

## **50 home remedies that work: these safe, fast, and effective fixes will relieve what ails you -**

### 1 Bad Breath

No other natural remedy freshens bad breath as well as parsley, says David Orlarsh, N.D., a naturopath in Plymouth, N.H. This herbal food garnish is rich in chlorophyll, a green plant compound that kills the bacteria that cause bad odor. Nibble on a sprig after eating raw onions or garlic or whenever your breath smells sour.

### 2 Blemishes

To clear zits quickly, keep a small sealed jar of this natural topical remedy on hand (it keeps for a few months): Combine 2 tablespoons of green clay, 1 tablespoon of goldenseal powder (*Hydratis canadensis*), 2 to 3 drops of tea tree oil (*Melaleuca alternifolia*), and enough water to form a paste. Apply the paste to your blemish at bedtime and leave it on all night. The clay dries up pore-clogging oil, and the goldenseal and tea tree oil kill the bacteria that cause infection.

### 3 Blisters

Don't pop your blister, no matter how tempting it is. Doing so increases the chance of infection. Instead, dab a cotton ball dipped in plain old drugstore witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) on the area at least four times a day, says Brad Bongiovanni, N.D., a naturopath in Atlanta, Ga. Witch hazel contains astringent tannins that dry up the fluid-filled skin

and relieve pain by increasing circulation. It also contains alcohol, which is drying.

#### 4 Body Odor

If your body odor persists despite good hygiene, your problem may be clogged pores. When your skin can't properly eliminate body wastes, bad body odor can result. Gently dry-brushing your skin just before every shower exfoliates the dead skin that traps those odor-causing wastes. You'll find body brushes in most drugstores. If you brush with long, gentle strokes moving toward your heart, you'll also improve circulation, which will help your body detoxify more efficiently. (This won't eliminate your need for deodorant, but you may be able to use less of it.)

#### 5 Bruises

Experts say the popular muscle soreness remedy Arnica is also your best bet for minimizing bruises and healing them fast. As soon as you bump your knee or other body part or notice a swelling or discoloration, gently rub a dollop of this homeopathic cream on it. Arnica shrinks inflammation and increases circulation to flush away the stagnant blood that turns your skin black and blue.

#### 6 Burns

You may know lavender essential oil (*Lavandula angustifolia*) best for its soothing scent, but you can also use it to take the sting out of a first-degree burn (the kind you might get by touching a hot pan). Not only does this oil speed the healing

process and prevent scarring, Bongiovanni says, but it also fights bacteria on vulnerable new skin. Gently clean the burn with soap and water first. Then combine one part pure lavender essential oil and three parts carrier oil, like almond or olive oil, and apply the mixture liberally to the burn at least three times a day, leaving the wound uncovered.

## 7 Canker Sores

You can once again eat spicy foods in comfort if you douse painful canker sores with raspberry leaf tea (*Rubus idaeus*). Steep 2 tablespoons of dried raspberry leaves in 1 cup boiling hot water until it cools. Strain the tea, and then swish a few mouthfuls for about one minute each three times a day. The tannins in this tea (which tastes a little like black tea) reduce the swelling and clean the sore so it can heal faster, explains Andrea Candee, a South Salem, N.Y.-based herbalist.

## 8 Chapped Lips

First, chuck your Chapstick. Conventional lip balms contain petroleum and sometimes alcohol, both of which dry the sensitive skin on your lips. Instead, moisturize and protect your parched, peeling lips with castor oil. Carry a small squeeze bottle of the oil and apply it with your finger often throughout the day. If you plan to be out in the sun, use a natural petroleum- and alcohol-free balm with an SPF of 15 a few minutes after rubbing in the castor oil.

## 9 Chest Congestion

The sweetness of your breath may suffer, but eating a plate of curried, sauteed onions on rice can really loosen congestion in your chest. Lightly saute two onions, sliced, and at least 1 teaspoon of curry powder in 2 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil until the onions are soft. Onions contain quercetin and sulfur, two plant compounds that break up mucus and increase circulation, explains Orlarsch. Curry also loosens phlegm. And for that breath? See remedy 1, page 48.

