

NATURAL HOME REMEDIES FOR YOUR CHILD AND YOU

*Easy Natural Remedies
for Common Health Conditions*



Carolyn Stone

**NATURAL HOME REMEDIES
FOR YOUR CHILD AND YOU:
Easy Natural Remedies for
Common Health Conditions**

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WHAT'S INSIDE

The author of the popular Green Matters series is back with another handy title to help you deal naturally with many of the common health conditions new parents face. Whether you are treating yourself or your infant, toddler or older child, this guide provides a range of natural treatments for many of the most common health issues that will crop up in the middle of your busy family life.

There is often no need to run to the doctor for prescription drugs, and no need for expensive products from the drug store. Learn how to treat issues such as diaper rash, thrush, teething problems and more with items you usually have right in your own kitchen.

Discover the hidden dangers lurking in many commonly used "baby products" and how to make your own safe, natural alternatives for pennies compared with what you are paying in stores for these chemical-laden products.

Learn how to deal with colds, flu, fever, sleeplessness, bad breath, headaches and migraines. Discover all-natural ways to deal with eczema, acne, depression, anxiety, and more.

Save time, money, and trial and error with the help of these effective natural remedies, and continue to make your move towards a more frugal and green home today with the help of this guide.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carolyn Stone is one of the main writers and editors for the popular health site Healthful-Goddess.com, and the author of over four dozen health and self-help guides.

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INTRODUCTION

In our Green Matters series, we have been trying to give you practical advice on how to live in a more eco-friendly and healthy manner. As we have said in every guide, we can vote with our wallets in terms of the products we buy and consume, and consume less of them. We can aim for quality, rather than quantity, organic versus factory-farmed, and handmade or upcycled rather than mass-produced.

No matter how hard you try to live more greenly and naturally, however, there will be times when your child or you will get sick. Not every sniffle or symptom is a cause for a trip to the doctor, especially with the cost of medical co-pays and prescription medications these days.

We are not advocating that you avoid the doctor completely, but as you become more experienced as a parent, you might find that you can often treat the symptoms of many common illnesses using natural remedies at home.

Colds and flu, for example, can't be treated with prescription medications such as antibiotics. In fact, you can start to damage your immune system by taking too many, leaving yourself open to antibiotic-resistant germs. On the other hand, how can you tell when it is a cold or flu, or something more serious? (See Evelyn Trimborn's guide to colds and flu for more information.)

Sometimes you can treat the problem without having to run to the doctors and the pharmacy as well, while at other times items that you already have on hand in your pantry can go a long way towards helping you or your child feel better.

Many people are turning to homemade remedies to relieve the symptoms of certain medical conditions for several reasons. The first is cost, and the second is convenience.

The third reason is that conventional medicines may be effective against the health condition that they are intended to treat, but many prescription drugs carry with them a risk of unpleasant or even dangerous side effects. In some cases the drugs might simply be masking the symptoms, or creating a whole new set of them.

With all of these considerations in mind, many people are turning to their kitchen first for tried and tested home remedies that have been used for generations, long before the advent of modern medicine.

Outside of America, many more people are interested in natural remedies and homeopathy. We first learned about the wonders of natural remedies from trial and error, and a Scottish friend who was able to respond to a mutual friend whose nose had gotten broken by offering a tube of arnica cream.

The next day, instead of the classic panda look of two black eyes that usually accompanies a broken nose, our friend was able to go to work the next morning looking almost normal. When he went to the emergency room later in the day to report what had happened and seek a doctor's advice, every doctor he saw said his nose could not possibly be broken because he didn't have two black eyes.

Then they felt his nose, and were shocked to find that it really was broken. When they asked what he had done when he got injured, he held up the arnica cream tube; there was no doubt about it, he was not bruised after applying the cream and he suffered only the mildest yellow discoloration for about three days.

Seeing is believing, of course. Several years later, my husband fell off his motorcycle. His knee had ballooned to the size of a grapefruit, and it continued to swell to the size of a small volleyball. I raced into town for several tubes of arnica cream and plastered his knee with it. Within a couple of hours, it was back down to normal size, with only a slight trace of green and some slightly scraped skin to show that anything had happened.

Our friend has sensitive but oily skin, and her husband very oily skin. They didn't want a cabinet full of acne preparations, especially if they smelled too perfumey for him, but clearly wanted to keep their skin clear. They began to experiment with natural beauty treatments and also became interested in beauty without cruelty products. They found that the natural remedies for inflamed or dry skin were far more effective than the commercial products, at a fraction of the cost.

Beauty without cruelty, and recycling to leave as small a footprint as possible on the planet, makes creating your own small batches of fresh beauty preparations and medicines the natural, commonsense thing to do. (See our guide on beauty without cruelty for more information.)

In this guide, we want to highlight the many items that you probably already have on hand in your home which can help you treat many of the most common health conditions you will need to deal with as a parent. Whether you are a green new mom, have just started down the road as a green mother, or are green yourself but wish to live in an even greener family, this guide can help you treat several of the most common symptoms that babies and children develop during various points of their childhood.

Some of these conditions are also ones that adults can suffer from as well. Just think how handy and inexpensive it would be to treat them at home, instead of having to resort to expensive over-the-counter medications and even prescription drugs.

Before we go any further, we need to remind you to exercise common sense. If symptoms come on suddenly and/or persist despite any attempts to treat them, head to your doctor or the nearest emergency room.

This guide is designed for general advice only. It is not a substitute for advice given by

a qualified professional with respect to your own individual health situation or that of your child. You should never delay in seeking professional help because of anything you might have read in this or any other guide, at a website, on a herbal remedy bottle, and so forth.

Having given you the requisite medical disclaimer to remind you to let your common sense and knowledge of your own health and that of your family members be your guide, we hope you will find a range of helpful natural treatments to try that will be safe and effective.

Let's start now with a look inside your kitchen cupboards to see what kind of items you can find there that will help you start creating your own natural home remedies.

CHAPTER 1: NATURE'S MEDICINE CABINET IN YOUR HOME

You might not think you have much on hand to help when you or a loved one fall ill, but in the same way that many common grocery store items can become effective natural beauty treatments and safe, all-natural cleaning products (see our guides on these subjects), your kitchen pantry can also contain cures for many common childhood ills and adult ailments.

Let's take a quick look inside your cabinet to see what we can find. First up is honey, great as a sweetener and skin cleanser and softener, but also an item with known medicinal properties when used carefully.

No child under six months should ever be given honey, since it can cause severe digestive issues, but if you are using it for yourself or your older children, raw honey is great for coughs, colds, allergies and other health issues, including fertility. Honey has been shown to help boost your immune system and provide you with a variety of nutrients as well.

When taken in combination with apple cider vinegar, it can take the edge off the taste of the vinegar, which can be used both internally and externally for a variety of conditions. Apple cider vinegar can help restore your body's natural pH balance if you have been eating the wrong foods, and it has also been shown to help people who wish to lose weight. Its acidic properties help you clean out your system, and it works well as an antiseptic and a mouth rinse and gargle for sore throats.

Corn syrup, commonly sold under the Karo label in the United States, can be used to treat skin conditions and to alleviate constipation. A teaspoonful works especially well with infants who are experiencing difficulty in this area, and any child who might balk at a prune or prune juice. Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables can help you avoid this problem, but if you have not been able to keep your diet in balance, keep some Karo syrup or a box of prunes on hand and watch your problem vanish within a few hours.

Another common ailment of infants is diaper rash, which occurs for a number of reasons that we will discuss in greater detail below. One of the best remedies for this problem is corn starch, which most people use as a thickener for sauces and gravy. Cornstarch can work in a similar manner to baby powder, but without all the chemicals and perfume. It can keep the skin dry, protect it from irritation, and prevent itching and the scratching that can damage the skin even further, and perhaps lead to infection.

Oatmeal is another item with a wide variety of uses, from breakfast in the morning, to a low-calorie coating for pan-fried chicken, to a soothing compress for irritated or dry skin. It can even be used as a poultice or plaster on the chest to help ease congestion, especially when mixed with other items to help open the airways and allow your child to breath more freely.

Menthol oil or mustard can work well for this purpose. You might also consider stocking Olbas oil, a powerful if strong smelling decongestant.

Chamomile is usually used for teas that are drunk, but it can be used to relieve indigestion and soothe inflamed skin. It is also great for relieving stress and promoting relaxation, and useful as an aromatherapy scent.

Lavender is another flower that can be used for both home remedies and its scent. It is soothing, has powerful cleansing properties, and a marvelous aroma. It can be drunk in tea and used in a variety of beauty products, and even your own healthy homemade baby products (more about this in a later chapter).

You don't just have to look in the cupboards to find handy home remedies. You might also have several plants right inside your own home that can help treat a range of health issues.

The most common one is the aloe vera plant, a rather prickly-looking but sturdy plant from which you can snap leaves and use the juice inside for burns, cuts and scrapes. It is also good for soothing dry skin, and dealing with sunburn (see our guide on summer safety in the sun for more information on avoiding this common but potentially very dangerous problem).

If we are what we eat, then there are many foods that can help us stay healthy and build up our immune system. Citrus fruits, for example, contain a large amount of vitamin C and have been shown to help people recover from colds more rapidly. Having a juicer, or making some great smoothies rich in fruit can help you stay well all year round, even in winter (see Mara Michaels' guide on smoothies and shakes for some handy ideas).

And do not neglect the rather silly looking but enormously powerful kiwi. It has more vitamin C than an orange, plus potassium for heart health and replacing electrolytes in your body after you have worked up a good sweat. A banana is also useful for the latter, and the peel can provide handy relief from the sting of poison ivy.

Zinc, a common mineral found in many foods, has also been demonstrated to help reduce the time a person suffers from a cold. It can also help improve male fertility, since zinc is one of the main components of sperm. It is easy to add more zinc in your diet. Just eat a handful of shelled pumpkin seeds every day.

We hope this review of some of the most common products you have in your home will show you that you actually have a wealth of home remedies at your fingertips once you know how to use these ordinary household items for medicinal purposes.

Now that we have discussed the many natural items you can use at home to keep you and your family healthy, it is time to take a look at some not so natural ones, in the form of baby products that you might think are safe, but can really be harmful to your

child.

