HERBAL MEDICINES
Notes for Common Remedies

Please Note - Herbal remedies like all medicine can have individual effects. Before using any of the below, research the individual herbs and talk to knowledgeable people and herbalists.

Herbs or Conventional Drugs? - Herbal medicines are not drugs as they are not one specific chemical (as most conventional drugs are). They contain a multitude of constituents, meaning that the potency of different batches can vary. In general they are not as strong as conventional drugs.

A few reasons why herbal medicines may be suitable for you;
1) Herbal remedies are generally well-tolerated with few side-effects
2) They can help with short and long-term health issues. Many of these are taken for a while (as a tonic) and can help reduce symptoms so that eventually you may need less drugs or herbs.
3) No prescription needed
4) Many are readily available
5) They are generally less sedating (do not make you as tired)
6) They are not as addictive as some drugs (such as Vicodin)
7) They are often more affordable than drugs. (A difficulty is that they are not covered by insurance.)
8) Herbal medicines are generally easier to alter your dosage. You may need to use more than is commonly recommended to get the relief you seek.

Herbal Categories - There are a number of categories to consider when choosing herbs. Herbs generally fit into a number of categories depending on what you are using them for.

Some common categories include;
1) Acute - For treating a current condition
2) Tonic - Taken for long-term health problems
3) Anodyne - General pain relief
4) Antiinflammatory - Reduces inflammation which may reduce pain
5) Nervine - Long-term tonic for the nervous system
6) Sedative - Reduces excitement, calming, relaxing
7) Skeletal muscle relaxants - Help with voluntary muscle pain (such as back and joint pain)
8) Sleep aid - Help with falling or staying asleep
9) Smooth muscle relaxants - Relieve smooth muscle pain (for example; menstrual or digestive cramps)
**Dosage** - Initially, try one to a few drops of any remedy to test for individual response. Dosage includes how much you take per time as well as how many times taken daily. Use a specific remedy for a while to see how well it works for you, and increase or decrease dosage as you see fit.

**Preparations** - Below are a number of ways to purchase and take these herbs.

**Tinctures** - Plants extracted in alcohol.
- **Advantages** - This method can concentrate the medicine, making it more potent, and they last a long-time. You can prepare your own (and save money). Research or ask an herbalist how to do this.
- **Disadvantages** - Do not use if alcohol intolerant, they can be expensive, especially if needed over a long period of time, strong flavor.

**Teas** - Plants extracted in water. These can either be in hot or cold water. Two main methods; **Infusion** - pour hot water on the herb (most common method); **Decoction** - cook the plant in hot water (like soup).
- **Advantages** - Easy to prepare, inexpensive, easily tolerated.
- **Disadvantages** - May be hard to find quality herbs, do not last long once made, taste — you may not like the flavor, time-consuming to prepare.

**Powders** - Plants are prepared into a powder form.
- **Advantages** - Very easy to take (just stir into water), inexpensive.
- **Disadvantages** - Many plants don’t last long in powder form, strong flavor, hard to find many plants in powder form.

**Oils and Salves** - External applications. Herbs extracted in oil, and with salves, then put into beeswax.
- **Advantages** - Can be applied locally, no worries about flavor.
- **Disadvantages** - Messy, can stain clothes, shorter shelf life.