

Homemade Cough Drops

Herbs with expectorant qualities that help loosen phlegm include aniseed (*Pimpinella anisum*), elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*), ginger root (*Zingiber officinale*), mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*), osha (*Ligusticum porteri*) and thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*).

Read more: <http://www.herbcompanion.com/herbal-living/herbal-cough-drops.aspx#ixzz189TM2XUt>

- Powdered herbs
- 1 cup sugar, or honey
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup light corn syrup, or honey
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups water
- Powdered sugar, for easy handling

1. Steep your preferred soothing herbs in $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of water to make a tea.
2. Mix sugar and corn syrup with tea. Cook over low heat, stirring until sugar is dissolved and mixture boils.
3. Continue boiling without stirring until the mixture begins to crystallize; reduce heat. Wash away crystals from the side of your pan with a damp cloth.
4. Remove from the heat after a few minutes. Drop some of the mixture from the tip of a spoon onto a greased surface. Allow to harden and cool completely before removing. Roll the candies in powdered sugar and wrap in waxed paper for storage.

Echinacea (*Echinacea spp.*) is the best-researched herb for the colds and viruses that can cause sore throats. It enhances immunity by stimulating a type of cell called a macrophage to engulf and destroy invading microbes and to produce chemicals such as interferon that work against viruses. Echinacea helps activate our natural killer cells to combat viruses, bacteria, and other threats to our natural immunity.

Echinacea is best taken at the very first sign of a child's cold, the early scratchy-throat and runny-nose stage. At that point, we give our children three to four cups of tea or the same number of doses of liquid echinacea per day, following label instructions for weight and age to calculate dose amounts. We continue to give that dose for several days, until all symptoms are gone.

The nice thing about echinacea is that it's non-toxic and safe for children, though a rare child may be allergic to it. We find that echinacea glycerites have the best flavor, but capsules, tinctures, and tea can be used. Commercial sore-throat sprays with echinacea sometimes have a tingly, numbing effect that your child may find soothing.

Garlic (*Allium sativum*) and onions both show lots of antiviral and antibacterial activity, including action against strep bacteria. Raw garlic has the strongest medicinal effect, but let's get real: all but the most hardy kids will want their garlic cooked. Both garlic and onions make a good addition to broths and soups.

Elecampane (*Inula helenium*) is antibacterial, relieves coughs, and soothes the inflammation of laryngitis; it also destroys herpes simplex II virus, and herbalists suspect that it may act against other viruses as well. It's used as an expectorant for dry, irritable coughs and asthma. Elecampane is generally sold in root form, so you can decoct it by boiling and disguise its bitter taste with honey, unless your kids prefer capsules. Don't take elecampane during pregnancy; those with diabetes should avoid it as well.

Usnea (*Usnea spp.*) is the green-gray lichen that hangs from tree branches. Besides making great costumes, this strange-looking lichen works against strep throat and other upper respiratory infections. Usnea also serves as a broad-spectrum antibiotic, reduces inflammation, and stimulates the immune system. The strongest usnea products use alcohol to extract the herb's constituents into a tincture, although traditionally it was decocted, or simmered, into a tea.

Shiitake mushrooms (*Lentinula edodes*) are a powerful and tasty medicinal food. Just a small amount is effective; one to three lightly sauteed mushrooms per person, per meal, is an adequate dose. Shiitakes have enjoyed a tremendous resurgence since research confirmed their antiviral and immune-stimulating effects. Unless your kids hate mushrooms, shiitakes are an excellent addition to vegetable soups and stir-fry meals during sore-throat season.

Oregon grape root (*Mahonia aquifolium*) contains a main constituent, berberine, that specifically destroys many types of bacteria, including strep. Its taste is bitter, so your children will probably prefer it in capsules or glycerite form.

Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*) acts against a broad spectrum of disease-causing microbes. In test-tube studies, its volatile oils destroy bacteria, including strep, plus a variety of viruses, including some that cause flu symptoms. You can add this sweet-tasting herb to any healing tea, or purchase it in a glycerite.

Herbs for Common Cold

Astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*) is well-known in China as a tonic and adaptogen. Many studies, most of them conducted in the lab, show that it boosts the immune system and fights viruses, bacteria, and inflammation. Taken regularly over time, it can provide ongoing immune-system support

Flu Virus:

Compounds found in **elderberry** (*Sambucus nigra*) can inhibit the enzyme that flu viruses use to penetrate cell membranes. In one test-tube study, a syrup made from elderberry juice, raspberry extract, glucose, citric acid, and honey inhibited a variety of both type A and type B influenza viruses. The study's researchers also gave the syrup daily for three days to children (two tablespoons) and adults (four tablespoons) who had just come down with the flu. A complete cure occurred in nearly 90 percent of people within two to three days for the elderberry group versus at least six days for those taking a placebo.

Garlic (*Allium sativum*) benefits health in many ways, including its ability to boost immune function and inhibit or kill a broad range of microbes. Test-tube studies show that garlic is active against viruses that cause colds and flus. Some of garlic's active ingredients are eliminated through our lungs, right where you want them to target infections. Garlic also promotes expectoration, to help you cough up mucus. During cold and flu season, you may want to take garlic supplements and/or eat plenty of garlic. I blend raw garlic into foods or add it to dishes just before serving to preserve its active ingredients.

Licorice root (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) contains glycyrrhizin, which in test-tube studies inactivates and inhibits the growth of a range of viruses, including influenza viruses. Somewhat like echinacea, licorice contains polysaccharide ingredients that can spark the body's production of interferon (proteins released by virus-infected cells to prevent the virus from multiplying) and activate various white blood cells.