CHAPTER 2: THE HIDDEN DANGERS LURKING IN BABY PRODUCTS

Almost from the moment that babies are born in the West, the hospital staff and well-intentioned new moms start to douse them in chemicals as if the infants are hazardous waste, which makes no sense.

Many companies offer a wide range of baby products, but how safe are they really? Have you ever looked at the labels on the baby wash, soaps, lotions, shampoos, and baby powders that you often use on your baby or young child several times a day?

You might think that just because these products are supposed to be for babies, that they will be safe and all natural, but the truth is that they can be an evil witch's brew of harmful substances, either alone or especially in combination with each other.

Many parents put faith in the companies behind conventional baby products because it never enters their minds that products made specifically for babies could be harmful. Indeed, most parents are given a welcome pack of all sorts of products designed for baby, which is really intended to set the buying habits of the parents so that they continue to purchase these products.

Most parents never even bother to read the labels until it is too late and baby starts to experience adverse side effects from one or more of the products, such as a rash, dry skin, itching, and scratching. Scratching can cause even more damage, and can potentially lead to infection.

Then there is diaper rash, which can be caused by the diaper itself and the chemicals it contains, the lack of air circulation in the diaper area, and/or the baby products that a well-meaning new mom might be using, including, ironically, baby powder and diaper rash cream.

Unfortunately, there are many baby products available today that have questionable ingredients. Some of these ingredients include synthetic perfumes, Sodium Lauryl Sulfate, parabens, paraffin, and talc, but what are these ingredients, and why are they so bad for human beings?

Sodium Lauryl Sulfate or SLS for short is an ingredient that gives a product like shampoo or liquid soap its foaming ability. It is a known skin irritant. In fact, when testing a new ointment or cream intended to heal, SLS is the irritant they first rub on the skin to test the supposed healing properties of their new product.

SLS can penetrate the skin easily and then be retained in the eyes, brain, heart, and liver, with potentially harmful effects, according to a study published by the Journal of the American College of Toxicology.

In a baby product, SLS might cause rashes, eczema or other skin irritations. It is shocking that baby products can contain such a harsh ingredient just for the sake of the lather or bubbles that it can create.

To add further insult to injury, products containing this ingredient are sometimes labeled as natural or organic because SLS is a detergent derived from coconut oil. Therefore, read the labels on all of your products and avoid any foaming items such as foaming hand soap and bubble bath.

Also avoid any products sourced from overseas, where quality controls will be even worse than here in the United States. To make your own foaming soap, keep the bottle that you purchased. It usually has an aerating pump action to it. Then use one ounce of pure liquid soap, like Castile soap, to four ounces of water. The pump action will make the foam and help you use less soap at the same time.

Parabens are preservatives that have estrogenic qualities. They have produced abnormal hormonal effects following application on laboratory rodents, particularly male, resulting in decreased testosterone levels and other abnormalities. They have also been found to accumulate in the breast tissue of women with breast cancer.

Synthetic perfumes or fragrances can contain hundreds of chemicals. Some, such as methylene chloride, are carcinogenic. Others might cause headaches, dizziness, coughing, vomiting and skin irritation.

If you make small quantities of cleaning ingredients at home, there is no need for preservatives. Therefore, creating your own natural personal care products and cleaning solutions can be one of the best ways for a new green mom to start off on the right foot with her baby and not bombard his tender skin with unnecessary chemicals. (See our new green mom's guide and our natural skin care guide for more information.)

Paraffin is a product made from petroleum and is one form of barrier to prevent moisture leaving the skin or lips. If you have ever wondered why some lip balms or lip protectors taste so foul, this will give you a clue. There are other ways to keep skin hydrated without harmful and potentially flammable ingredients. Lotions made with milk, honey, aloe and more can all keep skin healthy and supple. And, of course, the best way to get healthy skin is to eat a balanced diet and stay hydrated. There are no fast fixes for any health issue to be found in a bottle full of chemicals.

Talc is white-gray mineral powder used as a baby powder. Moms might use it to keep their baby's skin smooth and dry, especially in the diaper area, but long-term use can produce the same effects as those of asbestos.

These ingredients hardly sound appropriate for tender baby skin. So what can you do to avoid these dangerous baby products?

First, read the ingredients and look them up online if you have to. Find out what they are and what they do. Are they really essential, ostensibly for health purposes, or is

the effect merely cosmetic, such as coloring and fragrance?

Second, find reputable companies that offer organic and 100 percent natural products. Since there is no regulation for organic bath and body products, you might need to do some research to find legitimately natural products. You should also aim for brands made in Europe rather than the Far East if you do need to buy overseas-sourced products. French, English and Swiss botanicals, for example, are known for their quality.

Third, try your hand at making some of your own baby products. If you make your own then you know exactly what they contain and you can feel comfortable that they are safe and as natural as possible. Just remember to make them in small quantities so that they stay fresh. This is one of the reasons for so many chemicals in commercial products: preservatives and shelf-stabilizers.

If you or your baby or child has sensitive skin, it is time to take matters into your own hands and start creating your own self-care products. Of course, a good diet will also help to alleviate some allergies and poor skin, but making your own small batches of self-care products might be one of the easiest places to start. Then keep track of your successes and results.

Many parents are now finding that it is easy, more cost effective, and safer to make their own baby products with natural ingredients. By stocking your pantry with a few key natural ingredients, you can make all sorts of natural baby products for baby, or the whole family as none of you really need a lot of chemicals on your face and skin.

You don't have to be a chemist to create luxurious, health-friendly products that are all natural. Here are a few easy recipes for natural baby products that are sure to work and will be a pleasure to use:

Baby Bath Milk

1 cup milk
1/4 cup corn starch
1/3 cup finely ground oats
2-3 drops lavender, rose, or chamomile essential oils

Mix ingredients together and put in a shaker style bottle.

To use, sprinkle a small amount in warm bath water. Refrigerate any remainder and use within four days. If baby has sensitive skin, leave out the essential oils.

Natural Baby Oil

1 cup Grapeseed or Apricot Kernel oil
1-2 vitamin E capsules
4-6 drops lavender or chamomile essential oils

Squeeze the vitamin E capsules into the oils and mix together. Store in a dark-colored bottle and use as a bath or massage oil.

All-Natural Baby Wipes Solution

- 1 cup water
- 1/4 cup Aloe Vera Juice
- 1 tablespoon Apple Cider Vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Calendula Oil
- 1 teaspoon grated, unscented soap
- 2 drops Lavender Oil
- 2 drops Tea Tree Oil

Mix in a jar and then pour over organic cloth wipes or paper towels.

This baby wipe solution is anti-fungal and great for discouraging yeast diaper rashes. The Tea Tree oil has powerful antiseptic properties too, so it is great to have on hand to treat acne outbreaks. If you or your baby has very sensitive skin, you might want to omit the lavender and tea tree oils.

Homemade Talc-Free Baby Powder

- 1/2 cup corn starch
- 1/2 cup Arrowroot powder
- 1 tablespoon dried ground chamomile
- 1 tablespoon dried ground lavender
- 1/4 cup finely ground oats

Blend well and put in a shaker-style bottle. Now you can powder your baby's bottom safely. If your child has sensitive skin, you can omit the lavender. Using these natural products in your household should keep baby clean and fresh smelling, and free from diaper rash. Family members of all ages will also be able to use these products for their own personal toilette.

If you are still worried about the issue of diaper rash, in the next chapter, we will look at the best ways to deal with it in an all-natural manner.

CHAPTER 3: NATURAL METHODS TO TREAT DIAPER RASH

Almost every baby who is in diapers will experience diaper rash at least once. If you want to avoid harmful ingredients that are contained in many conventional diaper rash treatments, there are a number of all-natural solutions to this problem that you can try.

The first thing to remember is that when it comes to many medical conditions, it is really true that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

You can minimize your baby's chances of getting diaper rash in the first place by using cloth diapers with a breathable cover (wool or cotton for example). Cloth-diapered babies generally experience less diaper rash. This is probably because they are more obviously wet and get changed more quickly once they go to the bathroom. It can also be because disposable diapers are heavily laden with a variety of chemicals to grab moisture and lock it away, but at what price to your baby's skin and overall health?

Cloth diapers are also more breathable than the heavy disposable ones with plastic covers and elastic around the legs. More free movement in a cloth diaper that has give to it, compared to a plastic-coated diaper, might also explain why babies who wear cloth diapers are much less prone to diaper rash.

Changing your baby as soon as he or she wets or soils the diaper is the best habit you can get into once your baby is born in order to keep all irritants from your child's skin.

You can also experiment with Elimination Communication (E.C.), learning your child's habits with regard to bodily functions so that you can "catch" them without having to worry about a diaper. This will eventually lead to successful potty training. Doing E.C. even part time will have many benefits, such as reduced diaper usage, which can save from 2,500 to 3,000 diapers per child each year they are in diapers.

If your baby is using disposable diapers, try switching to cloth for a while and see if the rash improves. If you are already using cloth diapers, remove the cover and let him wear pinned on pre-folded diapers so that lots of air can circulate around his skin and buttocks.

If you have been washing cloth diapers yourself in the washing machine, consider changing laundry detergents and double rinsing the diapers, adding a half cup vinegar to the first rinse to see if that helps. Many laundry products are full of unnecessary chemicals that your child's tender skin might react to, so consider switching to an all-natural brand like Ecover or Mrs. Meyers.

If you are practicing E.C, then removing the diaper completely for as long as possible during the day will help the rash heal more quickly. Take off the diaper and watch baby closely for signs that he needs to eliminate. Sit him on a potty or hold him over a toilet

or sink, make a "psst" sound and see what happens (see our green new moms or green mother's guide for more detailed instructions on how to get started with E.C., depending on the age of your child).

Sometimes diaper rash is caused by an overgrowth of candida (yeast). Suspect yeast if the rash is bright red and shiny, especially if you are nursing and also have signs of candida overgrowth (pain during nursing, vaginal yeast). Giving your baby acidophilus powder can help. Read package labels for dosage instructions. If you are nursing, also take the powder yourself.

Acidophilus is safe for young babies. Older babies who are on solids can also eat yogurt with live cultures to get the benefit of this powerful probiotic. Remove sugar and white flour from the baby's diet to help starve the yeast of its sustenance.

You can also make a rinse for your baby's bottom from one cup of water mixed with one teaspoon of baking soda to help kill candida. When you are finished bathing him, pour this rinse over their bottom and then pat dry.