## 10 Constipation

If you don't like prunes, you have another option for constipation relief. Dried figs work just as well as prunes. They contain soluble and insoluble fiber, both of which flush out your intestines. In fact, five figs supply at least 20 percent of your daily fiber requirement, more than almost any other fruit. Nibble on four or five at the first sign of constipation and drink at least one glass of water. If you don't get results within three hours, eat a couple more every three hours until you do.

## 11 Corns

Soften this thick, callused skin with a little castor oil, recommends Bongiovanni. Apply a drop of oil to the corn with your finger first thing in the morning, as soon as you get home from work, and right before bed. Cover the corn with a Band-Aid before putting on socks and shoes. You should see slow and steady improvement over several weeks.

## 12 Cough

Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) may be best known as a candy, but as a tea it can lick a lingering cough. Steep a licorice root tea bag or 1 teaspoon of the loose dried root in 1 cup boiling hot water for five minutes, and drink up to three mugs of it throughout the day. Your cough should improve right away, but you can continue to drink three cups a day for up to three days. Licorice can raise your blood pressure, so don't drink it if you have hypertension or diabetes.

### 13 Cuts

The antioxidant power that makes vitamin E so good for your heart also speeds the healing of minor cuts. Simply prick a vitamin E capsule with a sterile needle and squeeze the oil onto your cut at least three times a day. Cover it with a Band-Aid if it's a serious wound. Be sure to choose natural vitamin E (d-alpha tocopherol), Orlarsch says. Research shows that it has more antioxidant power than synthetic vitamin E.

### 14 Dandruff

To clear up dandruff you need to counter the cause of the problem: your scalp's acidic pH level. To restore your scalp's natural alkaline pH level, first wash and condition your hair. Then, while still in the shower or bath, pour a cup of apple cider vinegar on your head and rinse with water.

### 15 Diarrhea

It may seem counterintuitive, but to clear up diarrhea you may need more bacteria--good bacteria, that is. Diarrhea

can be a sign of an imbalance of good and bad bacteria in your intestines. Taking probiotic supplements corrects that imbalance, Bongiovanni says. Look for a brand that contains six to eight strains of live organisms, including Lactobacillus acidophilus and Bifidobacter. Bongiovanni recommends taking enough supplements to get 20 billion live organisms a day (this may be a large number of capsules). You should see improvement in one or two days; if you don't, see a doctor.

## 16 Dizziness

A common kitchen spice can stop a case of the spins. Simply drop a pinch of cayenne into a glass of warm water and sip. The warmth of the water and the heat of the cayenne cause your body to pump more blood and oxygen to your brain, which makes you feel clearheaded and steady. If you continue to experience bouts of dizziness, see your doctor.

## 17 Dry Eyes

You'll need to shed a few tears to remedy a case of dry eyes. And the easiest way to stimulate your tearing action is to apply moist heat to your eyelids. Dip a small towel or washcloth in warm water, wring it out, lie down, close your eyes, and put the cloth over your lids for 15 minutes. Do this two or three times a day or as needed.

## 18 Dry Skin

Almond and grapeseed oil are the quickest fixes for dry skin. They soak into your skin faster than creamy moisturizers. If

your skin is extra dry and rough, opt for thicker oils like castor and avocado. If you're prone to breakouts, try filtered jojoba oil. Spread a thin coat of whichever oil you choose to the dry areas twice a day.

## 19 Earache

Ease the pain and pressure of an ear infection with a store-bought blend of mullein (*Verbascum densiflorum*) and garlic (*Allium sativum*) infused oils, advises Tukwila, Wash.-based naturopath Eric Yarnell, N.D. These oils kill pain and fight bacteria. Before bed, warm the drops. One way to do that is by placing the bottle in your armpit for 45 seconds. Tilt your head and squeeze 5 drops into the infected ear and then place a cotton ball in your ear for a few minutes to keep the drops from running out. You should experience immediate relief.

