



Herbal Medicine for Common Skin Conditions

By Katolen Yardley, MNIMH, Medical Herbalist

The skin is the largest organ of elimination in the body. It offers protection from injury, provides a barrier from our external environment, and provides defense from pathogens and bacteria. The skin also maintains our intricate internal balance of minerals and tissue salts. Known in holistic health as the “third kidney”, the skin takes the additional burden when the internal organs of detoxification (namely the bowel, kidneys, liver and lungs) are not eliminating waste efficiently. If this imbalance is left unaddressed and continues long term, the skin is predisposed to flare ups, breakouts, and rashes.

There are many common skin ailments which herbal medicine can address including acne, psoriasis, hives and eczema. Herbs can be categorized either by the organ systems they support or by the action they provide in the body. In terms of supporting skin function, one of the main categories is **alteratives**, or **blood cleanser herbs**. These herbs are traditionally recognized for their ability to restore health and function to the skin while improving the detoxification abilities of the kidneys, lymph, bowels and liver. Examples of alteratives include the following:

Burdock Root (*Arctium lappa*): a diuretic and bitter (supportive to digestion) herb used for dry scaly skin, psoriasis and eczema, used long-term to support the function of the liver and kidneys. In Asia, Burdock root is known as Gobo, and is eaten as a root vegetable - added to soups and vegetable dishes.

Cleavers Herb (*Galium aparine*): one of the best lymphatic support herbs used for dry rashes or swollen glands and to remove impurities from the body through the lymphatic system. This herb offers gentle support for kidney function.

Nettle Leaf (*Urtica dioica*): a tonic for cleansing the skin, Nettle leaf is used as a diuretic and for kidney support. It is a mineral rich herb, high in iron and calcium, is used as a general tonic for the whole body and is ideal for acne, eczema, hives and allergic rashes. It decreases the body’s histamine response, thereby reducing the effect of allergic reactions.

Dandelion Root (*Taraxacum officinalis*): nature’s ideal diuretic, Dandelion is high in potassium and other trace minerals, which means that while removing fluid from the body, it actually assists in remineralising the body. The root is supportive to the liver and gall bladder and is used as a gentle laxative.

Red Clover Flower (*Trifolium pratense*): a member of the legume family, red clover is packed full of nutrients including calcium, iron, magnesium and B vitamins. It is an excellent gentle remedy for children’s eczema and is a useful expectorant for a cough and bronchitis.

Yellow Dock Root (*Rumex crispus*): also known as Curled Dock, Yellow Dock is used for chronic skin conditions, is a mild laxative used for occasional constipation, and works internally to promote the flow of bile. It improves liver and colon function while acting as a blood cleanser for stubborn skin conditions.

Herbal medicines are gentle and ideal for incorporating into ones daily routine. Alterative herbs can be used in either tea or tincture form. An adult general dosage for herbal teas is 1 tsp. of the herb for every cup of boiled water, steeped for 15 minutes. Drinking 3-4 cups daily will provide a medicinal dose. When using tinctures, the dosage varies depending upon the herbs used; however in general 2-3 ml taken 2-3 times daily is an adult dose.

Katolen Yardley, MNIMH is a Medical Herbalist in private practice at Alchemy & Elixir Health Group in Vancouver, BC. Visit www.alchemyelixir.com or www.katolenyardley.com for more information.

For more detailed information on herbal medicines, register for our upcoming seminar:

Seminar: Herbal Medicine for Common Skin Conditions

Taught by Katolen Yardley, MNIMH ~ Medical Herbalist

We will cover a general overview of the function of the skin, coupled with the actions and application of key herbs for the skin: herbal alteratives, blood cleansers, vulneraries, and anti inflammatory herbs. You will learn how to use herbs to treat wounds or common skin conditions, including acne, eczema, psoriasis and rashes. This will be an interactive evening, combined with herb tasting and fun!

Time: Tuesday, October 19, 2010, 6:00- 7:30 pm

Cost: \$10 cash at the door. All materials and handouts will be provided.

Location: Alchemy & Elixir Health Group # 320-1026 Davie St. Vancouver, BC.

Space is limited & pre-registration is required. Call 604-683-2298 or email at info@alchemyelixir.com to register.