



Kitchen Apothecary

25+ Natural Remedies Using
Ingredients From Your Pantry

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Dessinger

Kitchen Apothecary: 25+ Natural Remedies Using Ingredients From Your Pantry

By Heather Dessinger of Mommypotamus.com

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Hi there. I'm Heather, the Mommypotamus. If you read my previous e-books, DIY Organic Beauty Recipes and DIY Non-Toxic Cleaning Recipes, go ahead and skip to page 4. If you haven't, this is where you read a little about me, so here goes:

I'm a mom. I have three beautiful children whom I affectionately call the potami. The story of how we got our name can be found [here](#).

I'm a researcher. Questioning the status quo comes naturally to me, which is why I rely on evidence-based research to guide my decisions on food, natural remedies, birth and making my own cleaning and personal care products.

I'm a homesteader. Well, sort of. My husband, Daniel, and I recently bought some land to pursue a dream of long-term sustainability. We're just getting started, but I've got my boots and a hat and more barn kitties than I can shake a stick at.

I'm a DIYer. Whether it's homemade laundry soap, lotion bars, or lip balm, I can't help but tinker until I've got it figured out. And when it comes to common complaints, I love finding time-honored, research-backed natural remedies that use everyday ingredients I hope you find this guide helpful in your wellness journey,

~ Heather

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Burns/Sunburns

Special note before we get to the remedies in this section: Though the [Mayo Clinic says](#) most first and second degree burns can be treated at home, serious burns should be treated professionally. Please do not use any home remedies on serious burns.

Apple Cider Vinegar

Though there is not a consensus on why this works, [this study](#) concluded that apple cider vinegar supports healing after a burn. Some say it is because the apple cider vinegar restores damaged skin's pH, while others say it's due to the high percentage of "pectin, succared, vitamins (B1, B2, B6) (A, E, C), salt, mineral[s such as] as (sodium, calcium, magnesium, aluminum, phosphor, cobber, [and] silicon)." ([source](#)) White vinegar is also considered helpful.

To Use: Some people add one cup of apple cider vinegar (or white vinegar) to a tepid bath, while others prefer to dilute it (50% water and 50% vinegar) and spray it on or apply with a soft washcloth.

Baking Soda

For sunburns, Seattle Children's Hospital recommends pouring 1/4 cup of baking soda in a bath to help with discomfort. Soap should be avoided as it can be irritating. ([source](#))

To use: Add to tepid water and soak for 15–20 minutes, then allow skin to air dry or gently pat it dry. Bathe once or twice per day as needed. (Personal note: Because baking soda is alkaline and healthy skin has a slightly acidic pH, it might be a good idea to follow the bath with a diluted vinegar spray to balance skin pH.)

Coconut Oil

While usually considered beneficial, moisturizers like coconut oil can trap heat and delay healing for sunburned skin. It is generally recommended that it be avoided until the skin is cool and healing is underway, although a small amount of oil used to dilute essential oils may be appropriate. After the skin has cooled it is considered helpful for restoring lost moisture.

To Use: Apply a thin layer as needed.

Honey

As I mentioned in [this burn salve recipe](#) that blends honey with lavender essential oil, there is a lot of research that supports the use of honey for common kitchen burns, sunburns and more.

The sticky stuff's been used as a topical burn salve since Egyptian days. 'Studies suggest it may work better than some antibiotic creams at speeding up healing, reducing infection, and minimizing pain,' says Kathi Kemper, M.D., author of *The Holistic Pediatrician*." ([source](#))

It's not my first choice for larger body application simply because it's sticky, but it is an option.

To Use: Apply honey to the affected area and dress with gauze if desired.

Oatmeal

Soaking in a cool oatmeal bath can soothe skin and help with itching associated with sunburns, says Patricia K. Farris, M.D., professor of dermatology at Tulane University in New Orleans.

(source)

To use: Grind one cup of oatmeal in a food processor or coffee grinder. Add to a tepid bath and soak for 15–20 minutes. If sensitive to gluten, make sure to use gluten-free oatmeal.

Tea – Black or Green

Green tea contains catechins and black tea contains tannins, both of which are considered cooling for sunburns. They also contain theobromine, which may help ease discomfort and support healing. (source)

Peppermint tea – which contains essential oils high in menthol – can also create a gentle cooling sensation.