Don't use commercial baby wipes when your baby has a rash; as the skin will be at its most sensitive then, these wipes can dry out the skin and make it worse. Instead, rinse your baby after each diaper change with just plain water, or the baking soda rinse suggested above.

If the rash is dry and scaly, open a capsule of Vitamin E and apply it to the rash. Calendula is also healing and is available as a topical ointment. Kaolin powder, made from clay, can help if the rash is weepy and oozing.

If you have just started baby on solid foods, you will know to start slowly and introduce foods in a structured way. You may notice that your child may have a temporary rash as its skin adjusts to the pH changes of its urine and stool.

If your baby has a rash around his anus like a bull's eye every time he eats a certain food, take it out of his diet for a while, as he may be sensitive to it. You can try reintroducing it in a few months to see if his digestive system reacts differently.

If your baby has severe or chronic diaper rash, suspect food allergies. Talk with your baby's pediatrician about an elimination diet. The typical suspects are dairy, wheat, corn, eggs and soy.

Keeping a food diary of exactly what you feed baby can provide some clues, but the most effective way to determine if your child has food sensitivities is to take these most common allergens out of his diet. Then introduce them back one at a time, watching for reactions. If you see one, then you should avoid giving it and find a substitute.

If your baby develops other symptoms along with his rash, such as fever or irritability, or if the rash looks infected and doesn't respond to care at home, check with the doctor as soon as possible.

Make sure your cloth diapers are not as stiff as cardboard. Many families will dry them on the line in the fresh air, but you can make your own dryer sachets to leave them soft and scented.

Lavender Dryer Sachets

1 small muslin drawstring bag
(you can usually get these at craft stores)
Dried Lavender
2-3 drops lavender essential oil

Fill the muslin bag with the dried lavender and add the essential oil. Close the bag tightly and throw it in the dryer along with your baby clothes. They will be super soft and they will smell great.

Remember that skin is the largest organ of the body, and has the ability to absorb many substances that come into contact with it. (This is why the nicotine patch and the birth control patch work. It is because the medication is delivered transdermally, that is, through the skin.)

Since the skin is able to absorb so many things that it comes into contact with, do you want to expose your baby and the rest of your family to potentially harmful chemicals, or provide safe and natural ingredients?

Most parents would agree that ensuring your baby products and all personal hygiene products being completely natural will be worth it. While you will need to spend the time making up the small, fresh batches, you will save money making these and other recipes because these are items that you will already have on hand anyway.

You will also avoid the sticker shock of women being charge a third more for the exact same products that men use, such as soap and shampoo, and the supermarket sticker shock of reaching for an item you forgot in the drug store and then having to pay an additional 25 percent when you buy it with the rest of your groceries.

Keep track of the money you save even as you watch the improvement in your child's skin, and yours, as you use safe, natural toiletries that you make at home.

Making our own baby products with all natural ingredients is fun to do, it saves money and, most importantly, it ensures that our babies' delicate immune systems and skin are not unduly taxed by harmful product ingredients.

Since most of the ingredients listed above can be bought at natural food stores and supermarkets, you can pick some up on your regular shopping trips, with no need to hunt for any special items.

Another common issue babies and children need to deal with is difficulty in sleeping. In the next chapter, we will look at natural ways to help your child (and you) fall

asleep.

CHAPTER 4: HOME REMEDIES FOR SLEEPLESSNESS

One major concern for a large number of stressed parents is getting their children to bed at a reasonable time and without too much fuss. As infants, they may not settle down right away. As older children, they might have a hard time adapting to a set routine.

If you are stressed, you might also experience some sleep problems yourself. Or, you might find that your spouse has suddenly begun to struggle with this issue.

Medications designed to help with insomnia carry a high risk of side effects and even harmful results as severe as death from an overdose. Therefore, you should definitely avoid over-the-counter and prescription sleep aids except as a last resort for your child and you, and try some natural remedies for sleeplessness.

There are several issues involved with sleep patterns, such as having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, waking in the middle of the night, or waking too early in the morning.

Most people need eight to nine hours of sleep in order to repair the wear and tear on their bodies. Infants can sleep up to 18 hours a day, while small children can sleep 10 to 12 hours.

Good sleep habits, no matter what your age or how many hours you need to sleep, are the best way to help your whole family get the sleep they need. Some of the best natural sleep strategies will require some scheduling changes, while others can help you create the right environment to go to sleep.

In some cases, it might be an issue of diet and eating habits, and perhaps some natural herbal remedies to help you or your little ones fall asleep.

If you are a new mom, you will want to have a routine for your child as quickly as possible in order to make your own life manageable, and to help others who might be looking after your child know what to expect. Infants do have a schedule of their own, of course, but by picking up their cues that they are hungry, you will also pick up cues that they need to go to the bathroom (usually after they eat) and when they wish to sleep (usually after they have been active).

Once you have a routine, you should try to stick to it, and resist any changes that will disrupt it. Some parents will allow their children to stay up late at the weekends, but then wonder why their children can barely get up on Monday morning, and drag through the rest of the week miserably. Even a couple of hours of missed sleep can make a real difference. Just think of how you feel when we turn the clocks forward for Daylight Saving Time and you will have an idea of how powerful even one hour of lost sleep can be.

Some parents even allow their children to have a TV and DVD player or computer in their bedroom, or have one in their own room. Busy executives will also take their work into the bedroom with them, and then wonder why they are so tired or have a hard time falling asleep.

If you want to get a good night's sleep, make sure your bedroom is for sleeping. Create an atmosphere conducive to sleep, and set a routine for yourself that might include some light reading, but nothing too stimulating. Washing your face, brushing your teeth, having a bath or shower, getting into fresh and comfortable night clothes, can all help signal to your body and mind that it is time to sleep. The same will be true for your children.

Try to choose a time you can adhere to each night, and stick to it as much as you can. Bedtime rituals are another good way to get little ones to go to bed. You can find some time to relax together, read some books, say their prayers, singing a soothing song, and saying good night, all while getting them to bed.

These activities can all become part of their schedule and they will appreciate the rhythm of knowing what they are expected to do and what is going to be happening during this time. Do not expect them to just go to bed by themselves while you continue doing chores or work you have brought home.

Also when it comes to bed, you don't want children to associate being naughty with bed time. If bedtime becomes a means of punishment, or being sent to their room is seen as unhappy banishment, you may be setting yourself up for problems getting them to bed peacefully at other times.

Some children with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) have been noted to sleep very little, which can be a real trial for parents who need a solid eight hours. A routine throughout the year, on school days and non-school days, even throughout the summer vacation, can go a long way towards helping with this issue. (See Annabelle Stevens' guides for more information on ADHD.)

Exercise is a great thing to do every day, but avoid doing it for at least an hour before bedtime. It tends to boost mood and give you more energy, a good thing during the day, especially in the morning, but not so great at night if you want you or your children to get to bed on time.

Other things to avoid will be certain foods near bedtime. Avoid eating too much sugar or caffeine at night. Things such as chocolate and soda contain both of these ingredients and can make anyone jumpy and excited. Studies have shown that the effects of caffeine can prevent people from sleeping well for up to 18 hours. They can still fall asleep, but won't get the restful, high-quality sleep they need, REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep. (See our guides on natural treatments for insomnia and the importance of sleep for your health and weight for more information.)

If your child is hungry before bedtime, give them a small sandwich and some warm

milk. You might also give them some warm, not hot, chamomile tea with a little honey in it.

If nothing else is working, you can also try natural sleep supplements for children like Hyland's Calms Forte 4 Kids Sleep Aid. Rescue Remedy with 5 Bach Flower essences can also calm them and eliminate stress prior to bedtime, making the transition easier. This also works well for adults, as does wild lettuce, and valerian.

In setting the mood for sleep you can try some of the following:

A good pillow.

As adults, we try to find something comfortable for us, and try out several pillows at the store. Let your child do the same. Or buy them pillows specifically for children. The right pillow can make a huge difference to the quality of sleep.

Essential oils.

Lavender oil or another soothing aromatherapy scent might help as well. It can relax and soothe and create the right mood for sleep. There are plug-ins for electric outlets, scented pillows that can be refreshed with a few drops of oil each night, or small infusers to help fill the room with your chosen, relaxing scent. In your child's room, look for aromatherapy sets specifically for children.

A white noise or sound machine.

If you live in an urban environment, you might be having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep because of noises surrounding you. A white noise machine can help block some of these sounds without being intrusive, to help you get a good night's sleep.

Everyone has trouble falling asleep at some point in their lives, but you do not want the new pattern to become a bad habit. If you or any of your loved ones experience some unusual sleep disturbances lasting more than three nights, try one of these natural remedies and home treatments and see how much easier it is to enjoy a good night of high quality sleep.

Other issues that small children have which can keep them awake at night are teething, gum and mouth issues. Let's have a look at home remedies for this area in our next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: NATURAL REMEDIES FOR ORAL HYGIENE

There are a number of issues from which children will suffer, starting from infancy onwards, that can cause a lot of oral discomfort. Fortunately, there are a number of home remedies that can help relieve symptoms and clear up the issue.

THRUSH

One of the most common appears in infancy and is called thrush, a yeast infection that can inhabit a baby's mouth. In some cases the baby will also have a diaper rash caused by the excess yeast in its system.

Thrush can be painful and make feeding difficult for a baby, leaving them in pain as they try to eat. At other times, the baby won't seem to be bothered much by the thrush, but your child can keep on getting re-infected if they use a pacifier, or if you are breastfeeding. The infection can be passed back and forth between you, making it difficult to eradicate the infection completely unless you are both treated for it.

As we discussed in reference to diaper rash, there are a number of ways to treat a yeast infection to help nip it in the bud. Here are the best ways to deal with thrush in your child's mouth.

Better Hygienic Measures

Yeast is a very hardy fungus, so better hygiene will be key in getting rid of this unwanted pest, stopping its recurrence, and above all, preventing it from spreading to other members of the family.

If you are a new mom who is breastfeeding your baby, you must disinfect all cloth items that are associated with nursing, including your nursing bras, nursing pads, burp cloths and bibs. You should also disinfect cloth diapers and your panties in hot water, and do a double rinse. Add vinegar to the first rinse to help kill yeast and prevent irritation of sensitive tissues from detergents. For the second wash, you can use plain water and then dry the clothes on the line in the sun.

