

HERBAL INFLAMMATION FIGHTERS

Inflammation is a big part of the pain problem. Thank heaven Mother Nature has generously bestowed plant-based ways to cool things off.

Of all the over-the-counter drugs on the market there may be nothing more ubiquitous than aspirin, which was first formulated in the mid-19th century. What many people don't know is that the word "aspirin" was originally a registered trade name taken from "spirea." That's an old name for the herb meadowsweet, which contains an anti-inflammatory chemical, *salicin*, that the body converts into *salicylic acid*—aspirin. (The herb willow bark, which also contains salicin, was a painkilling favorite of both the ancient Greeks and Native American tribes.) The kicker is that aspirin was originally developed because chemists thought it would be easier on the stomach—and aspirin turned out to be a lot rougher, to the point that it can actually cause stomach bleeding in susceptible individuals.

Not that synthetic drugs don't sometimes serve useful purposes... but isn't it funny how humans haven't always been able to improve on the remedies Mother Nature has provided? That's particularly true of anti-inflammatory agents, the kinds you reach for when you have a headache or turn an ankle. Unlike such potent potions as Cox-2 inhibitors (think Vioxx) or even the seemingly innocent acetaminophen, which accounts for up to 50% of all acute liver failure cases in the US, herbal remedies have far fewer side effects. Because their actions are much gentler on the body, it may take longer for herbs to take full effect; as always, consult with your practitioner if you have a pre-existing health condition.

So turn the page for an all-star lineup of inflammation-easing herbs, and find sweet relief—naturally. ▶



Many of the herbs used in nutritional supplements that fight inflammation originate in Asia.



Herbal Anti-Inflammatories

The herbs on these pages have long histories of usage for conditions that involve inflammation—most commonly marked by redness, pain and swelling. Muscle and joint injuries should always be treated with RICE (rest, ice, compression and elevation) at the time of the injury. See a health practitioner if symptoms do not subside within a few days; seek *immediate* medical attention if inflammation is accompanied by high fever or if a severe injury (such as a fracture or torn ligament) is suspected.

ARNICA

Flowers of this mountain-dwelling plant are used in cream form to ease joint aches and to prevent swelling and bruising at injury sites. Do not use on broken skin; suitable for external use only.



BOSWELLIA

Taken from the frankincense tree of Three Wise Men fame, this ancient remedy has been found to shrink the inflamed joint tissue that marks arthritis.



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BROMELAIN

This pineapple-based enzyme helps reduce inflammatory reactions resulting from injuries and arthritis—and serves as a dandy digestive aid to boot. To fight inflammation, take on an empty stomach.

GRAPE SEED

This powerful antioxidant helps reduce swelling, especially swollen ankles associated with circulatory difficulties, and interferes with histamine, the inflammatory agent responsible for allergic reactions.



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DEVIL'S CLAW

The root of this vine, native to the Kalahari desert in southern Africa, is most often used for arthritis relief, but has helped people with lower back pain as well; take half an hour before a meal.



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MARSHMALLOW ROOT

Original source of the candy, which no longer contains any actual marshmallow; its slippery nature allows it to coat and soothe irritated membranes in the mouth and throat.



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CALENDULA

Widely grown as a garden flower, this marigold variety is used in creams to prevent skin damage caused by sun and wind, and to soothe insect bites as well as minor scrapes and irritations.

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WILLOW BARK

Aspirin is a synthetic form of salicylic acid, willow bark's primary component; unlike aspirin, willow doesn't cause stomach upset when used for headaches, toothaches and arthritic aches.



GINGER

Long considered an essential item for healers as well as cooks throughout Asia, this well-known spice is employed as a remedy for arthritis, bursitis and similar ailments.



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TURMERIC

Its bold yellow-orange color is familiar to anyone who has eaten curry; as the primary anti-inflammatory herb in Ayurvedic (Indian traditional) medicine, turmeric is used to treat arthritis, bursitis and tendinitis.



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ENERGY TIMES HEALTH CHART