To use: Brew a strong cup of tea and allow to cool. Apply using a soft washcloth or cotton balls.

Whole Milk

According to John F. Romano, M.D., clinical assistant professor of dermatology at New York Hospital–Cornell Medical Center, the fat content of whole milk “makes it a great compress for sunburn pain.” (source)

To use: “Dip some gauze in whole milk and apply it to sunburned areas for about 20 minutes, repeating this process every two to four hours. Be sure to wash off the milk to avoid having your skin smell sour.” (source)



Constipation

Before we get to this remedy, let's talk about the important difference between occasional bouts of constipation and chronic issues.

Constipation can occur for a variety of reasons, such as holding a bowel movement because you're feeling shy in a public restroom, a change in diet, stress, dehydration, etc. However, research suggests that chronic constipation may indicate a more serious underlying issue such as gut flora imbalance, inadequate levels of trace minerals, allergies, or hypothyroidism. ([source 1](#), [source 2](#), [source 3](#))

If someone in my family were experiencing chronic constipation, I'd take them to a knowledgeable practitioner for help. However, for the occasional bout of constipation there are ways to encourage normal bowel function. My friend Robyn shared the recipe below for "constipation candy" with me after finding it helpful for her son.

According to Robyn, "The theory is that since the medium chain triglycerides that make up coconut oil don't cause a person to store fat, they have limited absorption in the small intestine and tend to pass right through the digestive tract." This unique feature of coconut oil is thought to support function and efficiency in the digestive tract.

"Just two 'constipation candies' and then anywhere between 8 to 18 hours later, total relief without tears," says Robyn, adding that "For kids I'd stick with 2 pieces and wait a day before increasing how much they can have. For adults I'd start with 4 and try adding an extra each day to see what your body likes the most."

Constipation Candy Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 cup organic extra virgin coconut oil, melted
- 1/4 to 1/3 cup of lemon juice (mix and taste as you go along)*
- 2 tablespoons honey, maple syrup, sucanat or coconut sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon pink Himalayan salt

Equipment:

1-2 food grade silicone ice cube molds

Food processor or immersion blender

Instructions:

Combine all ingredients in a food processor or with a handheld mixer and pour into the candy molds. Taste as you go along and make it as sweet or sour as you like. Everything has to be very well mixed into the oil, so make sure as you're pouring the last bit in that it's not sugar or honey-heavy.

*Tip: My first batch separated, so the second time I made them I put my silicone mold in the freezer for about 10 minutes prior to pouring. When it was time, I let the mixture whir in my food processor for sixty full seconds

before pouring it into the molds, then set it in the freezer for an hour.

To Use

Store in the fridge and enjoy as needed.



Cough/Sore Throat Syrup

Got a sore, itchy throat? According to a study published in Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, researchers concluded that buckwheat honey works better than dextromethorphan (the active ingredient in store-bought cough syrup) at reducing the frequency and severity of coughing episodes for children. In the study, both the children and their parents got more sleep with this simple home remedy than any other way – who doesn't need that? ([source](#))

So what's so special about buckwheat honey? Made by bees who gather primarily from white buckwheat blossoms, this unique, molasses colored honey is incredibly rich in antioxidants and anti-bacterial/viral substances which promote healing. (source) However, other types may be beneficial as well – in folk medicine all varieties are considered to be helpful. I've personally used several types of honey and found them all to have the same effect.

When blended with the soothing qualities of extra-virgin olive oil and astringent lemon juice/apple cider vinegar, honey is my "go-to" for dry, scratchy throats and coughs. It's so easy to make, too!

- 3/4 cup organic buckwheat honey, raw honey, or local honey
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2-4 tablespoons organic lemon juice or raw apple cider vinegar
- cayenne pepper (Optional – Cayenne contains capsaicin, which is a warming and circulation enhancing pain reliever)

Combine all ingredients and serve by the spoonful either room temperature or gently warmed.