Wash your hands well with hot soapy water after changing diapers or using the toilet. Wash anything that touches baby's mouth (toys, pacifiers, and so on) with vinegar. When it comes to bottles and nipples, these should be boiled or steam-sterilized in the microwave at least once. If the thrush comes back even after these measures, then you should throw away all bottle nipples, cleaning items and more until the yeast infection finally goes away.

Baking Soda

Baking soda is a natural treatment for thrush. Mom can make a paste of baking soda and water and apply it to her nipples and then rinse it off before feeding the baby.

Baby can also take baths with a little baking soda sprinkled in the water to help heal any diaper rash. Baking soda works by creating an alkaline environment that is inhospitable to yeast.

Vinegar

Vinegar kills thrush also, though for the opposite reason to baking soda. In this case it is because it is so acidic. As it can be irritating to the skin however, use with care. One or two tablespoons of white vinegar can be added to a cup of water and applied to Mom's nipples with a cotton ball several times a day to keep the thrush away.

Acidophilus Cultures

Since yeast often proliferates in the digestive tract when antibiotics are administered and the natural flora is disturbed, acidophilus can help put things back into balance. It is a probiotic and is easy to enjoy in a powder, capsules or even certain kinds of yogurt. Capsules are probably easiest for you as a mom. For baby, you can try yogurt, or the powdered form. Put a little on a clean finger and allow your baby to lick or suck it. Acidophilus does not sound that attractive, but it tastes very pleasant and is safe for infants.

If you or your baby has a particularly stubborn case of thrush, speak with a health care practitioner you trust. You or your child may have an underlying immune dysfunction caused by another health issue, such as a food allergy or diabetes. You might also want to watch how much starch and yeasty foods you are eating in your diet, and see if symptoms improve.

No one likes to see their child in pain or hungry. Eating a well-balanced diet and being extremely hygiene-conscious can stop thrush from ever forming in the first place.

What if that white in your child's mouth, however, is actually a tooth poking through?

TEETHING REMEDIES

Natural teething remedies can help soothe inflamed gums and relieve the discomfort of the first or second set of teeth coming in. You can find a variety of treatments in your local drug store and the health food store. Homeopathic tooth gel can be helpful, but some contain honey, which is not suitable for children under the age of six months. (It does work very well for teething puppies, however.)

There are a number of things you can try at home to soothe the ache for your child. One is to wet and freeze a clean cotton wash cloth and let baby gum it until it defrosts. Other people suggest teething biscuits, rusks, or Zwieback toasts, to help the teeth come through. You just need to watch for any artificial ingredients and sugar in these items. A refrigerated bagel cut into quarters can also work well. Give them whole wheat or pumpernickel for even more density and nutrition.

Another remedy to try is a wedge of apple to gum on. It tastes great and can help your child's urge to bite down without becoming a sippy mess. Just be sure you remove all trace of the seeds in the center of the wedge, since they can scrape the gums. Cold

applesauce straight from the fridge can also help soothe irritation and tastes great, too. Another suggestion is a frozen banana, cold and hard at the same time, but not so hard that it can cause damage.

A baby bottle with a small amount of water in it that has been frozen upside down also works well as a way for them to suck, chew and soothe their sore gums. A large whole carrot that has been washed and peeled will also work well. Do not give small baby carrots as your child can choke on them too easily. The American Dental Association recommends a cold metal spoon to help the teeth break through the gums.

All of these home remedies work, and the edible ones can add valuable nutrition to your child's diet as well, but if baby isn't hungry, or your child needs to watch his or her weight, then using the non-edible remedies will work just fine. If you do give your child a spoon, banana, bagel or other large object to chew on, be sure that they are not left unattended for even a moment, as these can present a choking hazard.

BAD BREATH

Bad breath can plague us as any age, and is the result of bacteria accumulating in the mouth, between the teeth, on the gums, the tongue, and the mucus membranes inside the mouth.

There are many effective remedies for bad breath on the market, such as Listerine, but many of these products contain large amounts of alcohol and are not recommended for children. You can use Listerine Zero to get rid of the alcohol issue, but many of these products are also very expensive.

As with many health conditions, an ounce of prevention in the case of bad breath is worth a pound, or thousands of dollars, of cure. This is because cavities can form in a bacteria-laden mouth and cause tooth decay. Even worse, if plaque accumulates, it can cause gingivitis and other serious oral health conditions that can lead to tooth or even bone loss in the jaw and result in extremely expensive dental bills as people with these conditions try to save their teeth, or need to get partial plates or full dentures as a result of tooth loss.

Flossing is easy and inexpensive, and helps clean between the teeth along the gum line, massaging the whole area. Waxed dental floss can glide in and out between tightly-spaced teeth easily. There are also gum massagers and even small mini-brushes which can be used between teeth at the gum line to brush them and keep them clean.

A good electric tooth brush such as the ones by Oral B may have small-looking heads, but studies have shown that they are able to get into tight spaces at the back of your mouth and along the gum line better than similar brushes.

You should avoid the inexpensive battery-operated electric toothbrushes with the dual action heads that vibrate back and forth in a pincer motion. A study that came out in March 2012 shows that the ones with this dual action were responsible for weakening

and even breaking teeth. The heads were often faulty as well because of the odd pincer motion and therefore did not clean teeth as well as other methods.

As the main goal is to prevent cavities, you should ensure that you and your children have good brushing habits, brushing at least twice a day, once in the morning and once at bedtime. If you can remember to take two minutes to brush after each meal, so much the better. If you don't have time, you could give your mouth a quick rinse with mouthwash in order to be able to sluice out food particles and residue from your mouth.

As for toothpastes, the leading brand is Tom's of Maine if you are interested in something that is all-natural and contains no harmful chemicals. It should be safe and gentle enough even for children to use. Avoid any tooth products with cartoon characters on them; read the labels and you will wonder why they give so many dire warnings as to not allowing children to use these items unsupervised. If they are that dangerous, then common sense would dictate that you not use them at all.

Oral bacteria have been discovered to thrive in a dry mouth, so be sure you and your family are keeping yourselves hydrated with fresh, clean water every day. Avoid sugary drinks, including fruit juices, bottled sports drinks and pre-prepared smoothies. Instead, you can make your own for a fraction of the cost and keep control over the amount of sugar in your child's diet.

Install a water filter on your sink tap, or get a Brita jug, and refill plastic water bottles, or get durable metal water bottles for the whole family. Scientists are just now beginning to recognize just how dangerous plastic water bottles can be in terms of the chemicals involved, with a study published in April 2012 showing a link between phthalates and diabetes in adults. A metal water bottle is safe, can last for years, and therefore cut down on thousands of water bottles in landfills or being recycled. You also do not need to worry about plastics or their coatings leaching into the water you and your family drink.

Avoiding sugary snacks, especially before bed, and brushing your teeth and rinsing well will also help prevent cavities from forming and the germs that can cause bad breath.

But remember that odor and bacteria do not just collect on the teeth and gums, but the tongue and mucus membranes as well. Some people have begun to buy special tongue cleaners, but you can do a good job just with your toothbrush each day. Brush it lightly as far back as you can go without choking, and don't forget to also give the underside a brushing. As for the mucus membranes in your mouth, mouthwash should be able to help keep down the bacteria and odors if you use it frequently and give it a good swish all around your mouth on a regular basis.

If you have recently had a cold or flu, be doubly careful with your oral hygiene products so that you do not re-infect yourself. Treat yourself to a new toothbrush, and if you use bottled mouthwash, do not swig directly out of the bottle. Use a small cup

instead, and be sure to keep that very clean as well.

If you want to make your own tooth care products, there are a number of all natural remedies that will work very well, and also be items that you buy anyway, thus saving you a good deal of money.

Green tea can serve as an excellent mouthwash when used cold. Keep a small amount on hand in a bottle and use within three days to keep your mouth clean and fresh. (See our guide to green tea for more information on the health benefits of this wonderful Asian beverage.)

Another natural remedy is fennel seed, which you can chew and eat at any time to freshen your breath and help with any digestive issues. If you are a vegetarian or vegan, they are also handy to have on hand to add to Italian pasta sauce to give that authentic Italian sausage taste, but with none of the meat.

Another item from the spice rack that you can chew is star anise, from which the distinctive taste of licorice is derived. This is a great breath freshener for adults, who should suck on it carefully. It is a bit too large and spiky to give to children, however.

Moving on to less pleasant tasting, but no less effective natural remedies, a rinse and gargle with warm water, ginger and lemon will kill a broad spectrum of bacteria. Use about 1 teaspoon of each per 6 ounces of water.

You can also use sea salt in the same proportion, or hydrogen peroxide. It all depends on how dirty you feel your mouth is, and what flavors you can tolerate.

A paste made with water and baking soda can help whiten teeth, serve as toothpaste and also freshen the mouth when you hold it there for a time.

Avoid coffee, beer and wine, as they have a tendency to leave a residue on teeth that causes staining as well as bacteria formation.

So if you want to try any of these homemade remedies for healthy teeth and gums and fresh breath, start with a professional cleaning at your dentist, and then keep your mouth clean with these tips.

If your child has been suffering from oral infections like thrush, be sure to treat it first, and then address their oral care. Massaging their gums with some hydrogen peroxide can help if their teeth are breaking through, to relieve the pain, and also keep the mouth clean.

Avoid putting sugary juices like apple juice in their baby bottle, and remember that even milk contains certain sugars (lactose, for example), so give them some fresh water to help rinse out their mouth if they are still awake at the end of their feeding time.

No one likes to have bad breath, so starting your children off early with good oral

hygiene habits can make a real difference to their dental health later in life.

One of the most common health conditions every person has to face in their lives is a cold. Let's look at some natural home remedies to help deal with colds and flu next.

CHAPTER 6: NATURAL REMEDIES FOR COLDS

The common cold is just that, common to many people in the world from the time that they are young. If you are a new parent, you will naturally be very concerned with your child when they start to get colds and even flu.

Children in particular seem to be germ magnets, and yes, they do catch a cold, but not from the cold weather; rather from the germs that surround them at school and other areas where large numbers of people congregate. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure when it comes to colds and flu. (To learn more about the difference between the two and how to treat both effectively, you might be interested in Evelyn Trimborn's guide on colds and flu.)

