

Herbs and Natural Therapies for Pregnancy, Birth and Breastfeeding

By Donna Walls

Plants and botanical medicines have been used for women's health and healing for centuries, including pregnancy support, birth and breastfeeding. Natural medicines have been shown, through traditional wisdom and modern science to relieve symptoms, promote health and provide support for the childbearing year.

Plants and herbs provide not only medicines, but also vitamins, minerals and macronutrients for optimum benefits.

Some examples of plant nutrients:

Calcium, found in Kelp, dandelion, alfalfa, raspberry leaf, nettle, oat straw, celery seeds, chamomile and parsley

Iron, found in Alfalfa, burdock, dandelion, hops, meadowsweet, red clover, strawberry leaf, kelp, yellow dock, and purslane

Folic acid, found in Brewer's yeast, mushrooms, sprouts, nuts, wheat germ, lentils, and leafy green vegetables

Magnesium, found in Soybeans, fennel, catnip, chickweed, mullein, peppermint, sage, and yarrow

Vitamin C, found in Dark leafy vegetables (dandelion, collard and mustard greens), burdock, cayenne, chickweed, kelp, nettle, rose hips, and skullcap

Natural medicines are often less toxic and safer than many pharmaceuticals, but that does not mean that all natural medicines are safe. Like nature, there is good and bad, a balance. Many botanicals do have side effects or can be toxic, if not used wisely.

The most common side effects which can occur with herbal use are headaches, rash, indigestion, nausea, vomiting or allergic reaction to the plant. Education on safe herbal use is imperative for practitioners and patients alike.

Common Plant Parts Used

Echinacea—leaf or root

Black haw—root

Lemon balm—leaf

Evening Primrose—oil

Calendula—petals

Nettle—leaf

Comfrey—leaf or root

Hawthorn—berry, leaf

Valerian—root

Mullein—leaf, flower

Fennel—seed

Slippery elm—inner bark

Fenugreek—seed

Dandelion—leaf, root

Chamomile—flower

Passionflower—leaf, flower

Peppermint—leaf

Oat straw—strobile

Blue cohosh—root

Hops—strobile

Parsley—leaf

Corn silk—inner husk silk

Ginger—root

Arnica—leaf, flower

Red raspberry—leaf

Plantain—leaf

Milk thistle—seed

Goat's rue—leaf

Wild yam—root

Yarrow—leaf, flower

Catnip—leaf

Skullcap—leaf, flower

St. John's Wort—leaf, flower

Garlic—clove

Witch Hazel—leaves and bark

Motherwort—leaf, flower

Meadowsweet—leaf, flower

Blessed thistle—root, seeds

Chemistry and Actions of Herbs

Plants, flowers and medicinal herbs contain as many as 200-300 properties in their numerous chemical compounds and constituents.

The major active constituents:

Volatile oils (essential oils)—

This is the evaporative part of the plant, which supplies taste and fragrance. These oils used in aromatherapy contain properties which are

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anti-inflammatory, anti-microbial, anti-spasmodic, immune stimulating, wound healing or hormone balancing.

Tannins—These components express an astringent and healing effect to skin and mucous membranes.

Bitters—These ingredients exert their effect on the digestive tract by stimulating the release of bile and digestive juices to enhance digestion and absorption of nutrients.

Mucilage—The sticky, gel-like substance which forms a protective layer to coat and soothe and stimulate healing of tissues.

Saponins—A glycoside (sugar-containing) portion which forms a lather when in water. The properties are steroidal in nature and act as anti-inflammatory, hormone balancing or immune stimulating herbs.

Alkaloids—Nitrogen-containing components which exhibit an effect on the central nervous system.

Flavonoids—The colorful substances in herbs and plants which supply many nutrients to support the cardiovascular system and support healthy skin and tissues.

Herbal Preparations

There are many sources of herbal medicines; plants, including the aerial parts and roots, trees, shrubs, seeds, berries, fruits and vegetables.

Most herbs can be used in several forms, the most common are: teas, tinctures, syrups, decoctions, capsules, compresses, infused oils and herbal baths.

Teas (infusions)—This is the traditional way of taking herbal medicines.