Dandruff

Though it sounds like a tropical island, *Malassezia* is actually a type of fungus that causes dandruff. (source) Usually it's pretty harmless, but when immune defenses are down it can become an opportunistic pathogen. (source)

Unfortunately, store-bought dandruff shampoos usually contain highly toxic ingredients. Coal tar, for example, carries a level 10 hazard warning from the Environmental Working Group – the highest possible. (source)

Another common ingredient – recorcinol – may cause thyroid problems (including goiter) and have effects on the central nervous system. (source) And of course, several other ingredients are thought to be toxic to us and/or the environment: polyvinylpyrrolidone (PVP), ketoconazole, formaldehyde, selenium sulfide, zinc pyrithione, sodium lauryl sulfate, detergents, artificial colors, and fragrance.

Fortunately, research suggests that a common pantry item may be helpful in

reducing dandruff.

Honey

Raw honey is a natural humectant that helps hair hold onto moisture while delivering a powerful infusion of vitamins A, C, D, E, B-complex, beta-carotene and tons of minerals including iron, magnesium, potassium, manganese, calcium, and phosphorous. Grandmas have long recommended it to prevent thinning hair, which makes sense if you think about it. Dandruff can plug hair follicles and prevent new hair from growing in, so a reduction in dandruff may make it easier for hair to grow normally.

In one study, thirty patients with seborrheic dermatitis and dandruff were asked to rub diluted honey on their scalp and massage for 2–3 minutes every other day, then leave it on for 3 hours. Itching was relieved and scaling disappeared within one week, while skin lesions were healed and disappeared completely within 2 weeks – those who continued the treatment once per week had no relapses. Twelve of the 15 patients who did not continue the honey regimen relapsed within 2–4 months. ([source](#))

To Use: Wet hair, apply diluted raw honey (90% honey and 10% water). Massage into scalp for 2–3 minutes, then let it sit for three hours while you catch up on your favorite show, read, or fold laundry. Rinse with warm water. If desired, follow with 1/4 cup vinegar and 3/4 cup water to seal the hair cuticle and make hair shiny.

Repeat every other day for about two weeks. In the study, participants reported that their dandruff was gone within two weeks. Those who continued the honey treatment once a week after that had no relapses, while those who did not relapsed in 2–4 months.

Apple Cider Vinegar

Though there's not a study to explain why, vinegar has long been

recommended for a healthy scalp and shiny hair. According to [this article](#), the "acidity of apple cider vinegar changes the pH of your scalp, so it's not an ideal environment for yeast [a type of fungus] to grow." While that's true, the reason it works may also have to do with the natural probiotics contained in raw apple cider vinegar, which help fight bacteria and fungi. It also contains enzymes that may help open clogged hair follicles.

Whatever the reason, the participant in [this informal experiment](#) rated apple cider vinegar as one of the most effective home remedies for dandruff. The other winner – baking soda – is not one I prefer due to the potential for causing hair breakage. (When used infrequently as part of the 'no poo' method it may not cause a problem, when used frequently to manage dandruff it might.)

To Use: Mix equal parts apple cider vinegar and water together. Pour mixture into a spray bottle and apply to freshly washed scalp and hair. Make sure not to get in in your eyes – ouch! Put on a shower cap and allow the mixture to sit for 15 minutes to two hours, then rinse with warm water. Repeat twice per week until dandruff is gone, then use as needed.

Note: While honey and apple cider vinegar are very effective at eliminating dandruff, they do not address possible imbalances that could be the cause of dandruff. In one small study, supplementation with probiotics provided a 70% reduction in dandruff after 4–5 weeks. ([source](#))



Earache

Salt or Rice Sock

As a comfort measure, a white cotton sock can be filled with coarse sea salt or rice, heated, and then placed over the ear. In addition to its soothing properties, unrefined salts such as Himalayan salt may also have other therapeutic properties.

According to Alex Eingorn, a New York-based chiropractor, "Himalayan salt rocks emit negative ions. As he explains it, injured and diseased cells are electron-deficient, so submitting the body to an electron-rich environment benefits and heals cells by absorption. Second, salt in its microcrystalline form has antiseptic, antibacterial, antifungal, and antiviral effects on the epithelial cells (one of the body's most important for protection and secretion). The salt helps your cells consolidate inflammation and mucus, so your body can get rid of it." ([source](#))

To use: Add 1 – 1.5 cups coarse sea salt to a clean, white cotton sock. Longer socks are better because you'll need to tie the ankle section in a knot in order to keep the salt in. After you have done that, heat the filled sock in a clean skillet over low/medium heat, flipping often to ensure that the salt/rice is warming evenly. When it is very warm (but not so hot that it will be uncomfortable), place it on the ear and allow it to sit there for as long as you wish. Repeat the process if desired.