St.-John's-wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), according to test-tube studies, can inhibit influenza A viruses and parainfluenza virus (which produces flulike symptoms), but not rhinovirus (a prominent cold virus). In mice it has fought parainfluenza infection, but researchers have yet to study the effects of St.-John's-wort on people with the flu.

Lomatium (*Lomatium dissectum*) has a long history of use by Native Americans for bacterial and viral infections, particularly of the respiratory tract. Laboratory tests show that it is a potent fighter of many viruses and bacteria.

According to Ed Alstat, a naturopathic doctor and president and owner of the Eclectic Institute, a company that researches, develops, and manufactures botanical medicines, a doctor named Ernest Krebs observed that Native Americans of the Southwest recovered rapidly from the influenza epidemic of 1917. He attributed their recovery to the use of lomatium root and began using the herb in his practice with great success. Because use of lomatium root has been associated with a full-body rash, Alstat recommends taking a lomatium isolate—a specially processed extract—to eliminate rash-causing resins.

Stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) inhibits influenza A virus in test-tube studies. This herb is also packed with nutrients, including lots of carotenoids and flavonoids, and helps ease seasonal allergies.

Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*) shows some antiviral effects in test-tube studies against parainfluenza and many other bacteria.

Ephedra (*Ephedra sinica*) contains ephedrine, a chemical related to the hormone epinephrine, also known as adrenaline, and the synthetic decongestant pseudoephedrine.

Ephedrine clears up respiratory congestion and relaxes the airways. At the same time, though, ephedra stimulates the cardiovascular and central nervous systems. Large doses can raise blood pressure and cause palpitations, nervousness, insomnia, nausea, flushing, and headaches.

According to Mindy Green, director of educational services for the Herb Research Foundation, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has proposed restrictions on ephedrine, recommending that individuals take no more than 8 mg of ephedrine alkaloids in a six-hour period and no more than 24 mg in a twenty-four-hour period and for no more than seven days.

Peppermint (*Mentha ~~piperita~~*) oil and pure menthol are often included in commercial products such as nasal decongestants, throat lozenges, cough drops, chest rubs, and inhalants. The same goes for oil of **eucalyptus** (*Eucalyptus globulus*). Each herb contains compounds that relax the airways and open congested sinuses and nasal passages.

In one study, people who inhaled menthol indicated that it relieved their respiratory discomfort, maybe because menthol stimulates cold receptors. For example, just stepping into the cold outdoors can relieve stuffiness. You may try putting a few drops of peppermint or eucalyptus oil onto a cotton ball and setting it on your nightstand to breathe in the vapors as you sleep. Make sure that you don't get the oil in your eyes or rub it on mucus membranes, and never apply essential oils in or near the noses of infants or small children, because this has been reported to cause respiratory arrest.

Herbs for aches and pains

The essential oil of peppermint can be applied externally to stimulate nerves that perceive cold and decrease pain-transmission signals. Rub peppermint oil on your temples to reduce a headache (but don't get any in your eyes), or add two drops of peppermint oil to your bath. Peppermint oil combines nicely with essential oils of **lavender** (*Lavandula spp.*), an herb often praised for the relaxing effects of its scent, and eucalyptus. Taken internally, a peppermint tea made from one teaspoon of dried peppermint leaves and flowers for each cup of boiled water promotes sweating, which can help modulate fever.

Feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*) is currently popular for its ability to ease migraines, but it has an even longer history of use for relieving fever, arthritis, and other inflammatory diseases.

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) can fight inflammation and pain. It can also act as an expectorant and has a warming effect that may help if you're chilled. McCaleb says ginger is his favorite herb for treating colds and flus, and he prefers the powdered form to the fresh. To make a tea, he adds one-half teaspoon of the powder or two droppersful of an alcohol extract to a cup of hot water. Don't worry about straining the ginger, he says; it will just settle on the bottom of the cup. Add honey and lemon to taste.

The flowers of yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) fight inflammation and muscle spasms and promote sweating. Herbalists have long used Herbs to soothe sore throats and coughs

Known as demulcents, these herbs contain thick substances that coat and soothe irritated respiratory linings. A commonly recommended demulcent, **mullein** (*Verbascum thapsus*), also can help loosen a cough and fight viruses. Lab tests show that its leaves and flowers possess potent activity against the herpes virus, but do not completely inactivate flu viruses.

Other demulcents include the root of **marshmallow** (*Althaea officinalis*), the bark of **slippery elm** (*Ulmus rubra*), and the leaves of **plantain** (*Plantago spp.*).

Expectorants, which help loosen respiratory secretions so that they can be coughed up, include **horehound** (*Marrubium vulgare*), **eucalyptus**, and **thyme** (*Thymus vulgaris*). Thyme fights microbes, and its flavonoids help decrease smooth muscle spasms to open tight airways.

Osha (*Ligusticum porteri*) was one of the most popular herbs among the Native Americans of the West and Southwest. Feather Jones, executive director of the Rocky Mountain Center for Botanical Studies and president of Turtle Island Herbs in Boulder, Colorado, says osha fights viruses and is an expectorant. Herbalists use decoctions, tinctures, or syrups made from the root to treat coughs and sore throats (it has a nice numbing effect). However, Jones notes that osha is in danger of overcollection, and McCaleb says that no commercial cultivated sources exist. Only use osha if your supplier swears that his or her supply has been ethically wildcrafted.