## 20 Eye Strain

To revitalize tired eyes, treat yourself to a soothing chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) compress twice a day. The chamomile soaks through your eyelids, soothing eye tissue and reducing swelling in the capillaries, Candee explains. Make the compress by steeping 1 teaspoon dried chamomile flowers or 1 chamomile tea bag in 1 cup boiling hot water for 20 minutes. Strain. Allow the tea to cool, soak a washcloth in it, wring it out, lie down, and place it over your closed eyes for 15 to 20 minutes.

## 21 Fatigue

Sleep is what you need if you're overtired. But for a quick pick-me-up, drink a mug of mate (*Ilex paraguariensis*). This tea contains caffeine, but in lower doses than coffee. It also contains theobromine, an energizing compound. Steep a mate tea bag or 1 teaspoon dried mate in boiling hot water for 5 to 10 minutes, strain, and drink. This earthy-tasting tea is good black or with milk and sugar.

## 22 Fever

Maintaining your fever, rather than breaking it right away, can fight the virus that's making you sick. If you have a mild fever (up to 100 degrees), wrap yourself in a blanket and drink a cup of yarrow tea (*Achillea millefolium*). Make the tea by steeping 2 yarrow tea bags or 2 teaspoons dried yarrow in 1 cup boiling hot water for 15 minutes. Reheat it until it's piping hot, and sip it slowly. Your temperature may rise or fall a degree as you start to sweat. If your starting temperature is 101 to 103, drink the tea but skip the blanket. Check your temperature every 30 minutes throughout this process. Eventually your temperature will drop. If your starting temperature is 104 or more, or if the tea-drinking brings your temperature to 104 or more, call your doctor. Don't do this with babies or children, or if you're pregnant; consult your doctor instead.

## 23 Foot Odor

Chlorophyll, the same plant compound that gives plants their green color, can also sweeten your feet. Pour 2 to 3 teaspoons liquid chlorophyll into a bucket filled with a gallon of warm water, and soak your feet for 15 minutes. Dry your feet completely afterward, and wear cotton socks which let



your feet breathe.

## 24 Gas

Chew on a small handful of anise, dill, or fennel seeds when you feel bloated. The compounds in these seeds relax the muscles in your digestive tract, which allows trapped gas to pass. You can buy the seeds in the spice aisle of grocery stores or the bulk section of natural food stores. Bonus: They freshen your breath, too.

## 25 Headache

Dull a tension headache by massaging a few drops of peppermint essential oil (*Mentha piperita*) into your temples. Peppermint works as well as 1,000 mg of acetaminophen, the main ingredient in aspirin, according to one German study. Herb experts don't know exactly how it works, says Yarnell, but the peppermint appears to prevent your body from sending pain signals to your central nervous system.

## 26 Heartburn

You'll need to find a carpeted area for this heartburn remedy called a heel drop. This sounds strange, but it works, says Yarnell. Roll up onto your toes as high as you can, and then allow your heels to quickly drop down onto the ground. Repeat this 20 to 30 times, holding onto the back of a chair for balance if you need to. The downward motion pulls the acid that causes heartburn back into your stomach.

## 27 Hemorrhoids

The tannins in witch hazel tighten the weak veins that trigger painful hemorrhoids. Apply witch hazel cream (be sure to buy the cream and not the clear liquid) three times daily, says Yarnell.

## 28 Hiccups

Think you've tried every hiccup remedy in the book? Candee swears by this one: Put a straw in a 6-ounce glass of water, press the tips of your index fingers into the indentations behind your earlobes where your neck and jawbone meet, and drink through the straw. Drink as much as you can while keeping pressure on those points. When the glass is empty, your hiccups should be gone.

## 29 Hives

The moment you feel yourself start to break out in hives, take 1,000 mg of vitamin C and 500 mg of pantothenic acid, advises Orlarsch. The combination of these supplements helps your body produce antihistamines, which fight hives, he explains. If the hives don't disappear after the first dose, take another dose every 10 minutes, up to three doses. The high vitamin C dose may cause diarrhea. Reduce your dose if this occurs.