1-2 teaspoons fresh or dried plant material is steeped in 6-8 ounces of hot water for 5-10 minutes. For children, a lower “dose” can be accomplished by steeping only 2-3 minutes. Plant material is strained and the tea can be sweetened with honey or other non-sugar substitute sweetener. Organic plants are preferred, and many medicinal teas are a blend of several herbs. For a medicinal dose: usually 2-3 cups a day should be consumed.

Teas or infusions may also be applied topically.

Decoction—A tea (or infusion) made from the bark or woody parts of plants. Break or crush the plant part well and simmer in water for 20-30 minutes to extract the medicinal qualities. Strain and use as a tea or topical application.

Tincture—Another way of preparing and storing botanical medicines. Fresh or dried plant material (for fresh, use one-half the amount), is soaked in an alcohol base for 2 weeks. A clean, clear glass jar should be used and sealed tightly during the soaking process.

The formula for preparation is creating a ratio of 1:4 plant to liquid:

1 part plant material

1 part distilled water

3 parts 80 proof Vodka

A “part” can be 1 tablespoon, 1/2 cup or any desired amount.

Label the jar with the herb name and date. Seal tightly and set out of sunlight. Gently shake jar twice daily for 2 weeks. Strain plant material and store tincture in amber glass jar, out of direct sunlight.

Tinctures will maintain their potency for 2-3 years. The medicinal dose of a tincture is 20-30 drops, in water or juice, 2-3 times daily.

Non-alcoholic forms of tinctures are available for children or others preferring not to have the alcohol base. These tinctures are prepared with glycerin or vinegar.

Syrup—Heat prepared infusion or decoction and add honey to desired thickness and taste to make more palatable for children.

Capsules—Plant material is dried or flash frozen, ground into a fine powder and placed in gelatin or veggie capsules. Doses vary; so label directions should be followed.

Compress (poultice)—Dry or moistened herb is placed in a gauze pad, cheese cloth or soft porous fabric, folded into a “packet” and placed directly on to the affected area for 10-20 minutes, 3-4 times daily. Compresses may also be gauze or fabric soaked in an infusion and placed directly on the affected area.

Infused oil—To extract the plant’s medicinal quality in an oil-based form, tightly pack plant material in a clean, clear jar. Completely cover the herbs with a base or carrier oil (olive, sweet almond, apricot kernel, jojoba, wheat germ, etc.). Seal well and place in a sun-exposed window for 2 weeks. Strain plant material and store infused oil in an amber jar, out of direct sunlight. Apply infused oil to affected area 2-3 times daily.

Salve (ointment)—Warm (do not boil) 2-3 cups of the preferred infused oil. Add 1 ounce of beeswax and slowly warm until beeswax is melted. Pour

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into clean jars and allow cooling before sealing. Apply a small amount to affected area 2-4 times daily.

For a softer ointment, use 3 cups oil to 1 ounce beeswax. For a firmer ointment, use 2 cups oil to 1 ounce beeswax.

Herbal baths—Add to a warm tub bath, foot bath or sitz bath add 1-2 cups prepared infusion or 1-2 table-spoon fresh or dried herbs in a cotton tea bag. Soak affected area for 20-30 minutes, 2-3 times daily.

Aromatherapies

Aromatherapy is the practice of using essential oils to affect mind and body. The essential oils are, literally, the plant oils distilled from aromatic plants. This concentrated oil can be used in many ways, and like the plants, must be used respectfully. Essential oils produce a pleasant aroma and are often thought of as medicinally benign. Just the opposite is true, as these oils are 75-100 times more potent than the plant.

These oils are distilled or expressed from the plant glands. Oils change in character depending on the part of the plant used. The oils from the orange peel (orange essential oil) are distinctly different from the oils from the leaves (petitgrain essential oil) or blossoms (neroli essential oil).

Choosing Essential Oils

The therapeutic effects of essential oils are well documented, but these effects are derived only from 100% pure and natural oils. Synthetic oils may have a pleasant aroma, but do not demonstrate the desired effect on

mind and body. Synthetics are often labeled “perfume” or “fragrance” oils. When selecting and using essential oils, choose only a “pure” essential oil which is stored in dark amber bottles. Pure essential oils most often are more expensive, have a fuller, deeper aroma and evaporate within minutes when placed on blotter paper.

The Effects of Essential Oils on the Body

Essential oils enter the body through the nose or the skin. The sense of smell is linked directly to the limbic system of the brain, the area of emotions, memory and some regulatory functions. Many aromas evoke memories, which may be good or unpleasant, making the need to individualize their use an important aspect of care.

