

ELIXIR COLLECTIVE NO. 12

January marks the start of a new year – a time for setting intentions and starting positive routines that will hopefully ease their way in to our daily habits in the months to come. As we embark on this new adventure that is 2019, I want to contribute two offerings for your home apothecary as well as some invaluable tips I've learned for staying well so that you can keep focused on all the other things that make your world go round. While no one is impervious to catching a cold in the winter (even here in Hawaii!), there are several methods I've ascribed to that either assist in curbing sickness or prevent it in the first place. A few of my favorites, many inspired by my education in traditional Chinese medicine, are the following:

- Staying warm internally & externally is a key principle for avoiding sickness in Chinese medicine. The back of the neck is known as the *wind gate*, where disease may enter: always keep a scarf around your neck when you are in chilly temperatures! The winter is the also season of the water element, and hot soups & stews are considered the best way to get nutrients during the colder months. If you're having a cold or raw meal, eat it at the warmest (most *yang*) time of day: lunchtime.
- Help your nose function at maximum capacity. When traveling on a plane, the stuffy cabin air can dry out your nasal passages and therefore prevent them from properly filtering out pathogens. Keep those passages moist by applying a thin layer of neutral salve or balm (like my Solve All Salve or Savior Salve) around the inside of your nostrils with clean fingertips. I'll reapply a couple of times throughout a long flight whenever I feel my nose starting to get dry – and now I never get sick on planes!
- Acupressure points can boost your immune system when it needs the support. One of the most common points for improving immune function and energy is the *Leg 3 Mile* point: find this on the outer side of your lower legs, four fingers below your kneecap and a thumb's width away from the front (tibia) bone. The *Wind Gate* point, for the first signs of a cold or headache, is on the back of the neck in the most tender hollows on either side of the base of the skull. Another important point for headaches as well as expelling pathogens is *Joining Valley*, on the top of each hand in the fleshy space between the bases of your thumb and index finger. When searching for these points, trust your body to tell you where they are by paying attention to what feels tender and what areas want to be touched. When you've found the spot, gently press with your fingertips and make small circular motions for 5 - 10 seconds in each area before switching to the next points and then repeating the cycle a few times over.
- Across the herbal traditions I've studied, all employ a similar principle of *sweating out* a pathogen. The key here is to be in tune with your body – use this method only at the very first signs of feeling 'off' (such as an itchy throat, runny nose, slight cough or lethargy). First prepare a large mug of hot tea with whatever warming, aromatic herbs you have on hand: ginger, cinnamon, garlic, chili etc. While your tea is steeping, wrap yourself in layers of warm clothes (hat, socks, all of it) and blankets (and yes I do this even in Hawaii). Start sipping on your tea slowly and allow yourself to literally sweat for about 20 to 30 minutes. Once you feel sufficiently sweaty, take a hot shower and follow with a bowl of soup that incorporates pungent herbs (green onion and miso is a classic Chinese remedy for the first signs of a cold). Then be sure to drink lots of warm water and go to bed early! While it sounds slightly unconventional, this method has worked for me without fail as long as I catch my symptoms soon enough (within the first day or two) before they fully develop.

I hope you find these methods effective to get you through cold season unscathed! For the times when your body needs extra support, the following herbal elixirs can serve as useful allies in your medicine cabinet. Both are crafted with 4 key herbs to help you breathe freely with their cold-clearing properties. Hawaiian Eucalyptus is antiseptic, expectorant to clear mucus, and has a warming & pain relieving effect when used as a chest or sinus rub for respiratory infections. Mint is antibacterial, and its cooling volatile oils help dilate capillaries for congestion and headaches. Sage has anti-inflammatory properties, and is a traditional remedy for relieving asthma. Rosemary, a circulatory herb well known for easing headaches, is stimulating and restorative to help overcome illness and recover swiftly.

BREATHE RELIEF RESPIRATORY BALM

Designed for when a cold or allergies has got you in its grips, Breathe Relief uses a combination of aromatic essential oils to help clear your nasal passages and chest. A base of Hawaiian Sunflower oil and local beeswax was infused with Big Island Eucalyptus and Rosemary essential oils distilled by Vetiver Farms Hawaii, plus organic Peppermint and Sage essential oils. Use this balm to ease signs of pressure and congestion by massaging into sinuses, temples, forehead & under the nose (while being careful to avoid the eyes), as well as on your throat, chest & back. Give some additional love to spots that seem tender by making gentle small circles; if you have a chest cold, massage into the muscles between the ribs on either side of your sternum. Feel free to also use this cooling, moving & pain-relieving balm on achy muscles and tired feet. Your balm will last 6 - 12 months, and will soon be a member of the permanent Topical Medicinals collection!

BREATHE EASY HERBAL STEAM

This exclusive batch blend contains all herbs grown on the islands: fresh Rosemary, Sage & Spearmint came from my local farmer's market, and Eucalyptus leaves were also contributed by Vetiver Farms Hawaii. Mirroring the 4 antiseptic herbs in the rub, this facial steam can help clear congested nasal passages, relieve an achy head and also cleanse your skin. To use, place a liberal pinch of herbs in a large bowl with a cup or two of boiling water. Cover your head with a towel and place your face over the bowl, allowing the vapors to warm your face (it should be comfortably hot – move your face further away or let the water cool down for a few moments until it feels soothing, not scalding). Breathe deeply to inhale these healing herbs while they soothe your sinuses and your skin; relax into the experience for about 10 minutes or until the water cools. You can also use this blend to soak your feet, or throw a bit in the tub for a soothing bath! Your tin contains enough herbs for roughly 4 - 6 uses, and if kept dry can last a year.

BY INDIGO ELIXIRS
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