



# Make Your Own... ...Natural First Aid Kit

Prevent, protect and prescribe with a DIY kit of nature's most potent remedies

*The bumps, bites and bubbly tummies* that come with adventures beyond your front gate may interrupt the moment, but they are rarely worth upsetting your body's equilibrium with harsh antiseptics, hydrocortisone or additive-packed medicaments. Reach instead for holistic remedies that calm and soothe jangled nerves – often the biggest symptom in a crisis – as they treat any physical manifestations. Ancient wisdom can work wonders when calamity strikes, so make space among the Mr Men plasters and sachets of sterile dressings; whether you're off on holiday or hosting a picnic in the park, pack nature's remedies to treat body, mind and spirit.

## ALOE VERA GEL

"My number one go-to for prickly heat and sunburn is aloe vera gel," says herbalist Hannah Charman, founder of [Physic Health Consulting](http://PhysicHealthConsulting.com) ([physichealth.co.uk](http://physichealth.co.uk)). Hannah recommends using the oozy gel from the aloe plant fresh, but if your handbag, glovebox or baggage allowance doesn't quite stretch to pot plants all is not lost. "You can buy it in a pot of gel from good health food shops and keep it in the fridge to instantly soothe burnt, itchy or irritated skin."

## GINGER ROOT

"Ginger has been used in traditional Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine for the treatment of nausea and digestive discomfort for over 5000 years," points out nutritionist Fiona Campbell from the [College of Naturopathic Medicine](http://College of Naturopathic Medicine.com) ([naturopathy-uk.com](http://naturopathy-uk.com)). "It can be ingested in powdered, raw, tincture, or capsule form, or drunk as a tea, and it can be very effective at relieving nausea as well as pain and inflammation in the body." It also offers protection against that most unbearable travel soundtrack: queasy kids. "Children may benefit from sipping cooled or iced ginger tea sweetened with honey, and taking ginger 30 minutes before travelling in a car can greatly alleviate or even prevent symptoms of travel sickness."

## ARNICA PILLULES

"Arnica has been used to treat bruising, and relieve pain and inflammation for over 200 years," says Fiona. "The active components of this yellow flower



include chemicals called sesquiterpene lactones, antioxidants and flavonoids, known to reduce inflammation and ease pain. By stimulating the activity of white blood cells, Arnica is believed to assist with dispersing the fluid that accumulates around damaged and swollen joints. Homeopaths also recommend this remedy in higher potencies of 6°C or 30°C (meaning that they contain very little of the active ingredients but act much more deeply) to support acute or ongoing recovery from shock.”

### CAMOMILE TEA BAGS

Tea bags are essential to any survival kit, but it's not all about PG. “Camomile is an effective sedative and anti-inflammatory but is also pain relieving,” says medical herbalist Katherine Bellchambers (nottingham-herbalist.co.uk). “It also helps the digestion and can reduce symptoms of IBS and bloating.” The quality of your tea will, however, have an impact. “Teabags from the supermarket can be quite effective as eye compresses and an after-dinner drink but are sometimes prepared and dried at high temperature which destroys some of the volatile components,” says Katherine. “If you can get whole dried flower from a health food shop or herbalist you'll be more likely get a better product.”

### LAVENDER OIL

“Lavender essential oil is a gentle antiseptic, anti-irritant, and an emotionally-soothing product,” says Katherine. “It's one of the few essential oils safe to use neat on the skin, though it shouldn't be used this way on children under five. It contains over 100 different constituents; linalool is particularly implicated in pain relief and is also responsible for some of the gentle sedative effects. Camphor has a beneficial effect on breathing and is antiseptic but it's thought to be the combination of the different constituents that gives lavender its all round ‘good egg’ status.” Katherine advises using lavender oil neat on bites, stings, spots, minor cuts and grazes and on minor burns once the heat has been relieved under running water. “When I go on holiday I mix a few drops in my after sun for extra healing and to take the heat out,” she says.

### PEPPERMINT OIL

The fresh, cooling scent of peppermint is always a boost to the senses, but can do more says holistic therapist Claire Kelly, founder of Glastonbury's Indigo Herbs (indigo-herbs.co.uk) “It's known as a top note in aromatherapy, so it is stimulating to the mind and uplifting to the spirit,” she starts. “Because of peppermint's menthol content it has a cooling, anaesthetic-like quality, so it can be used to treat sunburn, inflammation of the skin, headaches,

aching limbs and any part of the body that would benefit from this cooling soothing effect. It is also an antispasmodic so it can ease IBS, stomach cramps or pains, or spasms brought on by coughing or menstruation.”

### PROBIOTIC CAPSULES

If eating like a local always leaves you dashing for the toilet it's time to get your gut in tip-top shape rather than suppress its warning signals when you're away from home. “Probiotics are a great way to help protect yourself from stomach upsets while you're away,” says Hannah Charman. “There are some specifically formulated for travel which don't need to be kept in the fridge, and some studies show that they're a safe, effective treatment for tummy bugs. Take them from a week before until a week after your holiday.”

### MARIGOLD TEA BAGS

The beneficial marigold flowers and leaves are from the plant *calendula officinalis*, and they have a long history of traditional use for their skin healing properties,” says Claire. “It's the beautiful bright orange and yellow colour – a phytochemical called carotenoids – that gives this tea its beneficial properties. The primary use for an infusion would be for bathing the skin as it's known to heal wounds, stop bleeding, calm soreness and soothe and protect. However the tea can be used for healing the intestinal tract, balancing gut flora and healing the gut wall. Its anti-viral, anti-microbial and anti-fungal properties make it a wonderful first aider for both external and internal use.”

### ACTIVATED CHARCOAL POWDER

Pre-treated to increase surface area and powers of absorption, activated charcoal is an ancient remedy for diarrhoea, indigestion and bloating. “Activated charcoal works by attracting irritating substances and unfriendly bacteria in the gut or on the skin and holding them on its surface,” says Fiona. “Mix the powder thoroughly with a soft drink or fruit juice to aid ingestion and follow with plenty of water; this may help to support a swift recovery from travellers' diarrhoea.”

### TEA TREE OIL

“This essential oil has anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties that make it a first aid kit must have,” suggests Claire. In fact, indigenous Australians have long used the oil of their native tea tree for a whole range of conditions and clinical research has proven it to be potent in the fight against multi-resistant superbugs. “It can be used in place of an anti-bacterial agent for cuts, sores, fungal infections and more,” says Claire.



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