Topical application to the skin provides an efficient means of delivering the therapeutic actions.

Essential oils, because of their natural concentration, must be diluted with a carrier or base oil before application. There are 2 exceptions to this rule, lavender and tea tree essential oils can be applied “neat” or undiluted to the skin.

Carrier or base oils are organic, cold pressed oils from seeds, nuts or vegetables. Avoid using petroleum based oils such as mineral or “baby” oil as a carrier oil.

Some well absorbed carrier oils:

Wheat germ, sweet almond, apricot kernel, grape seed, olive, canola, castor, hazelnut, rose hip, sesame, safflower, sunflower, walnut.

Essential oils are excreted through perspiration and urine and exhaled through the lungs. Most essential oils are excreted within 3-6 hours in a healthy person, but may take as long as 12-18 hours in a health compromised individual.

Some general safety guidelines:

- 1) Do not use undiluted oils on the skin. Do a patch test if prone to sensitivities.
- 2) Do not take internally unless under the direct supervision of a knowledgeable practitioner.
- 3) Use only in small amounts; e.g., formulas for essential oils are given in drops only, Do not exceed recommended number of drops
- 4) Do not use in or near eyes.
- 5) Use only pure essential oils.
- 6) Use very dilute formulas for children, during pregnancy and with the elderly or health-compromised person.
- 7) Use extra care on broken or damaged skin.

How to Use Essential Oils

Inhalation—with electric, battery or candle diffusers, or placing a small amount on small piece of fabric or cotton ball. This is good for relaxation and calming essential oils.

Topical—diluted with a base oil (olive, sweet almond, jojoba, apricot kernel, or any cold pressed oil) or distilled water for direct application or misting of the skin

Hydrotherapy—drops added to baths, foot or sitz baths

Most healthy adults will use the 4% dilution for most topical applications. Children, the elderly or health-

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Dilutions for Topical Use

Carrier Oil	Essential Oil and dilution %		
1/2 oz or 1 Tbsp	3-5 drops = 1%	6-8 drops = 2%	12-15 drops = 4%
1 oz or 2 Tbsp	6-10 drops = 1%	12-16 drops = 2%	24-30 drops = 4%

compromised people should use the 1% dilution. Pregnant women should use the 2% or lower range of 4% dilutions.

Essential Oils Which are Considered Toxic and Harmful

- Bitter melon
- Rue
- Buchu
- Sassafras
- Camphor
- Tansy
- Cassia
- Thuja
- Mugwort
- Wintergreen
- Pennyroyal
- Wormwood

Herbs and Aromatherapies for Pregnancy Concerns and Complaints

Pregnancy Safety Guidelines

- 1) Use smaller doses
- 2) Use milder herbs
- 3) Use only herbs and essential oils approved for pregnancy
- 4) Use a 2% or low range of 4% dilution of essential oils
- 5) Avoid, in first trimester, if possible
- 6) Avoid uterine stimulant herbs (emmenagogues) before 37 weeks
- 7) Tea/infusion forms cause less indigestion
- 8) Discontinue essential oils, if headache or nausea presents
- 9) Discontinue herbs, if nausea/vomiting, rash or headache presents

Herbs Not Recommended in Pregnancy

- Barberry
- Mandrake
- Licorice
- Pleurisy root
- Bladderwrack
- Tansy
- Cascara
- Yarrow
- Chapparal
- Rue
- Saw palmetto
- Juniper
- Goldenseal
- Damiana
- Gentian
- Uva ursi
- Sage
- Lobelia
- Fenugreek
- Ginseng (caution)
- Ephedra
- Pennyroyal

Herbs Generally Regarded as Safe in Pregnancy

- Passionflower
- Skullcap
- Marshmallow
- Chamomile
- Dandelion
- Vitex
- Evening primrose oil
- Oatstraw
- Echinacea
- Hawthorn
- Garlic
- Peppermint
- Bilberry
- Calendula
- Ginger
- Lemon balm
- Astragalus
- Red raspberry
- Mullein

