

# Herbal Infusions:

## *Good health cup by cup*

By **Sandra Clair** MA (Berne), Grad. Dip. Health Science (UNE)

Plants and humans have a long history of co-evolution and are indeed a “match made in heaven”. Without plants there would be no human life on earth. Apart from us benefiting from plants for food, clothing and shelter, medicinal herbs have been the trusted ally since the dawn of mankind to recover from sickness. Perhaps equally important they have also been treasured for increasing vitality and sustaining good health.

Just as nature has a rhythm that is reflected in the seasons, our body is subject to a natural rhythm of biological needs requiring respect and nurturing for prime performance.

Many traditional medicine philosophies were based on the understanding that small daily steps of self-care as well as being in-tune to Nature’s rhythms such as day/night and activity/relaxation are fundamental to good health. This wisdom is reflected in old European medical textbooks as well as in Asian medical systems like Ayurveda, TCM (traditional Chinese medicine) and Tibetan medicine, which give specific advice on herbs, food and lifestyle in order to experience optimal health.

### Daily health principles

It is easy to observe that the daily routine of cleansing, nurturing, priming and relaxing body and mind lead to sustained health, vitality and longevity. We can choose to create good health and wellbeing right now and into the future by implementing simple daily health principles which we can teach our clients:

- Eating nutrient-rich, fresh organic food
- Exercising regularly, e.g. a half hour walk each day
- Proper daily detoxification with nutrients and herbs
- Cleansing and rehydrating with clean water
- Balancing the nervous system in its energy output and relaxation modes
- Attending to sub-optimal health
- Attending to emotional and spiritual happiness

### A firm commitment to health

Optimal health can be achieved with a firm commitment to give our body and mind what it naturally needs. This is even more important today. It is a challenge in the 21st century to live a truly health-enhancing life with daily access to pesticide-free food, pollution-free air, clean water and a proper balance of activity and relaxation.

The impact of our environment and contemporary lifestyle are documented in many studies that conclude that the modern Homo sapiens is challenged by nutritionally-depleted foods, high stress levels, inadequate exercise and little time out from the daily treadmill. As we know from our patients and ourselves if left unchecked this modus vivendi is linked to a decrease in essential vitality, to premature aging, degenerative diseases and ultimately a compromised quality of life.



ABOVE: St. Mary’s thistle (*Silybum marianum*), together with other bitter herbs like Dandelion root and Globe artichoke facilitate essential daily detoxification. For best results they are taken as a herbal infusion before breakfast.

### Enjoy good health cup by cup

An easy way to nurture the natural daily requirements of our body and mind is the most ancient of all remedies: herbal tea. The healing properties of the remedy are easily absorbed by the body to aid specific functions because they are made with minimally processed herbs without the binders, fillers, excipients and colouring that are found in many tablets. These have an impact on bioavailability and can bind with the active ingredients in a tablet, altering the ability of the gastro-intestinal tract to absorb the active components<sup>1</sup>. These issues are not present with minimally processed loose herbs extracted in hot water.

Specific herbs applied strategically as health enhancing infusions are an effective way to regularly cleanse and support the vital body functions. They contribute to our daily required intake of two litres of water and they are a good source of essential nutrients like minerals and trace elements. They also contain powerful antioxidants for an effective health-enhancing programme. Unlike tablets, they have a high bioavailability and can be safely enjoyed by adults and children alike.

The following herbal routine is based on tried and trusted health principles which have been handed down by many generations of medical herbalists. I learned about it from my teacher who was a midwife and herbalist and I have found it very helpful both personally and with my clients. It is designed to cleanse our vital functions in the morning, repower our energy in the afternoon and relax and gently wind us down for a restful sleep

in the evening. When used on a daily basis, it follows our natural biorhythm and supports the regenerating balance of the body.

### Before breakfast

Get ready, up and going. The period before breakfast is physiologically the most effective time for liver detoxification. Liver herbs such as St. Mary's thistle, Globe Artichoke, Dandelion root and Peppermint are the ultimate morning pick-me-up in the as they prepare the body and sharpen the mind for the day. They are traditionally and scientifically proven to promote the regular cleansing and priming of the vital functions of the body. Best taken together as a combination their potent antioxidant properties support effective liver detoxification and liver regeneration.



