

Health Watch

Natural Remedies for Summertime First Aid

by Dr. Trevor Holly Cates

Summer is quickly approaching with its sunny weather and fun outdoor activities. Along with summertime comes the possibility of insect bites, poison oak rashes, injuries, and sunburns. Even with these possible "risks," you don't need to stay cooped up indoors. Homeopathy offers safe, natural remedies that can put your mind and your body at ease this summer. Stocking your medicine cabinet or first aid kit with certain homeopathic remedies keeps you prepared for common summer ailments.

Homeopathically prepared remedies are commonly available in health food stores and many drug stores and are safe for people of all ages, including children and seniors. These all-natural medicines are easy to use, do not have side effects, and do not interact with other medications. They can be used day or night without causing drowsiness or stimulation.

Homeopathics are available as individual remedies and in combinations. Individual homeopathic remedies on hand at most stores are in 6, 12 and 30 C and X potencies, which are great for acute conditions. Homeopathic remedies can be repeated as often as every 15 minutes and given up to about six - eight times per day. For chronic or acute conditions continuing for more than a few days with no improvement, be sure to consult a professional homeopath.



Trevor enjoys a cool morning with her daughter, Thalia.



There are numerous homeopathic remedies for first aid. Below you will find some of the top remedies to keep on hand this summer.

Too much fun in the sun can often lead to sunburns. Preventing sunburns with sunscreens, hats, and other cover-ups is essential. In case you miss a spot and still get sunburned, try applying aloe vera gel or calendula spray to the affected area. In addition, homeopathic cantharis can be taken internally to help soothe the pain and promote healing.

Watch where you step to avoid an uncomfortable rash. Hiking and camping is on many people's list this summer. Be sure to look out for poison oak and poison ivy on the trails. Some people are more sensitive to these plants than others, and if you do end up with an itchy rash, try homeopathic anacardium. If the rash continues with no reduction in itching or swelling, switch to Rhus tox.

Bugs are unavoidable in the outdoors. Avoid synthetic insect repellents that are full of harmful chemicals. Instead, choose natural essential oils such as neem or citronella oils. For bee stings and insect bites, homeopathic Apis mellifica can provide relief when there is pain, redness and swelling. Ledum is helpful for insect bites and stings when the skin is punctured and the affected area feels cold. If you have an allergy to bees, do not delay treatment, seek health care immediately to prevent an anaphylaxis reaction.

All-natural relief can soothe minor injuries. For minor scrapes and cuts, use topical calendula ointment, salve or spray. Calendula heals and soothes the skin and is antimicrobial. **Hyland's** makes a calendula spray that is alcohol-free. Not only is the spray convenient and easy to use, but also it does not sting like alcohol-based products. For deep wounds, visit an urgent care center or emergency room for proper wound care. Once a deeper wound is beginning to heal, you can apply calendula to help speed the recovery.

Accidents happen, but homeopathy can help. Arnica is the single most important remedy for trauma when there is soreness and tenderness, especially to touch or pressure. It is useful for any kind of trauma including bruises, black eyes and sore muscles. Arnica can be taken internally as a homeopathic and used externally as ointments, salves or sprays.

There are multiple remedies for sprains and strains. Arnica should be taken first to help the pain and swelling. Other helpful remedies are: Bryonia when the slightest movement causes pain; Ruta graveolens which is indicated



for more severe strains and sprains; and Rhus tox for sprains and joint aches with stiff, painful restless feeling that is better with continued motion and heat.

For fractured bones, take Arnica immediately for the pain and to help heal bruised tissues. Then, once the swelling and bruising reduces and the fracture has been set, switch to Symphytum to promote bone growth and repair. If you suspect you have a fracture, always visit a health care provider who can properly assess and set the fracture.

Hyland's Homeopathic Bumps 'n Bruises consists of a combination of four different homeopathic medicines: Arnica montana, Hypericum perforatum, Bellis perennis and Ruta graveolens. Hypericum is excellent for injuries to areas rich in nerves such as fingers, toes and genitals. Bellis perennis can also help reduce swelling and soreness of deep bruises. Ruta graveolens helps ease strains and sprains. With this combination of remedies, many injuries are covered from minor bruises to more severe injuries. Individual remedies work wonders, but sometimes a combination remedy such as this is easiest to use and keep on hand.

Whatever outdoor activities you have planned this summer, be prepared by creating your own homeopathic first aid kit to take along with you on outings. In addition to band-aids and other basics, consider some or all of the homeopathic remedies mentioned in this article for your kit. Keep it simple with a few remedies and straightforward instructions. Enjoy your outdoor activities knowing you are ready for whatever summertime may bring.

Dr. Trevor Holly Cates received a Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine degree from the National College of Naturopathic Medicine. Co-founder of the Santa Barbara Center for Natural Medicine, Dr. Cates practices as a primary care doctor with a focus on women and children's health care. She was the first woman in California to receive a license as a naturopathic doctor and was appointed by Gov. Schwarzenegger to the Bureau of Naturopathic Medicine Advisory Council. She lives with her husband and three children in Santa Barbara, California.

