

## ~ Ask Granny Earth ~

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Healing with Herbs

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**I'm not sure about taking herbs for diseases or serious conditions. Can you give me a reason a person should switch to herbs instead of prescription or over the counter drugs? And what's the big deal about tinctures and tonics?**

First let me say- 'I am not against modern medicine; it has saved many lives.' I am against the abuse of drugs, whether legal or illegal, and of treating 'symptoms' of conditions, rather than treating the underlying cause. It has been the experience of many people, that drugs cause side-effects, while herbs heal the condition that is causing the problem in the first place. It never ceases to amaze me how folks take prescription, or over the counter drugs without learning or caring about the side-effects.

To address your first question: Why Herbs? The main benefits of taking herbs include:

1. Herbs cleanse and purify the body of harmful toxins without causing side effects.

2. Herbs regulate and tone the organs, and body systems to achieve normal functions.
3. Herbs provide energy needed for the body to create a healing environment within itself.
4. Herbs act to stimulate the body's immune system, promoting its ability to fight infection and rid itself of toxins.

Herbal healing is not new. Natural remedies were the main treatment for illness and disease in this country up until 100 years ago when (history tells us) the American Medical Association (AMA) dictated their demise.

Approximately 50% of the drugs used today are derived from a plant source, or contain a chemical imitation of a plant compound (Aspirin is a chemical imitation of 'Salicin' from the bark of the White Willow Tree. Digitalis, a heart medicine, was originally discovered as a component of Digitalis purpurea, better known as Foxglove). Prior to WW 11, herbal medications were listed side-by-side with chemical drugs in the U.S. Pharmacopia, the official listing of accepted medicines in this country.

The use of herbs, for the treatment of diseases, dates back to ancient Egypt. The Papyrus Ebers, an ancient Egyptian text written in 1500 BC, contains references to more than 700 herbal remedies. The Chinese have practiced herbal medicine for 5000 years. They are specifically noted for their knowledge and use of Ginseng and Ginkgo, to name a few. They believe that the regular use of herbs prolong life. Hypocrites (ancient Greece- "the Father of Medicine"), was the first man to practice medicine as an art. He believed and taught that in nature there was strength to cure disease using herbs and diet as the basis of treatment. The medical inheritance of ancient Egypt passed first to Greece, and then to Rome. The Roman Empire used herbal remedies extensively. For example: Mandrake (May Apple) herb was used as an anesthetic.

Present day herbalists believe in natural healing, and seek to help people build good health using Nature's plants. Herbs are considered to be food as well as medicine, because they are pure nutrition. When herbs are ingested, the body begins cleansing, regulating, and purifying itself. Unlike chemically concentrated drugs that produce side effects, herbs realign the body's defenses enabling it to heal itself without any toxic side effects. Most herbs do not produce instant miracle cures, but rather offer a way to put the body in tune with its own natural healing wisdom.

What's the big deal about **Tinctures**? A tincture is a liquid extract, usually made with alcohol and water using a ratio of 1:4. They are alternative to capsules, they are concentrated, and work well for immediate absorption into the system. They can also be made using vinegar and/or glycerin. It is

important to let the herbs soak in the liquid 'menstrum' during the new to full moon phase and to shake at least once daily. I believe in Tinctures, because you can make them yourself, you can combine certain herbs for specific conditions, they compliment each others actions, they enter your system *immediately*, and they last indefinitely.

**Tonics** (definition): *any substance that balances the biochemical and physiological events that comprise body systems.* Balance means health or wellness. Illness is a departure from the optimum state, or imbalance. A substance that helps to maintain an optimum state, or that moves a system back toward the optimum state is a tonic. The optimal state is one of balance of all processes underlying a body system or function.

Tonics are 'bi-directional', that is they are capable of both increasing and decreasing the activity of body processes, according to the body's wisdom for what it needs to heal. In other words, a Tonic works synergistically with the body, giving it what it needs to heal itself. A tonic can be made using one (tonic) herb for a specific purpose, or several to get a more balanced combination. I usually use between 5 – 10 herbs in a Tonic, depending on the desired effect I'm striving to achieve.