

20 Antibacterial and Antiviral Herbs and How to Use Them

by **Nina Nelson**

Being exposed to different kinds of antibacterial and antiviral herbs is natural when you grow up on an herb farm. Long before I knew what herbs were used for, I saw how they were grown, cut for different uses, and packaged for herbal retail companies. You'd think I adopted the use of herbal remedies before I started my own family.

I didn't.

I began using some herbal remedies after my 2nd child was born. But after using a combination of herbs recommended by my midwife to successfully treat a kidney infection (a previous kidney infection landed me in the ICU for a week on very strong antibiotics), I was hooked.

Using herbal remedies is easy and if you're looking for herbs to prevent or treat bacterial and viral infections, this list can help you decide what's best for your situation.

Before using antibacterial or antiviral herbs, I suggest consulting an herbal medicine guide or herbalist for exact dosing instructions. Your body is unique and your specific needs will likely be unique, too.

*Please note that the links to any antibacterial and antiviral herbs below are affiliate links to **Mountain Rose Herbs**, a company we are proud to support.*

Antibacterial Herbs

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

Calendula can be used in first-aid to heal wounds, prevent infection and treat pink eye. Calendula can be prepared a few different ways, including infusions, tinctures, lotions and ointments. No known precautions.

Cinnamon Stick (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*)

Cinnamon warms the body, aids in digestion and is used for its antibacterial properties. Cinnamon can be taken as a tea, added to food or used as a supplement.

Dried Clove Bud (*Syzygium aromaticum*)

Though **clove** is typically used as a topical analgesic (it has a natural numbing quality!), it can also be used to combat intestinal bacteria. For internal use, use in cooking or make a cup of clove tea.

Garlic (*Allium sativum*)

As an antibacterial herb, **garlic** is more effective against several types of bacteria than penicillin. Garlic is also friendlier to the body than antibiotics because it attacks the offending bacteria without wiping out the body's normal flora. Garlic can be used as a tincture, capsule, infused in oil or simply added to your diet. (If cooking with garlic, avoid heating past 130 degrees as that will decrease its potency.)

Echinacea (*Echinacea angustifolia*)

Taken at the onset of an infection, **echinacea** can speed the healing process. Echinacea is most effective when taken as a tincture over a long period of time. Do not use echinacea if you have an auto-immune disease.

Oregon Grape Root (*Mahonia aquifolium*)

Oregon grape root is a potent antibacterial herb, especially when combined with echinacea. Do not take if pregnant, breastfeeding or if you have a history of diabetes, stroke, hypertension or glaucoma. Take as a tincture, but not for long-term treatment as it can decrease Vitamin B absorption.

Marshmallow Root (*Althaea officinalis* L.)

In addition to pain-easing properties, **marshmallow root** soothes, lubricates, softens and heals. Marshmallow root also contains tannins found effective against bacteria found in urinary tract infections. Marshmallow root can be taken internally as a tea.

Usnea (*Usnea barbata*)

This common lichen is antibacterial and antifungal. A powerful antibiotic, **usnea** is used to treat urinary tract infections, strep and staph infections, respiratory and sinus infections as well as fungal infections like yeast and vaginosis. Usnea is best used as a tincture. No known precautions, but consult an herbalist before using in pregnancy.

Uva Ursi (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)

Uva Ursi is often used as a tincture or capsule for treating urinary tract infections as it contains compounds effective at killing pathogens typically associated with UTIs. Because of its strength, it should not be used continually for longer than 2 weeks. Not for use by children, pregnant or nursing women or those with kidney disease.

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

Tiny **yarrow flowers** have a number of different uses. As a powder, they stop bleeding quickly. Infused in water, it speeds the healing of canker sores. As a tea, yarrow is used to fight urinary tract infections. Because it can cause uterine contractions, avoid during pregnancy.

Antiviral Herbs

Astragalus Root (*Astragalus membranaceus*)

Astragalus is one of the antiviral herbs that works by boosting the immune system. Taken internally, either as a capsule, tincture or by adding it to soup, astragalus root is known to increase your body's defense against viruses. Astragalus root is best used as prevention, so take it during flu season or before going places with large crowds of people. Avoid if you already have a fever.