The best way to take care of these illnesses is to prevent them with good nutrition and hand-washing habits. Despite our best efforts, however, all children will come down with a cold occasionally.

The advantages of natural remedies are, among other things, that they are generally safer than over-the-counter remedies, less expensive and easier to administer. In addition, there is really no way to cure the common cold other than to treat the symptoms until they subside.

Here are a few suggestions on the best ways to help ease your child's cold. In many cases, these remedies can also be used for the whole family, to help you feel better sooner.

If your child has a fever, many parents try to bring down the fever quickly, but it is the body's way to try to get rid of the illness. If it is only a degree or two above normal, just keep an eye on your child. Unless your child is listless and not responding to you normally, they should be fine. (See more detailed information on how to deal with fevers in the next chapter.)

Once your child has a cold, will need to confine them to bed and give them plenty of fluids. Don't allow them to watch too much TV, but read to them or play some quiet games for a short time. Spend time with your child, but do take precautions as far as you are able in order to avoid spreading germs to other members of the household.

Treat the sick room as just that, the sick room, and try to keep the area around the bed as clean as possible. Wash your hands often, and have your child do the same. Use paper tissues instead of hankies to prevent re-infection or infection if anyone handles them.

If they are sneezing and producing a lot of mucus, have your child blow their nose or sneeze into their hand and then wash their hands carefully with soap and warm water. In this way they will not only prevent re-infection, they will avoid rubbing and

squeezing their nose with tissues and making it sore.

Sit them in the bathtub and allow the warm water to steam open their sinuses. Have them wash their face and hands to cut down on the germs in those areas.

Have your child rest as much as possible, and eat as normally as possible. Some people say to starve a cold and feed a fever, based on the old wives' tale that this can help, but your child's appetite should really be your guide.

Feed them light meals with plenty of protein. Warm, nourishing soups without too much salt will definitely hit the spot, especially good old-fashioned chicken soup. Also encourage your child to enjoy citrus juices, rich in vitamin C, kiwi fruits (which contain more vitamin C than oranges), and pumpkin seeds, which are rich in zinc, which is now thought to help ward off colds, and lessen the duration of any colds that arise.

If your child has a sore throat, they might not feel much like eating, but warm soup should help steam open the sinuses and soothe inflamed areas. If their throat is very sore, try to ease it with warm salt water gargles. You can add some baking soda as well. Honey lemon tea is also nice. Just squeeze a little fresh lemon juice into a mug of warm/hot water and add a teaspoon of honey.

All of these tried and tested home remedies have been proven to work, and nourishing soups in particular help to keep your child hydrated and can speed up the healing process.

Avoid giving your child decongestants and antihistamines when he has a cold. These have been proven to have little effect on colds, and may even be harmful in terms of their side effects. As the mucus relief drugs on the market have been proven useless in a number of studies, save your money. Instead of using these expensive yet ineffective over-the-counter remedies, try menthol rub, Olbas oil, or Tiger balm to lessen chest and nasal congestion. Just be sure to wash your hands after touching it, and avoid it anywhere near the eye area.

Using acupressure may ease the symptoms of a cold, and your child may also enjoy it. Consult a guidebook on acupressure and follow the suggestions for targeting the bladder, large intestine and lung pressure points in order to clear the cold and its symptoms more quickly.

Aromatherapy in the form of inhaled essential oils such as eucalyptus will also help your child's symptoms, especially at night when it can be hard to sleep because of a stuffed-up nose. A couple of drops on a hankie tucked inside the pillow case can help them breathe more easily.

Change the pillowcases and sheets every couple of days and also change your child's toothbrush when the cold symptoms have disappeared. This will prevent re-infection, and help improve your child's oral hygiene at the same time.

These are just a few of the things you can do to relieve symptoms if your child has a

cold. You can also try them yourself when you fall ill, to see if they help you feel better and recover from the cold more quickly.

As we said above, there are different schools of thought regarding fever and what it can mean for your child. Let's take a closer look at this in our next chapter.

CHAPTER 7: NATURAL REMEDIES FOR FEVERS

Fever is a way for the body to show that it has been invaded by an intruder that poses a threat to its well-being. Many parents panic as soon as their child has a fever, but it can be a part of the natural healing process when a person has come down with a cold, flu, or other bug.

Most of the time, fever should be left alone. Naturopathic and traditional health care practitioners believe that fevers which are brought down artificially can prolong illness and lead to more cases of sickness. They believe it is the body's ally in fighting infection since it slows down pathogens due to the increased heat making the body a less hospitable environment for it to multiply and thrive.

However, if your child is experiencing a very high fever, or is so uncomfortable that he cannot rest, you might attempt one or two of the following suggestions to see if they make a difference.

The first thing you might want to do before treating a fever is to see a Naturopath, Homeopath or other licensed health care provider who specializes in natural remedies. In this way you can educate yourself before you start using them on your baby. Lemon balm leaf, chamomile, peppermint, licorice and elder flower have been traditionally used to treat fevers and are generally regarded as safe in the proper dosages.

For babies who are breastfeeding, it is best if the mother takes the herbs herself in order to pass along the medicinal properties to her nursing infant. You can also buy herbal formulations with dosages designed for children at health food stores. Echinacea and goldenseal have been relied upon for centuries to assist the body's immune system. These are also available in children's formulas if you want a complete medicine without having to get out the mortar and pestle.

One food you might want to consider is garlic. It is not only said to be heart healthy, it has antibacterial properties as well. Make a large batch of chicken soup with garlic, and serve it to your child. It should be homemade soup whenever possible, since many canned varieties lack nutrition and are also full of preservatives and salt.

Another herbal remedy to try is ginger tea. It can help with a fever, and is also great for stomach aches and nausea. Ginger has warming properties and is excellent as a tea with honey and lemon, especially if your child feels chilled. You can easily make a weak tea with grated fresh ginger and hot water. Add a little raw honey to sweeten, but do not give it to any child under the age of six months.

Homeopathic remedies are often effective for infant fevers, but the remedy must match the individual child's specific symptoms, including their emotional state. Some will take longer to work than others, leading to restlessness and overdoing things

before they are well as a result. Check a homeopathic reference book to find out the differences between the remedies, or call a Homeopath for suggestions and see what works.

Be sure to keep your child well hydrated with clear liquids. If the child is still nursing, offer the breast frequently so that baby will get plenty of fluids and the natural immune factors contained in breast milk. Some babies who are eating solids will revert to nursing for a time. This is completely normal and fine for a few days as long as mom is still producing high-quality milk.

Last, the most important way to handle fever is to give your child lots of love and affection during their illness, though always being cautious to avoid spreading the germs in the household or beyond.

All of these home remedies will work, but keep in mind that if your infant is younger than three months old, it is a good idea to call the pediatrician about any fever. Additionally, if your child appears listless, lethargic, is acting unusual (such as not responding to your efforts to play with him), having difficulty breathing or complaining of a stiff neck, call the doctor immediately.

Remember also that meningitis can mimic the symptoms of a cold or flu in its early stages, but can become lethal quite quickly. Be familiar with the symptoms and keep track of the spread of illness in your child's school and the area at large.

Adults can get it too, of course, but there is a vaccination for it now that has been approved in particular for older patients. Another common health condition that can accompany a cold and flu, or appear on its own, is a headache. In the next chapter we will look at the most healthy natural ways to treat one.

CHAPTER 8: HOME REMEDIES FOR HEADACHES

When you think of a headache, you probably think immediately of a throbbing or sharp pain in your head, perhaps even a migraine. There are different kinds of headaches, such as tension, cluster, and migraine headaches. They can be acute or chronic. Acute headaches are defined as a one-time headache that lasts for only a short amount of time. Chronic headaches can be defined as occurring often, with the headaches lasting for longer amounts of time.

Headaches can begin in various places in the head, and spread down into the sinuses, along the jaw line, as well as into the neck. Many people can get relief from aspirin and other pain relievers, but this is not an option for people who are allergic to them, or who are concerned about the risk of side effects, such as gastrointestinal bleeding from aspirin and liver damage from acetaminophen (the active ingredient in Tylenol).

Treating a headache successfully will often have a lot to do with the reason for the headache in the first place. Some of these reasons include, but are not limited to, tension, stress, eye strain, dehydration, low blood sugar, and sinusitis, as well as being prone to migraines.

Finding the remedy to help relieve the symptoms of the headache will be easier if you have some idea of what is causing it. Then you can pinpoint one of the many home remedies that can be used to treat headaches effectively, and try it for the particular kind of headache.

Three of the main treatments you can use at home easily are aromatherapy, exercise, and massage.

Aromatherapy is known as one of the most powerful home remedies for headaches. Aromatherapy uses powerful scents from natural sources to help improve health conditions. There are some scents that are known to enhance or alter mood, and some scents that can help relieve tension headaches. These include sandalwood, peppermint, eucalyptus, and lavender, which can be used alone or combined. You can try these scents in candles, diffusers, wall plug-ins, massage oils, or soaps and other personal care products.

Having said that, you might want to invest in all-natural essential oils rather than the less expensive and less pure products, which may make headaches grow worse due to impurities.

Regular exercise can help reduce the number of headaches, and/or help cope with the pain more easily. This method is especially effective for those who suffer from migraines. You may even try doing some exercise while suffering from a migraine, which may help to ease the pain. You can begin by starting to walk half an hour a day

and try to build yourself up to the 10,000 steps a day that is recommended for all Americans who wish to keep fit.

If you are in the middle of a headache, you can try taking a brisk walk outside. This seems to work because the exercise helps the body to release endorphins, the body's natural painkillers.

You will do well with this remedy if you ease into it. By starting something suddenly, you run the risk of making your headache worse, so start slowly and build up gradually, especially if you have not done any exercise for a while. Many people who suffer from migraines lock themselves away in a dark room until the pain passes.

Adding exercise to the daily routine helps relieve tension and stress and therefore is likely to reduce the chances of getting a headache in the first place. Other exercises that can be beneficial and do not put too much stress and strain on the body include swimming, yoga and tai chi. They help maintain flexibility and reduce stress, and are low impact.

Low-impact aerobics can also help, but again, it is important to start slowly and work your way up to a full 30-minute routine, rather than try to do the whole thing when you have not exercised for years, and then end up sidelining yourself for a month because of injury.

Yoga is great for calming both mind and body, and you might find several positions that are particularly good for relieving headache. The breathing aspect of yoga will also help improve your lung function and circulation, oxygenating the body more extensively to help deliver nutrients more efficiently to all parts of the body.