- Feverfew (after 1st trimester)
- Nettle
- Elderberry
- Black haw
- Milk thistle
- Slippery elm
- Burdock
- Horse chestnut
- Corn silk
- Arnica (external only)
- Wild yam
- Alfalfa
- Parsley
- Horehound
- Catnip
- Meadowsweet
- St. John's Wort
- Yellow dock
- Valerian
- Flax
- Fennel

Emmenagogues (Uterine stimulants)– Use only after 37 weeks

- Blue cohosh
- Black cohosh
- Motherwort
- Birthwort
- Cottonroot
- Shepherd's purse
- Dong quai
- Squaw vine (partridgeberry)

Essential Oils to Avoid in Pregnancy

- Thyme
- Mugwort
- Pennyroyal
- Thuja
- Tansy
- Wormwood
- Ginger (not in 1st trimester)
- Nutmeg
- Juniper

Essential Oils Generally Regarded as Safe in Pregnancy

- Cypress
- Citrus (in small amounts)
- Lavender
- Chamomile
- Jasmine
- Patchouli
- Ylang ylang
- Sandalwood
- Clary sage

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Rosemary
Bergamot
Eucalyptus
Rose geranium
Neroli
Tea tree
Marjoram
Rose
Marjoram
Cedarwood

Pregnancy Nourishment Tea

Herbal teas have been used to nourish the body and relax the mind.

Herbal tea blends of oatstraw, nettles, alfalfa and rose hips are nutrient rich and adding red raspberry to the blend tones the uterus. Add equal parts of the above herbs and add 1-2 teaspoons of the mixture to 6-8 ounces hot water to steep. Drink 1-2 cups per day.

Herbs Used to Calm an Irritable Uterus

Throughout history women have used these herbs to prevent early miscarriage. The uterine relaxant properties in these herbs are also used to prevent pre-term labor.

Black haw—uterine relaxant
Wild yam—hormone balancing
Red raspberry—uterine toning
False unicorn—hormone balancing
Vitex (chaste tree berry)—hormone balancing
Valerian—muscle relaxant for skeletal and smooth muscles

For Pregnancy Nausea and Vomiting

Peppermint
Ginger
Chamomile
Acidophilus
Lemon balm
Cinnamon bark tea

Catnip
Homeopathic nux vomica
Papaya
Miso soup—diluted, 2-3 times weekly

For severe nausea/vomiting—peppermint tea and ginger capsules.

For reflux—slippery elm capsules.

For indigestion—drink teas of peppermint, spearmint, fennel seeds and ginger slices:

Indigestion Tea:

1 tablespoon each of peppermint and spearmint leaves
1 teaspoon fennel seeds
3-4 ginger slices
Steep herbal blend in hot water for 5-10 minutes and drink as needed.

Pregnancy Constipation

Add 1-2 tablespoons flax seed meal to cereals, salads or in yogurt daily, for severe constipation use 1 tablespoon flax seeds and 1 tablespoon flax seed meal.

Add nutritive herbs as teas: nettles, dandelion, oatstraw, strawberry or red raspberry leaf.

Abdominal massage with essential oils of fennel or orange- in 1 ounce carrier oil add 7 drops each of orange and fennel essential oils. Mix well and massage abdomen in the morning.

Pregnancy Varicosities

Adequate vitamin C in the diet promotes healthy blood vessels.

Garlic, added to the cooking 3-4 times weekly promotes blood vessel elasticity.

Varicose Vein Massage:

1 ounce carrier oil
6 drops each of lavender and bergamot essential oils
3 drops cypress essential oil
Mix well and gently apply to affected area daily.

Striae Gravidum (Stretch marks)

Massage abdomen with enriching oils and butters such as wheat germ or jojoba oils or shea or cocoa butters.

Calendula infusion applied to the abdomen daily helps to promote healthy tissues.

Pregnant Belly Massage Oil:

2 ounces carrier oil
10 drops each lavender and sandalwood essential oils
5 drops chamomile essential oil
Mix well and apply to abdomen 1-2 times daily.

For Muscle/Ligament Pain

Teas, tinctures or capsules of valerian, black haw, or ointments for topical use with capsicum (hot chili peppers).

Cayenne Muscle Massage

Add 1 tsp cayenne to 1 cup warm water and apply to aching muscles, 1-2 times daily.

Massage oils made with rosemary or peppermint.

Hemorrhoids

Direct application to the area with witch hazel, 2-3 times daily.