Onion

The warmth of a fresh onion poultice is said to provide comfort and assist with circulation. Onion is also believed to have antibacterial and antiviral properties, which may be helpful depending on the reason for the discomfort.

[This article](#) explains how to make the poultice:

"Use one brown or yellow onion, chopped in half. Bake it face down on the oven rack at 350 degrees until you can just start to smell the onion, and it's just beginning to recede. You want it to be just hot enough that you won't burn the ears – test by touching as you would formula. Have the person lie down on their back with their head supported by a pillow. Place the onions over the ears like ear muffs, and then wrap them completely using a natural cloth such as a 100% cotton towel, or 100% wool scarf. You do NOT want to have the chemical fumes from an acrylic fabric going into the ear canal. What you are doing is wrapping the top of the head, covering the onions, and then keeping it sealed by wrapping it loosely around the neck. This is why a wool scarf (if you or they are not allergic) works really well. Leave on for about 10–15 minutes, or until onion cools. Repeat again as needed."



Eczema

Apple Cider Vinegar

Astringents such as apple cider vinegar can sometimes be helpful for weeping eczema. For apple cider vinegar, it is usually suggested that individuals dilute it by applying 1 part purified water and 1 part apple cider vinegar to the skin, either as a compress or spray. Those with very sensitive skin may need to dilute the mixture more.



Headache

Cayenne Pepper

Cayenne stimulates circulation and increases blood flow to the affected area, which supports healing. It also contains capsaicin, which reduces the amount of Substance P – a chemical pain transmitter in the body. (source 1, source 2)



Lice

Lice are super these days. And by super I don't mean awesome, I mean resistant to pesticides.

"The manufacturers won't tell you that, and your child's doctor probably won't either," writes Melanie Haiken of [Takepart](#). "But research published this spring in the *Journal of Medical Entomology* revealed that 99.6 percent of the lice found in the United States are 'super lice' resistant to pyrethrins and permethrin. It makes sense: Just as bacteria mutate to make an end run around an antibiotic, so too do fast-reproducing head lice, which mutate to survive the neurotoxic onslaught."

Yikes. If you're scratching your head about what to do instead, I've got some suggestions for you.

In general, the four basic ways to get rid of lice are:

1. Physical removal with a nit comb – Professional "nitpickers" most often use the Nit Free Terminator Lice Comb to remove lice and nits (lice eggs). We'll cover how to use it with other remedies in the section below.

2. Suffocation – One study found that coating the hair/scalp with a blend of mineral oil and other chemicals to suffocate the lice was 97.6% effective. ([source](#)) Personally, I wouldn't use mineral oil, polysorbate 80, etc., but I would definitely try oils such as coconut or olive. Many parents have reported great success with this method. However, because the little buggers "can hold their breath for up to 8 hours," you'll need to put on a shower cap and let the oil sit overnight. And because nits don't die from suffocation, you'll have to repeat the process or comb them out. ([source](#))

3. Pesticides – As I mentioned earlier, about 99% of the lice found in the U.S. are resistant to one or more pesticides. For that reason – and because they're likely to be toxic – I wouldn't use most store bought or prescription treatments. However, the study I mentioned in #2 that examined the suffocation method also found that botanical pesticides – also known as essential oils – seem to be very effective at killing lice. More on that below.

4. Degreasers – Certain enzyme soaps and substances like diatomaceous earth actually break down the exoskeletons of lice.

Option 1: The Nit Comb

In [this video](#), a professional "nitpicker" walks you through effective combing techniques for removing lice and nits. Quick note: I personally would probably use coconut oil or olive oil instead of cream conditioner.

Pros: No toxins and it's very affordable. (About \$11)

Cons: You cannot miss even one egg, otherwise you'll have another outbreak. Personally, I think this method is most effective if used in combination with one of the others below.

Option #2: Apple Cider Vinegar and Olive or Coconut Oil

In this method, you first rinse the hair with apple cider vinegar to loosen the glue that holds the nits in place. Allow the vinegar to sit until the hair is fully dry, then coat the scalp and hair completely with coconut or olive oil to suffocate the lice. Pull all the hair into a shower cap and let the oil sit for at least eight hours. Remember, the little buggers can hold their breath for a long time.