As with most medical conditions, headaches, and migraines in particular, can be caused by the foods you eat or don't eat. One of the most common headache and migraine triggers, for example, is Monosodium Glutamate, or MSG. It is a meat tenderizer and enhances the flavor of food, particularly Chinese food; however, it has also been linked to migraines and various other health issues. Unfortunately, since it is considered a natural flavoring because it is derived from the sugar beet, even reading the labels on the products you buy will not keep you safe.

Therefore, avoid any food that you do not cook yourself if you want to be certain that you are not eating anything that could provoke migraines. Keeping a food diary can be one of the best ways to trace your headache patterns to make the possible connection between your headaches and food. A daily diary can help you keep track of what you are eating, and a headache diary, particularly if you suffer from migraines, can help you identify possible food and activity triggers for your headaches, and the best methods you have found to relieve them.

Another effective natural remedy for migraines is massage, with or without essential oils and aromatherapy. You can rub your temples, around your sinus area, behind your ears, and the back of your neck. You can also rub certain parts of your head and your shoulders. Your spouse can also rub your upper back, and even up to

the top of your head. Some people have reported relief from migraines when they shampoo their hair and use warm, but not too hot water.

Other people use aromatic oils and menthol, and the Tiger Balm varieties that are designed for headache relief. If you use oils or Tiger Balm, be sure to keep your hands well away from your eyes and mouth. If you are performing massage on a child with a headache, this will be doubly important.

You can also use acupressure, pressing gently but firmly in the area where the base of the skull and neck join. You can also try putting pressure on your hand between your index finger and thumb. This can also work well for a toothache. A foot massage is also good for a headache because you will hit certain pressure points in your feet that will help trigger pain relief mechanisms in your brain and body, such as endorphins.

Depending on your health insurer, you may discover that it approves a variety of healing modalities. In this case you can determine how many visits you would be entitled to with a massage therapist. Other healing modalities might be included as well, including acupressure, acupuncture, herbal medicine, and more.

With all of the causes of headache, there can be just as many, if not more, treatments from which to choose; therefore, if you or a member of your family suffer from debilitating headaches, it may be time to start exploring them more deeply.

If you are a woman, one other thing to consider will be your hormones. You might find that your headaches appear at various points in your monthly cycle.

Other causes of headache might include tooth-grinding, especially in your sleep, known as bruxism. If you wake up in the morning not feeling rested, and have an aching head, jaw, or neck you might want to get a mouth guard to stop the grinding.

Headaches can be very inconvenient, and so painful as to be almost debilitating for some people. If you are concerned with the side effects of medications to treat headaches, especially migraines, it might be time to start looking at alternatives or additional treatments in the way that you treat headaches.

Headaches can affect us at any age, and once we start to narrow down the possible causes, it can be a great deal easier to find safe, effective relief. The same is true of various skin conditions that infants, children and adults can suffer from at various points in their lives. In the next chapter, we will look at one particularly bothersome skin condition you might need to treat at home, eczema.

CHAPTER 9: NATURAL WAYS TO TREAT ECZEMA AND ACNE

HOME REMEDIES FOR ECZEMA

Eczema is a common problem in infants and small children. It presents as a red, scaly rash that itches, and sometimes oozes when it blisters and breaks open. In some cases, it can even split the skin open completely, leaving the eczema sufferer prone to persistent cracking of the skin and infection.

It can be extremely uncomfortable and even miserable for children (and adults) to endure. It is itchy, unsightly, painful, and can make even the simplest tasks, such as gripping something or wearing long-sleeved garments, very difficult and uncomfortable. Thankfully, eczema can and often does respond very well to natural remedies, sometimes to the point of clearing up completely. In this chapter, we will discuss some of the most effective ways to deal with eczema, no matter what the age of the sufferer.

Many physicians are now starting to become convinced that eczema is mostly due to food allergies. If you can identify the allergen, you can avoid feeding it to your child, or eating it yourself.

Studies have shown that the most common allergens linked to eczema symptoms are dairy products, wheat, soy and corn. Incidentally, advocates of raw, unpasteurized milk claim that switching to it has cleared up some cases of eczema. This may or may not be true, but dairy is another food group that has been linked to eczema outbreaks.

Avoiding certain other foods such as peanuts, tomatoes, eggplant and shrimp (or even handling them) that have also been reported as causing eczema.

In the same way that you can avoid certain foods in order to clear up eczema symptoms, there are also a variety of things you can eat or supplements that you can take which can help alleviate the symptoms of eczema. These include essential fatty acids from Omega-3s, such as in fatty fish.

You can also find them in Evening Primrose Oil, Vitamin E, coconut oil, organic butter from grass-fed cows, and cod liver oil. Talk with your doctor about proper doses of these nutrients for your child and yourself if you would like to try them first to relieve eczema. Hand creams containing these oils can also help penetrate the skin and offer healing relief.

Oatmeal baths can be helpful to ease the itching, redness and dryness of eczema. You can make an oatmeal bath for pennies compared with buying in the store by grinding oats in your blender and then putting the oats into small muslin drawstring bags you can make yourself and reuse.

Place one in your bath water, and use tepid to warm water, not very hot water, in your bath. Don't over bathe your own skin or that of your child, or use anything other than pure soap, such as Castile soap. Once you or your child emerges from the tub, pat the skin dry gently, and then apply an all-natural baby oil or lotion, such as the baby oil recipe indicated earlier.

Avoid using harsh detergents when washing your child's clothing. Maggie's Soap Nuts work well. They are all-natural and not irritating to the skin. If you use any type of detergent, do a double rinse to remove any residues. Remember that as most commercial brands of laundry detergent are full of unnecessary chemicals, such as bleaches, optical whiteners and fragrance, avoid them whenever possible.

Another cause of dry skin can often be the medications that we take. For example, antibiotics can certainly change the flora of a person's body and lead to dry skin and yeast infections. You can counteract these symptoms through the use of probiotics, foods such as naturally fermented and cultured vegetables, including German sauerkraut, Korean kimchee fermented vegetables, and so forth. Kefir milk drink, yogurt and kombucha tea beverage, can all help put your digestive tract back into balance.

Other natural remedies to try to help boost the immune system and speed up healing include items containing zinc, and plenty of fresh, leafy green vegetables. Beware of any packaged, processed foods, and consider steering clear of glutens to determine if this might help alleviate the unpleasant symptoms of eczema.

Wash your hands with a gentle soap, and apply your own homemade lotion afterwards. Be sure to wear rubber gloves whenever you are doing household chores, and avoid wearing, or putting your child in, any wool clothing that might touch bare skin. You might find the wool rough, or be having an allergic reaction to the lanolin that naturally coats the wool.

Chinese medical practitioners also suggest avoiding spicy food, and too much seafood. A Chinese herbalist will have an array of items from which to choose to treat the symptoms of eczema, including various lotions that purify and balance, and creams containing volcanic soil or ash, rich in minerals, to help heal the skin.

Again, as every person's eczema triggers are different, you might want to keep a daily food diary and activity diary that can help you keep track of your eczema, or that of your child, and help you determine what is setting off the latest eczema attack. Your child might outgrow his eczema, or he might have it all his life.

As people can also develop eczema later in life, if you have strange blisters suddenly appearing on your hands and have not burned your finger or handled raw chili peppers, this could be a sign of eczema.

Another skin condition that mainly occurs when we are younger, but can also appear throughout our lives from our teenaged years onwards, is acne. Let's have a look at

home remedies for this embarrassing skin condition next.

HOME REMEDIES FOR ACNE

Acne is one of the most common and chronic skin disorders in the world and affects millions of people, but it is no less embarrassing even though so many other people also suffer from it. Acne affects every gender, race, and age. Research shows that it can appear in adults, and even infants, though it is most commonly seen in teenagers.

Acne is normally seen on the face, neck, chest and back, but it can spread to all parts of the body. Because it appears so commonly on the face, this condition is both annoying and embarrassing, and many people are eager to do whatever they can to hide the acne or get rid of it, though not always with the best results. Some people will pay upwards of \$30 per month for all sorts of lotions and potions, but in many cases, they are no more effective than many of the remedies you have right in your home.

There are many ways you can treat acne. Some of the more well-known natural acne treatments use powerful cleansers and oil-free moisturizers to stop the skin from being damaged. Some doctors will also recommend a modified diet, and perhaps even antibiotics, or the birth control pill for girls. This is because acne has been found to have a link with the hormonal activity in a woman's body, so the theory is that smoothing out the hormonal cycle will also settle the skin.

The obvious issue with this is that all birth control pills pose a risk of side effects, including blood clots, heart attack and stroke. Antibiotics also have a risk of side effects, including allergic reactions, and can make the digestive tract unbalanced. If they are taken at the same time as birth control pills which are being used to prevent conception (rather than to clear up the skin), they can interfere with the absorption of the birth control pills and potentially result in an unwanted pregnancy.

The simplest ways to prevent acne from developing is a good washing routine in the morning and night, and a good diet. You should care for your skin with pure soap, such as Castile soap and warm water when you wake up in the morning and before you go to bed at night. You should also keep your hands clean and your hair shampooed and clean in order to be sure that you are not transferring oils to your skin if you touch your hair and then your face. Acne will spread, so be sure to keep your hands clean, including the areas under the nails, and avoid touching your face.

Do not squeeze any pimples, as this can damage the skin and spread the infected pus to other parts of the face. Serious acne can also cause scarring, and there are few treatments that can improve the appearance of your skin once this happens. Many women, and even an increasing number of men, resort to using makeup to try to cover their acne or scarring.

With an active acne infection, this can be a disaster, because in most cases, the makeup will contain oils and be likely to clog pores even more. It can also spread the acne over the face as the makeup is spread over the skin. Therefore, whenever possible, keep the face clean and use only water-based make up, if you use it at all.

You might also try a mineral-based makeup, which will give you a natural look without a lot of oil or chemicals.

Even more important than what you put on your face is what you put into your body. A good diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables and unprocessed whole foods is one way to prevent acne from developing. This is why your doctor or nutritionist may recommend that you eat at least five servings of vegetables and fruit every day. You can get this in smoothies, fruit salad, and more (see Mara Michaels' guides on these subjects for lots of useful serving suggestions).