## 30 Indigestion

If your tummy's in turmoil, drink a mug of chamomile tea (*Matricaria recutita*). The essential oils in this herb ease muscle spasms in your gastrointestinal tract and may also

decrease your body's production of pepsin, a digestive enzyme that exacerbates indigestion. Brew your tea using loose chamomile flowers rather than the less-potent tea bags. Steep 1 to 2 teaspoons of the dried flowers in boiling hot water for 20 minutes, strain, and sip slowly.

### 31 Inflamed Gums

When your gums feel tender, mix a dropperful of myrrh liquid extract (*Commiphora myrrha*) in 1/4 cup of water, swish it around in your mouth, and spit it out, instructs Rosemary Gladstar, an herbalist in East Barre, Vt. Myrrh soothes sore, swollen gums. Do this twice a day.

### 32 Insect Bites

Relieve the itch from bug bites with an onion. The sulfur in onions neutralizes the chemicals that cause the itch, explains Candee. Simply slice a yellow onion in half and rub one of the cut sides on the bite. The itching should stop immediately. Refrigerate the onion in a sealed container to use again if the itching resumes. Make a fresh slice before reapplying it.

### 33 Insomnia

On nights when you can't get to sleep, a gentle herbal extract can do the trick. Take 2 teaspoons of valerian liquid extract (*Valeriana officinalis*) mixed in 1/4 cup warm water. As you wait for the herb to take effect, read a book. You can safely take two more doses of valerian throughout the night if you wake up again. Be aware that valerian makes some

people jittery. If you have that reaction, try skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*) or passion flower (*Passiflora incarnata*) instead.

### 34 Joint Pain

Capsaicin ointment, made from fiery cayenne peppers, can make your joints feel as good as new by interrupting pain signals. Rub the ointment into your joints every few hours. You may feel a mild burning sensation in your skin when you first apply it, but any discomfort will subside in a few minutes. Be sure to keep your hands away from your eyes until you've washed them thoroughly.

### 35 Menstrual Cramps

It should be no surprise that an herb named cramp bark (*Viburnum opulus*) would work wonders for menstrual pain. It contains at least six compounds that relax muscles, as well as salicin, the pain-relieving compound from which aspirin is derived. Take 1 teaspoon of the liquid extract every hour until your cramps subside. If they don't ease within 48 hours, stop taking cramp bark.

### 36 Muscle Strain

The tried and true Epsom salt bath works magic on sore or strained muscles. Epsom salts contain magnesium, a mineral which relaxes muscles when absorbed through your skin, explains Bongiovanni. The salts also soothe pain and kickstart your body's muscle repair process. Dump 2 cups of Epsom salts into a tub filled with warm water and soak for 20

minutes.

### 37 Nasal Congestion

Nothing works faster to clear clogged sinuses than horseradish, Gladstar says. The oils in this plant boost circulation in your nasal passages, which then loosens mucus. Mix a teaspoon of grated fresh horseradish with a little apple cider vinegar or honey, and eat it on toast (the vinegar and honey take the edge off the potent horseradish taste). Inhale deeply as you grate the horseradish; the fumes alone will start breaking up your congestion.

### 38 Nosebleeds

Halt a mild nosebleed in minutes with this simple, albeit strange trick. Tear a piece of brown paper from a grocery bag, place it inside your mouth between your top lip and your gum, and leave it there until your nose stops bleeding, says Candee. No one knows why it works, but Candee says her patients have used this trick successfully for 30 years.

### 39 Poison Ivy

Stop the itch of a poison ivy rash and prevent it from spreading with the following homemade paste: Mix 1 tablespoon of salt and 1/8 teaspoon of peppermint essential oil (*Mentha piperita*) with 1/2 cup green clay, and add enough water to form a paste. Apply the paste liberally to the rash and leave it on for 20 to 30 minutes. Store leftover paste in a tightly sealed jar and reapply as needed. The remedy soothes the itch by absorbing the irritating plant oils

and drying the rash. It also works for poison oak.