Compresses of moistened:
Elderflower, plantain, calendula or red raspberry

OR
make an infusion of the herbs and saturate a cottonball and apply to affected area.

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Respiratory and Sinus Congestion

Use Echinacea tea, tincture or capsule for congestion due to cold or flu.

Mullein tea, sweetened with honey, 2-3 times daily.

Eucalyptus essential oil diffused in the air in diffuser, inhale 2-3 drops on a cottonball or make a steam by placing about 1-2 cups water on the stove. Bring to a gentle simmer and add 5-7 drops of eucalyptus essential oil and turn off heat. Inhale the vapors for 3-4 minutes to clear congestion.

Pregnancy Swelling

Add foods which contain omega-3 oils—salmon, flax and walnuts to the daily diet.

Include dandelion tea daily.

Add chlorophyll as capsules to the daily diet.

Stress/Anxiety

Herbal “calmers” are: St. John’s Wort, valerian, skullcap, oatstraw, chamomile, lavender, lemon balm.

Herbal Calming Tea:

2 parts chamomile

1 part lemon balm

1/2 part lavender bud

1/2 part oatstraw

Calming essential oils to diffuse in the air, place 5-7 drops in a warm tub bath or make into massage oil:

Sandalwood, lavender, marjoram, patchouli, rose geranium

Pregnancy Fatigue

Assure adequate rest and exercise daily.

Review diet to include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts and seeds

with adequate protein.

Review hydration needs—water prevents dehydration which can result in increased fatigue.

Add nutrient dense foods such as spirulina, kelp, chlorella, alfalfa or barley grass.

Energizing essential oils which can be diffused in the air for energy:

Rosemary, bergamot, peppermint, orange, lemon or tangerine.

Insomnia

Incorporate relaxation breathing—slow, deep, deliberate breaths, focusing on the exhale will help with relaxation at sleep time.

Valerian capsules or tincture 1 hour before bedtime.

Teas of passionflower, catnip, chamomile, lemon balm or hops 1 hour before bedtime. To prevent night time urination, use only 3-4 ounces of water in preparing the tea.

Diffuse or relax in a tub with essential oils of:

Lavender, ylang ylang or sandalwood

Late Pregnancy Support

Continue with nutritive teas and 2-3 cups red raspberry tea daily in the last month.

Add evening primrose oils gelcaps, 500 milligrams, 2 in the evening and 2 in the morning daily after 37 weeks.

Herbs and Aromatherapies for Labor and Birth

Support for the natural process of labor and birth blends very well with herbs and aromatherapies.

Herbal teas taken during labor are hydrating and nourishing and essential oils can enhance the relaxation process through diffusion in the air, as a massage oil or added to hydrotherapy.

Herbal Teas for Labor

To enhance relaxation—chamomile or catnip

To reduce nausea—lemon balm or peppermint

For energy—teas of ginger or ginseng root

Essential Oils for Labor

The oils can be diffused in the air (for a hospital birth, use a battery diffuser or apply 2-3 drops of the essential oil on a cottonball and pin to clothing), prepare a massage oil for massage in labor or add 5-7 drops in a hydrotherapy tub.

Relaxing oils for labor are: lavender, chamomile, rose geranium, sandalwood, clary sage, patchouli.

Energizing oils may be useful for long labors: rosemary, bergamot, peppermint.

Cooling oils may be helpful for late labor: orange, lemon or tangerine

Clary sage is emotionally balancing as it supports transitions in life

Rose geranium is calming and also hormone balancing

Encouraging Labor Naturally

Herbs known to stimulate the uterus should be used carefully when considering stimulating labor. They should not be used before full term and used cautiously when contractions are progressing. Any uterine stimulating herbs should be taken only with the team approach with the obstetrical

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caregiver, physician or midwife.

Emmenagogue (uterine stimulating) herbs used to encourage contractions are:

Blue and black cohosh, squaw vine, birthwort, cotton root bark or life root, taken as teas or tinctures.

Caution must be taken to not overstimulate the uterus, drink 1 cup of tea or administer 20-30 drops of the tincture and wait 1 hour for stronger contractions. If there is no change in contractions, the same dose may be taken again for the second hour.

Note: herbals work more slowly than pharmaceuticals; thus, patience and careful assessment are necessary before repeating doses.

