headaches and excess stress.
11. **Meadowsweet** (*Filipendula ulmaria*)-medium to large dose. General antiinflammatory but especially for digestive tract inflammation.

12. **Oregon graperoot** (*Berberis spp*)-medium to large dose. Helpful for a wide range of infections including viral, bacterial and protozoal.
13. **Osha** (*Ligusticum porteri*)-medium dose. Respiratory viruses and sore throats,
14. **Pain formula**-low to large dose. A combination of sedative and pain-relieving herbs for various pains and trauma.
15. **Passionflower** (*Passiflora incarnata*)-medium to large dose. A nerve tonic, useful when feeling edgy, and helpful to prevent it.
16. **Lousewort** (*Pedicularis spp*)-medium dose. A skeletal muscle relaxant, especially for back and shoulder pain.
17. **Propolis**-medium dose. Useful internally and externally. Antiseptic wound covering and for infected throats.
18. **Ragweed** (*Ambrosia spp*)-low to medium dose. Antihistamine-like action for hypersensitivity allergic reactions such as hives, hay fever, and insect stings. This is not a substitute for injectable epinephrine (such as an EpiPen).
19. **Silk tassel** (*Garrya spp*)-low dose. For smooth muscle pain such as menstrual or digestive cramps.
20. **Skullcap** (*Scutellaria spp*)-low to large dose. Sedative, relaxing, stress and pain relieving. Also good for skeletal muscle pain. Works well in combination with other similar acting plants.
21. **Valerian** (*Valeriana officinalis*)-low to large dose. Sedative, pain relieving, relaxing, and a very useful sleep aid. Start with a very low dose to look for any adverse reaction, such as agitation or restlessness.
22. **Willow** (*Salix spp*)-large dose. An antiinflammatory for soft tissue injuries (sprains, etc.) and other inflammatory problems.
23. **Wild lettuce** (*Lactuca spp*)-low to large dose. Sedative, pain relieving. Good for a wide variety of physical pain.
24. **Wild yam** (*Dioscorea spp*)-medium to large dose. Smooth muscle relaxant, especially useful for digestive cramps.

## Other Medicines

1. **Activated charcoal**-Drawing agent, internal for digestive infections, external for infected wounds.
2. **Chamomile herb** (*Matricaria recutita*)-for tea. Soothing, relaxing and for GI upsets. Well-liked.
3. **Lavender essential oil** (*Lavandula spp*)-burn medicine (dilute).
4. **Licorice root** (*Glycyrrhiza uralensis, G. glabra*)-antiinflammatory and moistening for internal mucosal conditions for the digestive and respiratory system.
5. **Osha honey** (*Ligusticum porteri*)-for sore throats and coughs.
6. **Peppermint spirits**-drop dose. Digestive aid for nausea, stomachaches, indigestion.
7. **Salve**-external applications for a number skin conditions, including infections, burns and rashes. Helpful to have a few types for different problems. Also helpful to have smaller containers so people can take the medicine with them.

8. **Slippery elm** (*Ulmus rubra*)-powder as a demulcent for sore throat and digestive remedy.
9. **Tobacco** (*Nicotiana spp*)-spit poultice for insect bites and stings.
10. **Valerian glycerite** (*Valeriana officinalis*)-for pain and insomnia, can be used for those who cannot ingest alcohol.
11. **Yunnan paiyao** (Patented Chinese medicine)-hemostat to help stop bleeding.

## **Supplies**

1. **Bands aids**-to cover small wounds.
2. **Disposable gloves**-to work on wounds and avoid infection and contamination.
3. **Dressings**-an assortment to cover wounds.
4. **Elastic bandages** (ACE bandage, Sports wrap, etc.)-Used as a wrap for soft tissue injuries such as sprains and strains.
5. **Face mask/Bandana**-for protection when looking in people throats.
6. **Flashlight and Headlamp**-to work in low light and checking throats.
7. **Rubbing (Isopropyl) alcohol**-for washing infections.
8. **Self-adhesive bandages** (Vetwrap. Coflex and other brands). This is thinner than elastic bandages and useful for holding wound dressings in place.
9. **Small plastic containers**-to give patients medicines to go.
10. **Tape**-an assortment of sizes and types to hold wound dressings in place.
11. **Tweezers**-for splinters and similar.