When the time is up, you have the option of either shampooing to remove the oil, or combing the hair with a nit comb and then washing. You may need to shampoo more than once to get all the oil out. Make sure to wash and dry all the towels and clean out your comb. Also throw any sheets/pillowcases that have been slept on in the dryer for 20 minutes.

Pros: It's non-toxic, and your hair will be exceptionally well-conditioned when the process is over.

Cons: Suffocation will kill the active lice, but it doesn't affect nits, so you have to do it once per week for three weeks. This works because lice don't lay eggs until they are about 10 days old, so if you treat every 7 days you're eliminating their ability to reproduce. After the initial treatment, two more treatments spaced a week apart should do the trick. Just make sure to put pillowcases, sheets, towels, etc. in the dryer for 20 minutes after each use.

Option #3: Salt, Vinegar and Olive or Coconut Oil

Salt and vinegar may work together to dehydrate and kill lice/nits. ([source 1](#), [source 2](#)) To use, apply as a spray (1/4 cup salt dissolved in 1/4 cup warm vinegar) until the scalp/hair is wet. Allow the mixture to sit until the hair is fully dry, then coat the scalp and hair completely with coconut or olive oil. At this point, you can either leave it on for eight hours to suffocate and remaining living lice, or you can comb out the lice that have died from the saltwater solution immediately.

After combing, wash with shampoo as many times as needed to remove the oil, then wash and dry all the towels and clean out your comb. Also throw any sheets/pillowcases that have been slept on in the dryer for 20 minutes.

Pros: It's non-toxic and may be faster than than the suffocation method (or you can use the two together).

Cons: There isn't any formal research that backs this method, only stories from parents. However, it may be worth a shot.

After combing, wash with shampoo as many times as needed to remove the oil, then wash and dry all the towels and clean out your comb. Also throw any sheets/pillowcases that have been slept on in the dryer for 20 minutes.

Pros: It's non-toxic and may be faster than than the suffocation method (or you can use the two together).

Cons: There isn't any formal research that backs this method, only stories from parents. However, it may be worth a shot.

Bonus Tip

Tea tree essential oil may or may not be in your pantry, but just in case it might be helpful I wanted to pass this info along. In one study, a lotion that included 10% tea tree and 1% lavender oil was 97.6% effective in eliminating lice, while insecticides like pyrethrins and piperonyl butoxide were only 25% effective. ([source](#)) If I were to try to use a similar method at home, I would put 20 drops of tea tree oil in 2 teaspoons of shampoo (that's a 10% dilution), lather and let sit for 15 minutes, then rinse and comb with a nit comb.



Indigestion/Heartburn

Apple Cider Vinegar

It's estimated that about 60 million Americans struggle with acid reflux. I used to be one of them, and I used to take prescription medication for it. Though medications do reduce symptoms, they can also contribute to the problem by lowering stomach acid levels. Yep, though it sounds counterintuitive, heartburn is often a result of too little stomach acid, not too much. In *The 30 Day Heartburn Solution*, Craig Fear, NTP, explains it this way:

"Now remember, our stomach is a warm, moist environment. It's almost 100 degrees in there. Fermentation, the process by which sugars get broken down, produces gas as a byproduct. Fermentation likes warmth as it happens quicker and more efficiently in its presence. If you've ever fermented vegetables, you know they ferment quicker in the summer than

in the winter.

In the presence of low stomach acid, the sugars in carbohydrates can ferment and lead to the production of excess gas. Bloating, belching and bad breath are some of the symptoms that result. The maldigested mass of food and the gas that results builds up in the stomach and can start to put pressure on the lower esophageal sphincter (LES), the valve that keeps the stomach separate from the esophagus. Over time, the LES can weaken through this continuous increased pressure.

As pressure builds, some of the acidic contents of the stomach can reflux back into the esophagus. And as we've seen, unlike the stomach, the lining of the esophagus is not meant for acid so it burns. As previously described, this burning of the lining of the esophagus is known as heartburn. So the root cause of heartburn is the under production of stomach acid."