Homeopathic blue cohosh, *caulophyllum*, in a 30-60X dose may be used instead of the tea or tincture.

These homeopathic pellets are dissolved under the tongue in the same routine. Directions: Three pellets taken, wait for an hour and assess, administer a second dose only if there is no change in contractions and do not exceed more than 4 hourly doses in one day.

Perineal Massage Oil for Birth Preparation or During Second Stage

Pack tightly into clean, clear glass jar equal parts of calendula petals and arnica flowers. Cover completely with wheat germ or olive oil, seal jar and place in sunny window for 2 weeks. Strain out plant material and store in dark amber jar out of direct sunlight.

Labor Support Massage Oil

An individualized labor massage oil can be created with the approved, preferred essential oils in a 2% to lower range 4% dilution. Here is a suggested formula:

2 ounce carrier oil
10 drops each of lavender and clary sage essential oils
8 drops rose geranium
4 drops lemon essential oil

Store in dark amber bottle and pack in the labor supply bag.

Labor Pain Relief

Jasmine or rose essential oils assist with pain relief. These can be diffused with a diffuser or on a cottonball, or by placing 5-7 drops on a warmed rice sock, or made into a massage oils or added to hydrotherapy (5-7 drops total).

Arnica massage oils can reduce muscle aches when massaged into the back or legs.

For mild to moderate pain relief- tinctures of motherwort, 20-30 drops in water or juice once an hour or 2-3 doses.

For more severe pain- skullcap tincture, 20-30 drops in water or juice once an hour for 2-3 doses.

Exhaustion in Labor

Chew or suck crystallized ginger root pieces.

Homeopathic preparation of *carbo veg*, 30-60X strength, pellets dissolved under the tongue once an hour for 2-3 doses.

Essential oils of bergamot or rosemary diffused or as a massage.

Postpartum and Breastfeeding

Perineal Healing

Plants high in mucilage-coating, soothing and healing plants assist in repair of perineal tissues. These plants include comfrey leaf or root, plantain, calendula, mullein, slippery elm inner bark, aloe or marshmallow.

Aloe gel can be applied directly to the perineum.

Comfrey Compresses

Place 1 tablespoon cut and sifted comfrey leaf moistened, in a 4 X 4 gauze pad or cheese cloth. Fold into a "packet" and apply to perineum with each change of peripad.

These herbs can also be used as a sitz bath. Prepare an infusion of any of these herbs, or a combination of the herbs, and add 1/2-1 cup infusion to a sitz bath.

Postpartum Emotional Balancing

Valerian capsules or tincture is a fast acting mood balancer and can be taken for a "bad day". St. John's

Wort can be used when there is a continuous need or a history of postpartum depression. The Bach Flower Remedy, Rescue Remedy is effective for acute needs.

Essential oils for calming and balancing are: clary sage, patchouli, sandalwood and ylang ylang, rose geranium or rose which can be diffused in the air, made into a massage oils or added to a relaxation bath.

Teas of chamomile, lemon balm, catnip, oatstraw, passionflower and lavender are helpful to calm stressful adjustment times and help with relaxation for sleep.

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Herbs Generally Regarded as Safe for Breastfeeding

Echinacea
Vitex (only in small doses)
St. John's Wort
Ginseng (short term only)
Nettle
Lemon balm
Elderflower
Mullein
Meadowsweet
Horehound
Valerian
Red raspberry
Dandelion
Garlic
Evening primrose oil
Astragalus
Ginger
Flax
Slippery elm
Catnip
Oatstraw
Parsley
Passionflower
Arnica (external only)
Corn silk
Aloe (external only)
Milk thistle
Calendula
Skullcap
Galactagogues
Feverfew
Oregano

Herbs to Avoid During Breastfeeding

Goldenseal
Saw palmetto
Peppermint
Mugwort
Sage
Wormwood
Kava kava
Poke weed
Uva ursi
Pennyroyal
Black walnut
Ephedra
Foxglove
Sarsaparilla
Butterbur

Chapparral
Male fern
Lobelia

Herbal Galactagogues—Herbs Which Increase Milk Supply

Fenugreek
Fennel
Blessed thistle
Vitex (in small doses)
Hops
Milkwort
Goat's rue
Nettle
Alfalfa
Diffused essential oils of fennel, anise and jasmine

Mother's Milk Tea:

1 part nettle leaf
1/2 part fennel seed
1/2 part fenugreek seed
Steep and strain. Drink 2-3 cups daily for milk supply.