Avoid fast food or oily foods, and eat foods with natural healing properties. One of these is the healthy Omega 3 oils that you can find in flax seeds, sardines and other fatty fish.

Foods rich in vitamin A can help, since it has been shown to reduce levels of oil production in the skin. However, vitamin A should be taken with caution, since it has been shown to have adverse effects on skeletal formation, and has been linked to birth defects for women taking too much of it who then become pregnant.

You can avoid the use of vitamin A if you have an adequate intake of vitamin E. Beta carotene from orange-colored vegetables such as carrots and sweet potatoes has also been shown to be helpful.

Zinc has also been shown to be a good remedy for acne. It is most helpful in the prevention of acne formation, and has been shown to aid in the healing of blemishes and decreasing inflammation.

You can also use vitamin B6. It is an effective form of a natural acne remedy, especially for mid-cycle and premenstrual acne.

You may also want to try some herbal remedies. These remedies may include yellow dock, sarsaparilla, cleavers, and burdock. These are effective because they are powerful lymph and blood cleansers and can help purge infection in the body.

Water has been shown to be a good remedy as well. You should drink at least eight glasses of water a day. When you do this, you should increase your fiber intake as well for other health reasons. This can help you feel full and eat less, and therefore be prone to make fewer bad food choices.

Caring for skin suffering from acne can be a fine balancing act between getting rid of the acne, and keeping the skin healthy. Witch hazel and lemon juice are great natural astringents that cost pennies compared to expensive preparations. Just avoid going out in the sun if you use lemon juice, since it can trigger an allergic reaction and altered skin pigmentation in direct sunlight.

A light, oil-free moisturizer with Vitamin E can be used to help the skin from getting too dried out. You might like to create your own moisturizer with a couple of drops of aloe vera and a Vitamin E capsule.

Gentle exfoliation at least once a week can unblock pores and keep your skin looking fresh. Use ground-up oatmeal formed into a paste with some water. Leave it on as a mask for a few moments to help absorb some of the excess oil and soothe inflammation, then rinse well with cool water. (See our guides on natural skin care and beauty without cruelty for more information on how to care for all skin types no matter what your age.)

Avoid too much hot water as it can cause bacteria to grow in some cases. Wash in warm water and rinse in cool water to help cut oil production.

Acne can cause problems with self-esteem, which is another important reason to get it treated apart from the physical health aspect. It can be even more embarrassing as an adult, when perimenopausal or menopausal women suddenly find themselves breaking out all over, just like a teenager, as their hormones start to go through all sorts of changes once more.

If you try all of these natural remedies and you still experience acne, speak with your doctor and a dermatologist and tell them you would like to take care of your acne without chemical products. They should have even more options for you to try to help you or your teen get rid of your acne.

A growing body of evidence has shown the link between food and mood, and in particular, the effect of certain foods on people suffering from particular medical conditions. In the next chapters we will look at several other increasingly common health issues that many modern parents have to face when raising a child, or issues that you might also suffer from yourself.

CHAPTER 10: ADHD AND NATURAL REMEDIES

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, is becoming an increasingly common diagnosis around the world. This neurobehavioral developmental disorder affects about five percent of children under age 19 and is becoming a health condition of international concern due to the number of children being diagnosed. Adults can have it, too, though many seem to outgrow it or at least learn how to manage their condition effectively.

ADHD usually becomes apparent during early childhood. Children diagnosed with ADHD are usually inattentive and/or hyperactive. They oftentimes have problems remembering things, and they can have poor control over their impulses. ADHD can present a problem during school years as a lack of concentration and focus can make success at school rather difficult to achieve. Some children are so disruptive, or seen to be so prejudiced against by the school authorities, that parents elect to take them out of school and homeschool them instead. (See Annabelle Stevens' guides on ADHD for more detailed information on what to do if your child is diagnosed with ADHD, and how to help them succeed at school, or with homeschooling.)

Many studies have been done and much has been written about the unhealthy side effects associated with the use of the most popular medicines prescribed for ADHD children, such as Ritalin (methylphenidate) and Dexedrine (dextroamphetamine). Not all children react favorably to these medications and sometimes the side effects can be worse than the problems associated with the ADHD.

There are, however, natural medications or remedies that can be suggested which can help relieve the symptoms of ADHD and stop your child from disrupting their home or school life so they can concentrate better and accomplish more. Any changes to your child's treatment should be discussed with your pediatrician or family physician first, but there are some very basic things that you can do to help right away.

The first is food. Studies have shown a link between ADHD and the high prevalence of pesticides being used in our society. Therefore, go organic, and buy local produce, which you should scrub well or peel before serving.

Artificial food colorings and artificial sweeteners should be avoided at all times as well (see our guides on these subjects). Your child should avoid fast food, since it is full of sugar and salt, as well as convenience foods. Also limiting your child's intake of caffeine (which can be found in chocolate, for instance) can also help even out their behavior a great deal.

Sticking to a schedule and established routine can also help your child with ADHD perform well at home and at school, so that they are less likely to get agitated and start to behave inappropriately.

There are also a number of herbal remedies that you can try, though, as always, remember that just because they are natural does not mean that they are completely safe.

St. John's Wort (also called Klamath weed) is said to have properties that can help with the symptoms of ADHD. It was first used in ancient Greece to treat many ailments. The active ingredient in St. John's Wort is hypericin and dianathrones and flavonoids. Studies show that St. John's Wort acts as an effective antidepressant. Having said that, you will want to make sure that it does not interact with any medications you or your child may be taking.

Lemon Balm or Melissa officinalis is a fragrant herb with a lemony taste. It was once considered a cure-all for various conditions, including nervous problems. It has had a long history with families affected by ADHD. It is felt to have a particularly positive effect on overly energetic children.

Melotone syrup is a natural liquid promoted widely on the Internet as a natural alternative to Ritalin. It is essentially a liquid nutritional supplement that has Omega-3s (the good fats) and oils from salmon and the primrose plant. It also includes several vitamins and minerals that have been found to be low in children with ADHD (magnesium, B6 and others).

Spirulina is commonly referred to as a super food. It is one of the most nutrient-dense foods on earth and has started to become incorporated into our diets in the form of a powder that is often used in fruit smoothies. Some studies have shown that a shake with spirulina for breakfast can help a child with ADHD experience better focus and concentration for the rest of the day.

Other simple changes in diet, sleep, exercise and routine can help a lot. Food allergies can often play a big role in behavioral problems. As gluten, wheat, and dairy allergies are quite common in children with ADHD, you can try an elimination diet at home, or in conjunction with consulting an allergist. Remove the items you suspect from the diet, and see if the symptoms vanish. Then introduce each of the foods again one by one. If the symptoms re-appear, you have found your culprit.

Other modalities that can help calm your child include aromatherapy with soothing scents, and massage to relax and relieve stress.

Natural or homeopathic remedies try to address the imbalance in the body without the side effects of sedation through medication. The goal of these remedies is to improve the balance and well-being of the whole child, mind and body.

If you are an adult suffering from ADHD and unhappy with the side effects of your medications, consider some of these home remedies, especially in relation to the food you eat.

One thing is for sure: ADHD is on the rise. We can only guess that it is due to the stresses and strains of modern living, and exposure to unnatural substances. The

more healthy home remedies you are willing to try to see if they work, the more effective treatments you will have for ADHD.

Another medical condition rapidly on the rise is autism. Let's look at it in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 11: TREATING AUTISM NATURALLY AT HOME

The number of children who are diagnosed with autism continues to grow each year. A study released in April 2012 states that autism now affects one in every 88 children, and the number is growing as the definition and early diagnosis of autism becomes a healthcare goal.

Each child diagnosed is different from the next and despite decades of research, the experts are not sure of its cause. At the present time there is no cure, but as research continues, and parents of autistic children share their information, there is an increasing number of suggested natural ways to improve the symptoms of autism effectively.

The goal is to treat it without medication and, as with many health conditions, what you feed your child with autism will be important.

Some families report success in alleviating symptoms through a gluten-free diet and eliminating all processed foods from the diet. Glutens can also be found in certain oils, such as soybean and canola. You can try gluten-free recipes (see Mara Michaels' guide on the subject) and keep track of your child's symptoms in a daily diary and food diary. Then you can see if there is any sign of improvement.

Another food group that has been eliminated is dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt.

If you eliminate both gluten and dairy, you will need to consult with a nutritionist to ensure that your child is getting all they need despite these dietary restrictions. However, the diet will be similar to a vegan one, and there are people who are able to live well on such a diet if they are vigilant about nutritional intake.

Try to also eat organic whenever possible, washing fruits and vegetables well and peeling before serving, even if the skin can normally be eaten. Avoid commercially-farmed soft fruits such as berries, as they can absorb most pesticides.

As for nutritional supplements, a couple have shown promise in helping to treat autism naturally. They are vitamin B6 and magnesium. In proven studies (<http://www.autism.com/treatable/form34qr.htm>), it is shown that both dietary supplements and different diets have made huge changes in autism symptoms, in some cases better than the prescription drugs being used to try to help these conditions.

Vitamin B6 is usually found in whole grains, which will usually contain gluten, however. But the good news is that B6 is present in quinoa, a tasty little seed which is packed with nutrients and can be used in place of rice or couscous in many recipes. (See Mara Michaels' guides on cooking quinoa for more information.)

Magnesium is frequently found in a variety of fruits and vegetables. The best sources of magnesium include pumpkin seeds, spinach, Swiss chard, kale, and other green, leafy vegetables, beans (legumes) and nuts, such as almonds and cashews. Kelp and other seaweeds are also a good source, as is the fish halibut. Magnesium has been shown to speed up the electrical communication between the synapses in the brain and therefore is thought to help children with autism be more responsive and process what they learn more easily.

Everyone has their own opinion on the best treatments for autism, but you as the parent of a child with the condition are in the best position to watch, observe, learn all you can about the condition, and work with your doctor or other professionals to put together the right treatment plan for your child. Most insurance companies offer a variety of modalities now, and they should also offer you the option of second or even third opinions about a care plan for your child.

Not all autistic children need medication, and for many the symptoms can improve with other vitamins, nutrients and alterations to their diet. It can be frustrating to find what really works for your child, but the results will be worth it in the long run if you find effective natural treatments without so many risks of side effects.

