

# How to Prepare an Herbal Compress

Ithaca Free Clinic

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Compresses are a type of external herbal preparation used for sore muscles and joints. They are prepared by soaking a cloth in an herbal tea and then placing it on the outside of the body.

Compresses are often prepared individually, and each compress may utilize a different tea blend and directions for use.

## Reasons for Using a Compress

Compresses are helpful for painful, tired, sore, and inflamed muscles and joints, such as the lower back or knees.

## Supplies

1. Cloth
2. Hot water bottle
3. Pot
4. Rubber gloves
5. Stove
6. Tea
7. Towel
8. Water

## General Directions

1. Directions for a generic compress.
  - Ask about specific instructions for any compress you may be using.
2. If the compress is going to be placed on your back or anywhere else that is difficult to reach, it is helpful to have someone else assist with applying it.
3. After the tea is prepared, put a clean cloth in it and wring it out so that it is not too wet.
  - This is easier to do with rubber gloves due to the heat.
  - Or lift the cloth from the hot tea with a utensil and allow it to cool a little before wringing it out.
4. It is helpful to place a dry towel under the compress to keep the area dry.
5. Place the moistened cloth on your body.
6. It should be very warm *but should not burn the skin*.
7. It is helpful to place a hot water bottle on top of the compress to keep it warm so that you don't have to change it as often.
8. Leave the compress on until it is cooled off.
9. Then put the cloth back in the tea (which may need to be reheated) and apply it again to the body.
10. 10-20 minutes is generally a good amount of time per session.

11. Leftover tea can be kept in the refrigerator until it is used up.
12. The tea should be reheated before using it.

### **Infused Tea for Compress**

- \* The amount of tea and water you use may vary from these directions.
1. Pour 1 quart of boiling water over 1 ounce of tea in a jar or French press.
  2. Let steep for 15 minutes
  3. Strain the tea into a pot
    - It may need to be reheated
  4. See General Directions

### **Tea Decoction for Compress** (when the tea is boiled in water, similar to a soup)

- \* The amount of tea and water may vary from the directions below.
1. Put 1.25 oz of tea in a pot with 1½ quarts of water
  2. Bring to a boil
  3. Let simmer on a low boil for 15 minutes
  4. Turn off the heat
  5. See General Directions

### **Compresses at the Ithaca Free Clinic**

At the Ithaca Free Clinic, you will be given two separate bags to prepare your compress. The larger bag contains the majority of the tea, and the smaller bag contains the amount needed for each preparation. Use the smaller bag as a way to measure how much to take from the larger bag, saving the smaller bag for last.

*For example:*

1. You are given 5 oz of tea for your compress
2. The directions are to pour 1 quart of hot water over 1 oz of tea.
3. You will be given two bags
  - One bag with 4 oz
  - One bag with 1 oz
4. Take the amount from the larger bag using the smaller 1 oz bag to approximate how much you need.
5. This avoids having to weigh the correct amount of tea each time.