If low acid is the issue, an alternative approach is to support proper digestion by raising acid levels in the stomach. Apple cider vinegar has long been used as a folk remedy for indigestion, and many people think it's ability to alter pH is the reason so many people find it helpful.

To Use: Mix 1–2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar in a little water and drink just before meals.



Insect Bites

Apple Cider Vinegar

Undiluted apple cider vinegar helps with itching and discomfort associated with bug bites.

To Use. Soak a cotton ball with apple cider vinegar – raw, unpasteurized is preferable – and apply to the affected area for several minutes.

Baking Soda

Also helpful for relieving itching, baking soda works by drying out the affected area.

To use: Add a little water to baking soda until a thick paste is formed. Apply,



Nausea / Stomach Ache

Ginger Syrup

We all know about the rock stars of cold and flu season – elderberry syrup and fire cider – but have you ever heard of their less famous band mate, ginger syrup?

This member of the Zingiberaceae family (to which turmeric also belongs) has been used in Chinese medicine for thousands of years to soothe tummy complaints such as nausea, morning sickness, gas, and indigestion. And according to the University of Maryland Medical Center, it has also history of

painful menstrual periods.” ([source](#))

While historically it was very expensive – one pound cost as much as a whole sheep in the Middle Ages – these days it’s widely cultivated and very affordable. I like to keep it on hand during the cold winter months along with other syrups, tinctures and teas that support the immune system.

This warming ginger syrup is incredibly versatile – if you’d like to give it a try but are not quite sure what to do with it, here are some ideas:

Delicious Ways To Use Ginger Syrup

- Mix it with homemade water kefir or sparkling water and a spritz of lime to make ginger ale
- For a drink that will wake you – and your sinuses – up, add it to a cup of hot water with freshly squeezed lemon and a pinch of cayenne
- Stir it into homemade Sweet Dreams Tea, or any tea you prefer
- Straight off the spoon (Taste a small amount first – spiciness varies from batch to batch depending on the intensity of the root)
- Drizzled over asian-style stir fry’s
- Stirred into oatmeal

Ginger Syrup Recipe

Ingredients

- ½ cup dried ginger 1 cup fresh ginger (peeled and chopped)
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup honey
- 1 cinnamon stick (optional)

Instructions

1. Add water, ginger and cinnamon stick (if you’re using it) to a pot and bring to a boil.
2. Reduce heat and simmer until liquid is reduced by half. This should take

2. Reduce heat and simmer until liquid is reduced by half. This should take around 45 minutes.
3. Strain to remove ginger. Allow liquid to cool to room temperature, then stir in honey.
4. Transfer ginger syrup to a jar and store in the fridge.

Notes

Because this recipe contains honey, it should not be used in children under one.

According to Rosemary Gladstar, the syrup should stay good from several weeks to months. If you are concerned that you might not be able to use it all in time, you may want to cut the recipe in half or freeze some in an ice cube tray for later.

Tea

Due to their ability to support digestion and overall soothing effect, several herbal teas that have been traditionally used for nausea.

Chamomile – According to one analysis, “Chamomile is especially helpful in dispelling gas, soothing the stomach, and relaxing the muscles that move food through the intestines.” The researchers also noted that it may have a calming, sedative effect as well. ([source](#))

To Use: Brew a chamomile tea bag according to the instructions provided with it.

Ginger – According to the University of Maryland Medical Center, “Children over 2 make take ginger to treat nausea, stomach cramping, and headaches. Ask your doctor to help you find the right dose.” ([source](#))

To Use: I personally use about 1/2–1 tablespoon fresh, grated ginger or 1/2–1 teaspoon powdered ginger per cup of boiling water, steeped for 10 minutes before drinking.

Peppermint – The University of Maryland Medical Center also states that “Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), a popular flavoring for gum, toothpaste, and tea, is also used to soothe an upset stomach or to aid digestion. Because it has a calming and numbing effect, it has been used to treat headaches, skin irritations, anxiety associated with depression, nausea, diarrhea, menstrual cramps, and flatulence.” The article also cautions that peppermint should not be given to babies or small children. ([source](#))

To Use: Brew a peppermint tea bag according to the instructions provided with it. Or, if you have fresh peppermint leaves, add a handful to 2 cups boiling water and allow to steep for 10–15 minutes.