By researching the symptoms your child shows and following up, you may be able to get better results faster. You can also get help from a local support group or online forum, as these may decrease the amount of time you need to spend doing trial and error. Learn from other parents about what has worked for them, and what has not. Try the effective methods first, but do not rule anything out, as every child with autism is different.

It can take a lot of time to see significant improvements, but the earlier you start, the better your chances, and in the end it will be well worth it. Keep a list of your successes, and failures, and come up with a natural treatment plan that works well for your child.

Another increasingly common disorder among children and adults in the United States is depression. Let's look at some natural remedies for this condition next.

CHAPTER 12: TREATING DEPRESSION NATURALLY

Depression seems to be on the increase in the United States, with more and more people suffering from this chemical imbalance to the point where they are unable to function to perform the normal activities of daily living, such as their personal toilette or eating properly.

There is now a greater range of antidepressant medications than ever before, but every single one comes with a risk of side effects, including sexual side effects in adults.

As we have discussed in her guide to natural treatments for depression, there is a range of things that you can do to alleviate the symptoms of depression. In particular, you should treat most forms of depression effectively sooner rather than later, such as Post-Partum Depression (also see our guide on that subject for more information on the signs and symptoms and what to do about it.)

The first step in treating depression is to acknowledge that you have it. Feeling down, sad or blue is common for many people for a day or so, but if symptoms persist and interfere with your normal activities, then it might be time to take steps to lift your mood. If you have had a baby recently, or know someone who has, you should also watch for signs of Post-Partum Depression.

If a loved one has recently experienced an illness, or severe loss, they might be suffering from grief, or it could be depression. Depression commonly occurs in people with heart health issues, particularly after a heart attack. Naturally, a loss of any kind can be difficult, but a death in the family, a severe accident, the loss of a job, even retirement, can all trigger depression.

We are not sure why some people suffer depression while others remain resilient, but it has nothing to do with character weakness. Depression is most often the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain. It should not be an embarrassing or shameful thing to seek treatment for depression. If you would not be shy about getting treatment for cancer, then there is no reason to be shy about seeking treatment for depression.

There are many things you can do to help relieve the symptoms of depression without ever taking a pill.

The first is exercise, which has been proven in several studies to be just as effective for mild to moderate depression as antidepressant medications or therapy. Engaging in exercise stimulates the release of endorphins, the body's "happy hormones", which also help relieve pain. The difficulty may lie in getting the depressed person to exercise, so coaching and accountability may have to come into play. You can offer to be an exercise buddy and go for a walk, set up a game of tennis, make a date for the gym, and more.

What you eat can also affect your mood greatly. Omega 3 fatty acids have shown great promise as a natural remedy for depression, especially among pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, who are often unable or unwilling to risk using antidepressant medications for fear of transferring harmful substances to their baby.

Omega 3 fatty acids inhibit inflammation, which can play a role in depression. While you can obtain Omega 3s from foods such as salmon, grass-fed beef and flax seeds, supplementation is easy and inexpensive, too. Cod liver oil is one of the cheapest ways you can add Omega-3s to your diet, and the flavored ones can make them easy for you to enjoy.

Some people suffer from a form of depression known as Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD. This occurs well north and south of the equator, when there is far less daylight in the winter seasons than at other times of the year. Light therapy can help with SAD, but so can plain sunshine and fresh air. The cold weather may make a lot of people want to huddle indoors and rarely venture out, but even 15 minutes out in the sun, with sunscreen on, of course, can make a huge difference to your mood.

Other people might find their down periods coincide with periods of bad weather, such as a lot of rain. But any light is better than none, so get outside with your umbrella and make the most of the daylight. Try to go for a walk at lunchtime, or even eat your sandwich outside in the sunlight. You can improve your mood and boost your levels of vitamin D naturally all at the same time. Just be sure to put on sunscreen, or a moisturizer with sunscreen.

Sunlight is free and easily available even in the winter if you are willing to bundle up before going outside. There is no need to suffer from the negative effects of depression when there is such a powerful antidepressant available right outside 365 days a year, unless you live above the Arctic Circle.

As we have mentioned, the link between food and mood is becoming increasingly clear. While it may be difficult to believe, food plays a powerful role in how we feel. Eating spicy foods for example, cause the body to flood itself with endorphins. Eating white flour products and sugar, on the other hand, cause blood sugar imbalances that can lead to chronic mood disturbances. If you think this may be contributing to your low mood, try eating a high protein diet with frequent small meals, such as every three hours. Focus on whole foods and avoid caffeine and other stimulants.

There are other herbal remedies that have been effective for many individuals who are depressed, and it's certainly worth exhausting these options before considering expensive, potentially dangerous medications. Talk with a Naturopath about your feelings and see if you can find a plan that will help you feel more like your old self again, full of vim and vigor and positive energy.

Another debilitating illness that more and more people seem to be suffering from is anxiety. Let's look in the next chapter at effective home remedies for this health issue.

CHAPTER 13: NATURAL REMEDIES FOR ANXIETY

Anxiety disorders are another medical condition that has shown a drastic increase in the past two decades. Whether this is because we are living in more anxious times, or simply because people are now less reluctant to seek treatment for depression and anxiety, we are not sure, but it is certainly true that record numbers of people are suffering from anxiety disorders.

With that increase, has come data which gives us a better idea of what works and what doesn't when it comes to anxiety, including natural remedies for anxiety. Traditional medicine argues that we should treat anxiety with drugs, but again, the issue with prescription medications is that they carry the risk of side effects.

Many of the classes of drugs which are used to treat anxiety, such as relaxants, antidepressants, benzodiazepines, and beta blockers, are potent medications which can trigger strong, even dangerous side effects. As a result of concerns regarding these side effects, there has been a growing interest in natural remedies which focus on how people can calm and relax themselves. When they are able to remain calm, they can avoid the sometimes almost crippling aspects of their anxiety disorder.

For example, one of our friends was terrified of spiders, but through positive self-talk he was able to cope each time he saw one, without the need for constantly taking medication to help deal with the rare occasions he saw one. He had been phobic to the point of paralysis, where he would literally freeze and need to be talked away from wherever he was standing.

Then he realized that his phobia was limiting his life and it was then that he sought treatment. Once he began working through the emotional and/or physical reasons for his anxiety, the therapist came up with a self-led plan that helped him deal with the anxiety that arose in certain situations in a less petrified manner.

This can include self-talk, special breathing exercises, a switch of focus, just stepping away from the trigger, and more. The purpose of these anti-anxiety exercises is to let go of tension and feel more in control of the situation. A person can literally talk themselves out of an anxiety attack once they know how. Even more importantly, this can also help take away the fear of what will happen if they are away from home and experience an anxiety attack.

Many people are embarrassed at the idea of having an anxiety attack in public, fearful of looking stupid or crazy and so forth. They will often confine themselves inside their home because of this fear, making their whole situation that much worse. The less chance they get to practice their new coping skills, the more likely it will be that their anxiety will start to dominate their life.

Positive self-talk, visualization and guided imagery can all be tried, with or without the

help of a therapist. Yoga and meditation have also proven effective means of reducing anxiety and stress. Other strategies for relaxation and relief from anxiety can all help, with no need for medications or supplements.

There are some natural supplements that have been found to work well if you think you or a loved one would benefit from some extra help. Some of these herbs include valerian, kava, hops, California poppy, lemon balm, passionflower, catnip, chamomile, and lavender. However, if you are considering taking some of these to ease the suffering you may be experiencing from your anxiety, you should talk to your doctor first.

When consulting your doctor, you should make sure that you explain exactly what you are doing, what you are taking, discuss any other medications that you may be on, and how long you plan on taking this remedy. This will allow your doctor to make sure that the remedy that you have chosen will indeed help your anxiety disorder and not interact with any medications you or your loved one might already be taking.

For example, St. John's Wort, as we have discussed, is a powerful herb that can help alter mood, but it does carry a risk of side effects and interactions.

Another remedy for anxiety is to do regular exercise. This is known to help relieve some of the symptoms of anxiety for several reasons: because of the endorphins released; the focus on doing something else; and your increased breathing while exercising. Exercise gives you an all-natural boost in your energy levels and your mood, and helps you burn calories to slim you down and keep you looking fit and trim.

Depression and anxiety can often be found together, in which case you should treat both conditions effectively through exercise, a good diet, and effective natural strategies that can improve your mood without the need for prescription medications with side effects. (See our guide for more detailed information.)

Anxiety can make you feel like a prisoner in your own life. It can also cripple your little ones and stop them from enjoying all the things they can in life. The phrase, "Feel the fear, and do it anyway," is one that many people are unable to live by because anxiety holds them back from trying anything new or putting themselves in situations that make them nervous, such as participating in a school play or a public speaking competition.

Stress and anxiety are now an almost natural part of modern existence. Learning the best coping strategies to deal with stress, anxiety, and even phobias can make the difference between a full, active life, and one lived behind closed doors.

Fortunately, there are now many more effective natural treatments for anxiety, so do your research on what works for you, and also discuss all of your options with a doctor to help make your anxiety disorder a thing of the past.

CONCLUSION

Once you become a parent, you will need to learn how to deal with many health concerns for your child, and all the members of your family. The mother in particular serves as the caregiver for the whole family, so your knowledge and the research that you do about the most effective treatments for various health conditions can make a real difference.

If you want to be a green new mom, there are many decisions you will need to make to live a more natural lifestyle. If you have been a mother for a while, but are concerned at the number of chemicals your children are being exposed to every day, and the amount of conspicuous consumption that is almost taken for granted as being essential in the United States, you should take steps to become a green mother, and educate your family to be more green as well.

Part of going green can be to stop using so many expensive personal products, all laden with chemicals, and start to make your own for pennies using the natural ingredients you probably already have right inside your home.

Going green or living a more natural life might also extend to avoiding a lot of expensive over-the-counter and prescription drugs, which carry high risks of side effects. Do keep in mind, however, that even natural supplements can have side effects as well, and that just because it is natural does not mean it is completely safe. Honey can kill a child under six months of age, and bee pollen can kill someone who is allergic to it, after all.

We hope that this guide has introduced you to a variety of home remedies that you can try for a variety of health conditions you will commonly encounter as a parent living in a busy family, and effective treatments to try without having to run to the doctor every week.

Here's wishing you a happier, healthier natural green family,

CEC

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April 22, 2012

Happy Earth Day!

FURTHER READING

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