



The Wellness Family

Dr. Greeley Keeps You Informed

Tonics and Elixirs

For thousands of years, before even ancient Egypt and Rome were using them, it was understood that the earth had provided us all we needed to improve our health. Whether it was a digestion problem, skin condition, energy issue, weakened immune system or just seasonal allergies, there was something that could be extracted, blended, or mixed from herbs, bark, flowers, etc. into a tonic or elixir to help relieve it – and it's still true today.

What are tonics and elixirs?

Tonics and elixirs are almost always treated as if the terms are interchangeable but, while they have herbal ingredients and medicinal properties in common, that's about where the similarities end.

Tonics are traditionally defined as substances to stimulate well-being by being invigorating, refreshing and restorative. An herbal tonic is typically a formula made from various herbs having these effects to fortify specific bodily systems, such as the immune system, and support overall health.

Elixirs are basically botanical remedies used to address a specific imbalance in the body, such as a cold or menstrual cramps.

Talking about Tonics

For thousands of years tonics have been at the core of traditional Chinese medicine and Ayurvedic medicine in India. Herbal tonics use a variety of different types of herbs, such as:

- Adaptogens (American Ginseng, Asian Ginseng, Licorice, Turmeric and more): herbs that increase the body's resistance to stress
- Alterative (Blood Root, Echinacea, Garlic, Wild Indigo, etc.): herbs that support normal bodily functions and processes to alter the course of illness
- Aromatics (Cayenne, Peppercorn, Lemon Verbena, etc.): herbs high in aromatic compounds with a strong aroma
- Astringents (Witch Hazel, Amaranth, Rosa Canina, etc.): herbs that cleanse, tighten, and dry out body tissues, including skin
- Bitters (Chamomile, Mugwort, Dandelion, Milk Thistle, etc.): herbs that support digestion process in the body
- Nutritive (Nettles, Red Clover, Raspberry Leaf, etc.): herbs that are rich in nutrients, like vitamins and minerals.

Administering Tonics

Herbal tonics are generally a combination of select ingredients for a specific purpose that can be applied topically, ingested as a powder, or imbibed in liquid form. To be applied topically will require making an oil infusion, which can be applied directly; consider adding the oil infusion to other ingredients to dilute the strength.

Oil infusion is made by placing fresh or dried herbs in a jar, covering them in oil and then letting them steep in a warm, sunny location for 2 or more weeks. The oil can then be used once the herbs have been removed. This can sometimes be too strong so it may be wise to make



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a topical salve, lotion, or ointment by adding the oil infusion to beeswax, aloe vera or other oils such as fractionated coconut oil.

Fractionated coconut oil is commonly used in this manner as it is more liquid than solid for ease of application. The main difference between regular coconut oil (that you would use for cooking) and fractionated coconut oil is that the long-chain fatty acids have been separated and solidified for removal. For this reason, it will remain in a liquid state.

A powder is made by drying the herbs and then crushing them into a fine powder that can then be placed in a capsule or added to foods or beverages for ingestion.

Most tonics in liquid form will be ingested as either a tea or syrup. Teas are the easiest to make by steeping or infusing the herbal mixes in boiling water. However, a syrup is a little more complicated in that the herbs must be simmered in the liquid until it is a very strong tea then strained and cooked further with a sweetener such as honey or glycerin until the mixture thickens into a syrup. Note that, depending upon the herbal mixture, the syrup may be more palatable.

The final liquid option is what's known as a tincture, which is created by putting fresh or dried herbs in a jar and covering them with a water-soluble liquid such as

alcohol or apple cider vinegar. Alcohol is often the liquid of choice, as it can extract components, such as resins and alkaloids, that are not water-soluble. Note that this will require an alcohol that is 180-proof. It is important to seal the jar for 6 or more weeks to give the alcohol time to absorb the active components of the herbs.

Exploring Elixirs

Elixirs are sweet liquids that are prepared for medicinal purposes intended to cure an illness or alleviate a symptom of discomfort. Beyond a tonic that is going to be refreshing or invigorating, elixirs are purported to be a healing remedy.

The base of an elixir is going to be a liquid to be ingested then, depending upon the illness or symptom to be relieved, additional ingredients are added. These ingredients are typically going to be herbs, barks, or flowers but they can also be superfoods, nut milks and seeds, sweeteners, or natural thickeners. Then, for a touch of flavor and a boost of health, add a pinch of Himalayan sea salt to every elixir. It will naturally sweeten while balancing the overall flavors.

Healing Ingredients

When creating an elixir, it's important to know the healing properties of the herbs or flowers included in most recipes. Depending upon the purpose, different ingredients should be considered.

For instance, chamomile is a plant that's effective in healing wounds, reducing inflammation and helping with insomnia. Lemon balm is great for headaches. Echinacea helps to treat or prevent colds, flu, infections and helps to heal wounds. Evening primrose oil is beneficial for PMS, mild skin conditions, inflammation and more. Garlic has antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties. Ginger helps with nausea and vomiting. Gingko helps with asthma, bronchitis, fatigue and tinnitus. Ginseng, when used in a tonic, has been considered a cure-all. Tea tree

oil may treat acne, athlete's foot, cuts and insect bites. These are just a few of the common herbs recommended for use in healing elixirs.

Recipes for Life

Whether it's a refreshing tonic to help overcome fatigue or a healing elixir to address menstrual cramps, there is probably a recipe to be found online.

Warning – not all recipes online are going to be good for you. Be aware of ingredients that shouldn't be part of your diet and definitely shouldn't be part of your tonic or elixir. These include sugar, high fructose corn syrup, emulsifiers, or any other ingredient that isn't all natural. Here are just a few websites that will provide some healthy, interesting and beneficial tonic and elixir recipes:
www.mindbodygreen.com/0-28047/the-best-tonics-elixirs-we-discovered-this-year.html
www.dailyburn.com/life/recipes/wellness-elixirs-recipes-collagen/
www.onegreenplanet.org/vegan-food/health- tonic-recipes/
www.eatingwell.com/gallery/14039/homemade- tonic-recipes-to-give-your-health-a-boost/

Be aware that some of these websites are providing links to several other websites offering the recipes. If you're unsure of the benefits of a tonic or elixir, print it off and take it with you to your next appointment to ask your Family Wellness Chiropractor for their opinion.

In Summary

When it comes to health and wellness, your Family Wellness Chiropractor is always going to be your go-to resource. The fact is that it's easier to go to the local drug store and grab some over-the-counter chemical that promises instant relief and doesn't require a lot of effort, but we often forget that even over-the-counter drugs have side-effects.

If you're looking for relief, don't go to the corner, go to your Chiropractor.



*Dear Patient,
Dr. Greeley is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.*

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