Caraway Seed – According to WebMD, “Caraway is used for digestive problems including heartburn, bloating, gas, loss of appetite, and mild spasms of the stomach and intestines.” ([source](#))

To Use: Add 1–2 teaspoons of caraway seeds to a cup and pour in once cup of boiling water. Allow to steep for 10–15 minutes, then strain out the seeds and serve.

Fennel Seeds – These seeds have been traditionally used for “various digestive problems including heartburn, intestinal gas, bloating, loss of appetite, and colic in infants.” ([source](#))

To Use: Add 1–2 teaspoons of fennel seeds to a cup and pour in once cup of boiling water. Allow to steep for 10–15 minutes, then strain out the seeds and serve.



Pink Eye

Like ear infections, most cases of pinkeye are viral in nature. However, some are bacterial and others are actually an allergic response.

Viral Pink Eye Is . . .

- Typically marked by clear, watery drainage
- Contagious
- Likely to start in one eye and move to the other
- Not treatable with antibiotics. "Most viral pinkeye cases have no specific treatment – you just have to let the virus run its course, which is usually four to seven days" ([source](#))
- Often somewhat alleviated by some of the comfort measures listed below. Immune system support may also be helpful.
- Often difficult to discern from bacterial pink eye ([source 1](#)) ([source 2](#))

Bacterial Pink Eye Is . . .

- Typically marked by greenish yellow drainage
- Contagious
- Likely to start in one eye and move to the other
- Usually treated with antibiotic eye drops. Some who prefer to avoid antibiotics use some of the natural approaches below.
- Often difficult to discern from viral pink eye ([source 1](#)) ([source 2](#))

Allergic Pink Eye Is . . .

- “Allergic pinkeye (caused by seasonal pollens, animal dander, cosmetics and perfumes) and chemical pinkeye (from chemicals or liquids, including bleach and furniture polish) are not contagious.” ([source](#))
- Clear, watery drainage is typical
- Usually involves both eyes

“Allergic pinkeye symptoms should improve once the allergen source is removed and the allergy is treated. Chemical pinkeye requires prompt washing of the affected eye(s) for five minutes and an immediate call to the doctor.” ([source](#)) Treatments for the allergy may include an antihistamine. Nettle capsules or tea are considered by many to be a natural antihistamine, and preliminary studies suggest that this may indeed be the case. ([source](#))

Because pink eye can be highly contagious, it is usually recommended that individuals address both eyes even if only one has irritation.

Honey

Frank Dougan of Glasgow spent eight years searching for relief from blepharitis, a chronic bacterial infection of the eyelid. ‘Lots of doctors gave me eyes [sic] drops, I have a whole fridge full and I have spent a fortune but nothing worked,’ he told the UK-based Daily Mail. ([source](#))

So what did finally work? According to Frank, it was a jar of honey from the local Tesco. His optician confirmed that she was no longer able to find any

traces of blepharitis.

Countless studies have affirmed honey's beneficial properties. In fact, according to a Cochrane analysis of 19 clinical trials, this pantry staple may work better than antibiotic creams for burns. ([source](#))

So what do we know about its effectiveness with pink eye? I am not aware of any studies that have directly looked at this issue, however there are a few studies that have explored the use of honey for various eye irritations. Here's what they concluded:

Studies that may support the use of honey for some kinds of eye irritation

In one study, the application of honey significantly reduced the amount of bacteria found on and around the eye in patients that suffer from dry eyes. ([source](#))

Another analysis notes that honey is being " 'rediscovered' by the medical profession, particularly where conventional modern therapeutic agents have failed. Recent published reports describe the effectiveness of honey in rapidly clearing wound infection with minimal adverse effects, and also possible in promoting healing with minimal scar formation. Honey also has antimicrobial action against a broad spectrum of bacteria and fungi, both in laboratory studies and in humans. Its use in the eye ranges from treating post-herpetic corneal opacities, local conjunctival lesions and corneal edema with variable results." ([source](#))

Also, though it is not not a study, "there is evidence that the ancient Egyptians used honey to treat eye diseases, the Greek philosopher Aristotle is credited with being among the first to record medicinal use of honey for the eyes as far back as 350 B.C. Honey was also widely used in India to treat eye disease and has been used by traditional healers in Mali to prevent scarring of the cornea in cases of measles. There is also evidence that honey was used by the medieval English to treat eye diseases." ([source 1](#)) ([source 2](#))

What kind of honey is best?