Cat's Claw (*Uncaria tomentosa*)

In addition to being an antibacterial, antifungal and antiviral herb, **cat's claw** is also known for boosting the immune system, increasing your body's protection

against illness. Cat's claw can be taken as a tea, tincture or capsule. Do not take during pregnancy.

Cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*)

Cranberry is a potent defense against urinary tract infections due to its ability to make the bladder lining too "slippery" to adhere to. Full of antioxidants, cranberry also has antiviral properties and prevents plaque formation on teeth. Cranberry can be taken in a capsule or as juice (make sure it is unsweetened).

Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*)

Elderberry is used as a remedy for viral infections like the flu and common cold. Elder stimulates the circulation, causing sweating, effectively cleansing the body. Elderberry syrup is the common delivery method and 1-3 tablespoons can be taken per day during infection. Leaves, roots, seeds, and berries of the raw plant contain cyanide-producing compounds and should not be consumed without cooking properly.

Dried Ginger Root (*Zingiber officinale*)

Ginger is another herb known for its antiviral and antibacterial properties. It is used to prevent and decrease duration of the common cold. Ginger can be taken as a tea, in capsule form, or added to meals.

Dried Lemon Balm Leaf (*Melissa officinalis*)

An important volatile compound found in **lemon balm** contains antiviral properties. Lemon balm leaf makes a tasty tea that can also relieve upset

stomach and promote calm. It may be unsafe to consume during some pregnancies, so check with your doctor on that one.

Licorice Root (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*)

Licorice is antiviral and antibacterial. It is commonly used for gastric ulcers as it kills *H. pylori* that causes ulcers without upsetting the stomach. Steep these antiviral herbs as a tea and drink by itself or blended with other herbal teas. Avoid during pregnancy.

Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*)

Mullein-infused oil is a great remedy for ear problems, including ear infection, especially when combined with garlic. Use the mullein flowers to create an infused oil.

Olive Leaf (*Olea europaea*)

As antiviral herbs, **olive leaf** is used to treat the flu, common cold and herpes. Olive leaf can be taken as a tincture, capsule or tea mixed with mint. Avoid during pregnancy.

Dried Oregano Leaf (*Origanum vulgare*)

In addition to adding great flavor to food, **oregano** also protects against viruses and bacteria as one of the best antiviral herbs available. It can be taken in a capsule to promote healing.

How to Use Antibacterial and Antiviral Herbs

Tea

Herbal teas are simple to make and require only a cup, hot water and a way to steep your tea. To make an herbal tea, steep 1 tbsp of antibacterial or antiviral herbs in 1 cup hot water for 5-10 minutes. For children, use 1 tsp herbs in the same amount of water.

Infusion

Herbal infusions are simply antibacterial or antiviral herbs prepared in water. They differ from teas in that they use larger quantities of herbs, making a more concentrated preparation. They are steeped in water for several hours in a tightly sealed jar. Using a quart-size canning jar is best because they can hold up well to boiling water.

Once prepared you can drink them iced or heated, add them to baths for soaking wounds or sore muscles or used to make compresses or poultices.

Put a handful of dried herbs in your canning jar. Fill the jar to the fill line with boiling water. Secure the lid tightly and let it steep until the water has completely cooled. Strain out the antibacterial or antiviral herbs and enjoy.

Infused oil

Creating your own infused oil is easy! You can do it with just a few minutes of prep time (the rest is done in the oven).

You'll need:

- J An oven-proof dish
- J Fine mesh strainer or cheesecloth
- J 1 cup jojoba or coconut oil
- J 1/2 cup antibacterial or antiviral herbs (one herb or a combination)
- J Clean, dry jar(s) to store your oil in
- J Labels

Heat your oven to 200 degrees, then turn it off. To your oven-proof dish, add the oil and herbs, then stir them together. (If the coconut oil is solid, let it melt first in the oven, add the herbs and stir). Put the dish in the oven. After 3 hours take out the herbs and strain the oil into your clean jar(s). Label and store in a cool, dark place.