A healthy liver is considered by both ancient healing systems and modern science as the necessary foundation of good health and vitality. When working well, the liver eliminates normal wastes as well as harmful substances like alcohol, spent pharmaceutical drugs, food additives and environmental toxins (such as pesticides, herbicides and solvents). It is vitally important that these toxins are eliminated on a regular basis to stay well and age well. If you want to do only one good thing a day for yourself, incorporate this routine, and, if you are unsure how to treat a confusing picture of symptoms of a client, staring gently with the liver usually unlocks the healing process.

### Morning tea

Enjoy an internal 'shower', flush it all out and feel refreshed. Kidney cleansing herbs like Nettle, birch leaf, Horsetail, and Golden rod complement the detoxification process initiated by the liver and filter and flush water soluble metabolic wastes, excess sodium, uric acid, inflammatory by-products and toxins which the body has released into the blood. These substances are linked to an aggravation of degenerative diseases like gout and arthritis, back pain, skin problems and urinary tract irritations.

A proper 'flushing' of the body is clinically associated with good energy levels, a healthy fluid balance (no puffiness) and a clear skin. If you have Nettle growing in your garden (*Urtica dioica* or *Urtica urens*) you could also do a daily fresh juice of this very cleansing and remineralising herb (start slowly and build up to 1–2 tablespoons of juice per day, diluted with water). Spring and early summer are the best times to harvest fresh Nettle leaf.

### Afternoon

Repower yourself and enjoy a natural energy boost to maintain energy and focus throughout the day when the nervous system needs to be in active mode. In the afternoon especially, energy levels can decrease. Green tea, Rosemary and St. John's Wort support mental and physical alertness without the defects of common 'quick fix' beverages which only accelerate burnout in stressed people. A fresh mind that can concentrate and a healthy body that is full of vitality are prerequisites for a productive, joyful life.

### Evening

Wind down, relax, restore. Evening is the natural time for the body to move into regeneration mode. Passionflower, Lavender, Chamomile, Lemon balm and Licorice all support much needed mental and physical relaxation after a busy day. The synergisti-

cally active herbs support the nervous system to wind down and switch to a resting mode in the evening. A daily regenerated nervous system can cope better with pressure, stress and anxiety. It also enables essential restorative sleep. Because computer work activates the brain and sympathetic nervous system it is best to leave a gap of at least an hour of computer-free time in order to promote sound quality sleep.

### Long-term health and vitality

Sustained wellness comes from within. We have no problem with cleaning our teeth on a daily basis. But what about our inner hygiene? This is an area where we need to educate our clients to look after themselves beyond the immediate treatment of acute signs and symptoms. Traditionally, herbal infusions have been incorporated into a daily routine as refreshing beverages to enhance the ability of body and mind to perform at their best. They are an ideal therapeutic tool for preventative health care and are safe for both adults and children. In conjunction with a healthy diet, regular moderate exercise and stress management, a herbal infusion maintenance routine which supports vital body functions to perform well will lead to long-term health and vitality. When buying herbal teas, make sure they are certified organic and of therapeutic quality. ✨

### Bibliography:

1. Golightly, L.K., Smolinske, S.S., Bennet, M.L., Sutherland, E.W., Rumack, B.H. Pharmaceutical excipients. Adverse effects associated with inactive ingredients in drug products (Part I). *Med Toxicol Adverse Drug Exp.* 1988 (Apr);3(2):128-165.
2. Martinez, M.N., Amidon, G.L. A Mechanistic approach to understanding the factors affecting drug absorption: a review of fundamentals. *J Clin Pharmacol.* 2002 Jun;42(6):620-43.
3. Nishida, K., Nakakoga, Y., Sato, N., Kawakami, S., Mukai, T., Sasaki, H., Sakaeda, T., Nakamura, J. Effect of viscous additives on drug absorption from the liver surface in rats using phenol red as a model. *Eur J Pharm Biopharm.* 2000 Nov; 50(3):397-402.

*Sandra is the founder and managing director of ARTEMIS Herbal Medicine. She is dedicated to offering a professional range of certified organic, health enhancing remedies based on traditional principles. Wholesale enquiries from Medical Herbalists welcome. In her blog ([www.artemis.co.nz/blog](http://www.artemis.co.nz/blog)) she shares her journey in the translation of the Renaissance Material Medica from 1588 and describes the old herbal knowledge in modern context.*

© Sandra Clair 2010



**ARTEMIS**  
THERAPEUTIC NATURAL REMEDIES