The exact type of honey used in the studies mentioned above was not specified. However, in the world of natural remedies I know manuka honey is often sought because it contains high levels of the compound dihydroxyacetone. However, I didn't have any on hand when I woke up with pink, irritated eyes last year so I used plain, organic honey instead.

Ingredients

- 1/4 teaspoon raw honey
- 1/4 cup distilled or reverse osmosis water (or water that has been boiled for 5 minutes and allowed to cool)
- pinch of sea salt

Dissolve raw honey and optional salt in pure warm water. Don't get the water too hot or it may alter some of the beneficial properties of the water. Using a clean dropper, place a 1–2 drops in each eye every few hours as needed.

Herbal Tea Poultices

According to Prescription For Nutritional Healing, "Calendula, chamomile, fennel and/or eyebright teas can be used to make hot compresses. Eyebright can also be taken orally in capsule or tea form. It is good for any eye irritation or inflammation. The tea can also be used to rinse the eyes."

Caution: Do not use chamomile or calendula if you are allergic to ragweed. Some sources, such as Prescription For Nutritional Healing, say not to use during pregnancy or nursing. (p. 421) However, many herbalists and OB-GYN's say chamomile is perfectly fine during pregnancy and while nursing. ([source](#))

To Use: According to some sources, distilled water is recommended because any impurities in water could exacerbate the infection. You can find instructions for making chamomile and calendula eye soothers at Mother

Earth News. Some individuals add a pinch of salt to their tea as it brews to boost the astringent quality of the poultice.

In *Prescription for Natural Cures: A Self-Care Guide For Treating Health Problems With Natural Remedies*, which was also written James F. Balch, M.D., along with Mark Stengler N.M.D, and Robin Young Balch, N.M.D, eyebright is mentioned again with a little more clarification. It is recommended for both pink eye and irritation due to allergies. In the section on allergies, it is suggested that readers “apply as a solution to irritated eyes by adding 3–5 drops of eyebright tincture to an ounce of contact lens (saline) solution in a disposable cup. Rinse each eye with separate cups and toss the cups after use. Do this once or twice a day to relieve irritated eyes and remove redness.”

Salt Water Wash

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Salt Water Wash

According to Chris A Knobbe, M.D., irrigating the eye’s surface with a sterile salt water (saline) solution several times daily may give additional relief. ([source](#))

Some eye drops contain lubricants and other medications for various conditions, but there are options out there – like Clearinse – that just contain salt and sterilized water.

Wondering if it’s possible to make your own saline solution? Just like with the teas, using water that has not been boiled or sterilized in some way is not recommended. However, according to Chemistry expert Anne Marie

Helmenstine, PhD, it is possible to make – [she explains how here](#).

Comfort Measures

Warm Or Cold Compress

“To reduce pain and to remove the discharge of bacterial or viral pinkeye, use a cold or warm compress on the eyes. Make sure to use a different washcloth for each eye to prevent spreading any infection. And use clean washcloths each time. Clean the eye from drainage by wiping from the inside to the outside of the eye area.” (source)

Raw Potatoes

Fresh slices of cold, raw potato are also said to be soothing.

Pink Eye Prevention

Recurring pink eye infections may be associated with vitamins A and B (especially B2) deficiencies, so it may be worth exploring supplementation if infections continue to occur. ([source 1](#)) ([source 2](#))

Cod liver oil is a source of naturally occurring vitamin A. You can find the brand I buy on [my shopping page](#) under Superfoods & Supplements.

When To See A Doctor

According to the CDC, “Most cases of pink eye are mild and get better without treatment. However, some forms are more severe. Severe cases need to be looked at by a health care provider and may require specific treatment and close follow-up. If you have pink eye, you should see your health care provider if you have—

- Moderate to severe pain in your eye(s)
- Blurred vision or increased sensitivity to light
- Intense redness in the eye(s)
- A weakened immune system, for example, from HIV or cancer treatment
- Bacterial pink eye that does not improve after 24 hours of antibiotic use
- Symptoms that get worse or don't improve
- Pre-existing eye conditions that may put you at risk for complications or severe infection"

The CDC also recommends that all babies with pink eye symptoms be seen by a health care provider.



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