

HERBS THAT HEAL

Study after study proves that Mother Earth has done a bang-up job in providing us with the tools we need to stay healthy. Here are five standout herbs that heal, protect and do a whole lot more.

~~~~~  
by ELISA KOSONEN  
~~~~~



ECHINACEA
HELPS YOU SAY
“BUH-BYE”
TO COLDS FASTER

A

LARGE PORTION OF MY CHILDHOOD memories, at least between the ages of seven and 15, can be traced back to staying home sick from school. Stomach migraines (like a stomach ache but with symptoms like nausea, vomiting and abdominal cramping), pneumonia, bronchitis, mono – I was one sickly kid. It certainly wasn't for lack of nutrition, or even a will to avoid the classroom – though I did love going to work with my mom as I could watch all the Mickey Mouse cartoons my heart desired. My immune system just wasn't up to snuff.

When I visited a naturopath for the first time in my late 20s, I discovered there was a world of whole

foods and healing herbs that could actually change the course of my health. And it wasn't just for hippies. (This was well before the juicing craze and health revolution of late.) I started eating ginger for my digestive issues, taking echinacea at the first hint of a cold and drinking chamomile tea when work stress took over – and it worked. My body has been an antibiotic-free zone for some time.

The use of alternative and natural remedies is now commonly accepted, as many people turn to herbs and nutrition to support their health. My own medicine cabinet has undergone a complete make-over and sort of resembles a spice rack. Let's just call it herbal magic. Give it a try.

ISTOCK



TUMMY TROUBLES? GINGER HELPS REDUCE THE RUMBLES

BEST TIP

ALWAYS CHECK WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONER BEFORE STARTING ANY HERBAL PROGRAM, ESPECIALLY IF YOU ARE PREGNANT OR BEING TREATED FOR AN EXISTING CONDITION.

1 GINGER (ZINGIBER OFFICINALE)
Having been used to treat upset stomachs and nausea for more than 2,000 years in Asian herbal traditions, ginger has a well-documented history of helping to improve digestion. Canada has one of the highest rates of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) in the world: Five million Canadians suffer from it, and more than 20 million Canadians struggle with more generalized digestive disorders every year. Eat the ginger on your next plate of sushi or add it to a green smoothie.

2 RED RASPBERRY LEAF (RUBUS IDAEUS)
“Raspberry leaf is one of the most widely used herbs in pregnancy. This herb supplies high levels of iron and other minerals to the uterus. It is used as a tonic to strengthen uterine muscles and tone the pelvic floor in preparation for childbirth,” says Carley Mendes, a holistic nutritionist who specializes in fertility and women’s health during and after pregnancy. But she warns that some women see an increase in Braxton Hicks, so it’s recommended to wait until the 32nd week of pregnancy to begin.

3 LAVENDER (LAVANDULA SPICA)
According to Statistics Canada, women have a harder time falling asleep than men. A little lavender could help us get more rest and enjoy a deeper slumber. The oil in its pretty flowers gives the herb a fragrant scent that provides a calming, soothing and sedative effect. Don’t knock aromatherapy until you try it. If a recent study by *The Journal of Neuroscience* is correct, lack of sleep could actually deplete brain cells. That’s a strong argument for getting to bed earlier. **Try Avalon Organics Lavender Hand & Body Lotion.**

4 ECHINACEA (ECHINACEA PURPUREA)
Laugh in the face of cold and flu season when you have this immunity booster in your arsenal. Many studies support echinacea as an aid to enhance the immune system, reduce inflammation and provide antiviral benefits. It’s also particularly useful for lessening the symptoms of upper respiratory tract infections, sore throats and congestion. You may be tempted to consume them daily, but echinacea supplements are reactive and should be taken at the very first indication of a symptom. Echinacea pallida has also been shown to heal wounds, which is a great benefit for its use in skin care. **Try Éminence Biodynamic Echinacea Recovery Cream.** Although it’s not a medical ointment, it’s reported to fight signs of aging and clear skin imperfections.

5 GOLDEN ROOT (RHODIOLA ROSEA)
Known as the “new ginseng,” this herb fights fatigue and can enhance mental function. It may also be helpful for women looking to boost fertility. “As an adaptogen, this herb improves the body’s response to stress – mental, physical and emotional,” says Mendes. “Stress is one of the leading causes of infertility. Rhodiola helps relieve amenorrhea (loss of menstrual cycles) and improve egg maturation. It also balances the thyroid gland, which many women don’t realize is necessary for fertility.” *—M*



ISTOCK

WEB EXCLUSIVE | TEA TIME? HERBAL TEAS ARE BRIMMING WITH BENEFITS. FIND OUT WHICH ONES ARE BEST AT BESTHEALTHMAG.CA/HERBAL-TEA