For Sore Nipples

The healing, high mucilage herbs again, can be used for healing.

Sore Nipple infusion

In 6-8 ounces hot water, add 1teaspoon each of calendula petals and mullein leaf or flower. Steep for 10 minutes and strain out plant material. Apply a small amount to nipples after feedings, 3-4 times daily as needed.

OR

Make a compress of marshmallow root pieces and apply compress to the nipples for 2-3 minutes after feedings, 3-4 times daily.

OR

Tea bags (black, green or white tea) applied to the nipples for 2-3 minutes after feedings, 3-4 times daily.

For Engorgement

Herbs known to reduce milk supply are peppermint and sage. To prepare a tea to reduce engorgement, with no affect to milk supply, steep tea only 3-5 minutes and drink only 1/2 cup as needed.

Peppermint Engorgement

Massage Oil

Peppermint essential oil also reduces supply.

To create an oil for gentle massage to reduce engorgement:

1 ounce carrier oil
15 drops peppermint essential oil

Massage a small amount into breasts, 2-3 times daily, only until supply normalizes.

Avoid nipple and areola area.

Thrush (Candida)

If symptoms are present on the nipple a vinegar wash, 1/2 water and 1/2 apple cider vinegar, can be applied to the nipples after feedings, 2-3 times daily as needed.

If oral remedy is needed:

Acidophilus (the concentrated for of the active cultures in yogurt)-4 billion units daily

Tincture of Myrrh- 20-30 drops in water or juice, 2-3 times daily

Pau'd Arco capsules or tincture

Oregano in tea, capsule or tincture form

Raw garlic clove- eaten once daily for 2-3 days

Plugged Duct

Apply compresses of cooled yarrow flower or marshmallow root to the breasts for 5 -10 minutes between feedings.

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Editor's Note: This article is for example purposes only. It does not enable the reader to be proficient in prescribing or creating herbal or natural remedies. The article alone does not imply that without further training and/or certification, this is part of the ICEA practitioner's Scope of Practice.

Herbs and Natural Therapies for Pregnancy, Birth and Breastfeeding

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Drink a cup of fennel tea before feeding to enhance let down

For recurrent plugged ducts- add concentrated cranberry or lecithin capsules daily for several weeks.

Mastitis

If mastitis symptoms present, after notifying the obstetrical or family practice caregiver, antimicrobial herbs such as echinacea, propolis (a beehive product), raw garlic, or oregano can be taken in tea, tincture or capsule form. Avoid or minimize the use of black walnut, as this may reduce you milk supply.

Meadowsweet and willow are natural pain relievers and reduce fever.

Pregnancy provides an opportunity to learn about a more natural life style that can benefit the entire family. Discussing your options and plans with caregivers, physicians, midwives, herbalists, childbirth educators or doulas, also helps in making an informed choice for care.

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ICEA Announces Photo Contest

In honor of the 50th Anniversary in 2010, the *International Journal of Childbirth Education* announces the **ICEA Anniversary Photo Contest**. It allows the readers of the *International Journal of Childbirth Education* to see pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding through your unique lens.

Contestants may enter photographs in three categories: Pregnancy, Birth and Breastfeeding. Photos will be judged on quality, clarity and composition but important to us too is your flair for the unexpected, creativity and your ability to capture that picture perfect moment! Judging will be done by the ICEA Board of Directors. Only ICEA members may submit photos.

Submit 4 x 6 photos by mail to ICEA with your name on the reverse side of each photo; please use labels and do not write directly on the photo. For each person in the photo, an ICEA Photo Release will need to be signed and accompany the photo. Include also your name, address, phone number and email address. There will be three photos selected in each of the three categories. These nine photos will be showcased in the *International Journal of Childbirth Education* during 2010 – four will be selected as cover photos! The photographers will also be featured in the issues of the *International Journal of Childbirth Education* during 2010.

Sorry, no photos can be returned. No copyrighted photos may be used.

Submit photos to: ICEA Journal Photo Contest, 1500 Sunday Drive Suite 102, Raleigh, NC 27607

Deadline for submissions is November 1, 2009.

Questions? Email the Journal Managing Editor at clivingston@birthsource.com.



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