#### 40 Puffy Eyes

If your eyes are puffy in the morning, go straight for a cube of ice. Wrap it in a paper towel and hold it over each eyelid for a few minutes. The cold will reduce the swelling.

#### 41 Razor Burn

A razor burn victim himself, Yarnell recommends slathering aloe gel (Aloe vera) on your skin when you're done shaving. You can buy aloe gel in drugstores, but look for a product that has few additives and is made with 100 percent aloe.

#### 42 Sore Throat

Most people know that echinacea (*Echinacea* spp) can help you fight off a cold. But it also acts as a mild local anesthetic when taken in liquid extract form, says Yarnell. Mix 1/2 teaspoon of the liquid extract with about 1/4 cup water, gargle, and swallow. Do this every hour for up to 48 hours or until the soreness disappears.

#### 43 Sties

The warm compress that most doctors recommend to heal sties can be made more effective if you soak the compress in a solution containing the herb eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*). Steep 1 teaspoon dried eyebright in 1 cup boiling hot water for 10 minutes and strain. Soak a washcloth in the solution, gently wring it, and apply it to the styte for 15

minutes two or three times a day.

#### 44 Sunburn

Your afternoon snack can also soothe your sunburn. Smearing yogurt on your skin as soon as it turns pink cools your skin and reestablishes its pH balance so it heals faster. Use plain, full-fat yogurt that contains few additives. Let it sit on your skin until it warms up and then rinse it off with tepid water. Apply as often as needed.

#### 45 Toothache

Numb a throbbing tooth with clove essential oil (*Syzygium aromaticum*). The aromatic chemical in clove called eugenol anesthetizes pain and kills bacteria. To apply it, soak a cotton ball or swab with the oil and use it to wipe your sore gums and tooth. Repeat this four to five times a day until you can see your dentist.

#### 46 Urinary Tract Infections

Drink cranberry or blueberry juice when you feel a urinary tract infection coming on. Both contain compounds that fight the infection by preventing troublesome bacteria from adhering to the walls of your urinary tract, explains Bongiovanni. Down one to two 8-ounce glasses of 100 percent cranberry or blueberry juice daily until the infection disappears. If you buy cranberry juice cocktail, drink four glasses a day. Or take 2.5 g of cranberry extract capsules (*Vaccinium macrocarpum*) twice a day with meals. If you still have symptoms after two days or if your symptoms worsen,

see your doctor.

#### 47 Vaginal Dryness

Vaginal dryness is triggered by a hormone imbalance. Vitamin E oil combined with the herb black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) restores vaginal moisture and tips your hormones back into balance, explains Yarnell. Simply squeeze the oil from six vitamin E capsules into a small cup, add about 5 teaspoons of black cohosh cream, and stir. Apply the mixture to the inside and outside of your vagina two or three times a day until you find relief.

#### 48 Varicose Veins

Putting your feet up and applying a compress made with sage tea (*Salvia officinalis*) can minimize the swelling of your varicose veins. Rich in anti-inflammatory compounds, sage reduces swelling by shrinking vein walls, Candee explains. Steep 6 teaspoons dried sage in 3 cups boiling hot water for 30 minutes (double the recipe if you're treating both legs) and strain. Dunk a medium-size hand towel in the tea and gently wring it out. Sit in a spot where you can put your feet up above your heart and wrap the towel snugly around your problem leg.

#### 49 Warts

This wart remedy may sound wacky, but Yarnell swears by it. Gently rub the wart with your finger for 15 seconds at the same time each day. Rubbing the wart stimulates blood flow to the area and prompts your immune system to fight the



wart virus. Doing this at the same time every day trains your immune system to kick in on its own.

## 50 Yeast Infections

Ease the maddening itch of a yeast infection with a suppository made with boric acid. Although its name sounds harsh, boric acid acts as a mild antiseptic and has antiviral and antifungal properties. Insert one suppository every night as long as needed. Do not exceed 14 days. If you don't find the suppositories in your natural food store, ask your pharmacist to make them.