

The External Applications of Herbs and Water

FOMENTATIONS AND BATHS

Fomentations are a category of treatment in which strips of cloth are soaked in a liquid herbal extract e.g. tea, tincture or succus, and placed over the treatment area on the skin. An occlusive covering such as plastic wrap or waxed paper covers this and is held in place with tape or more bandages for a measured period of time.

Astringent Fomentation:

An astringent fomentation is indicated for the treatment of cuts, scrapes, abrasions, wounds with exudates and cracked & sore nipples. As a preventive treatment to prepare the nipples for breastfeeding and help preclude mastitis.

- Choose appropriate astringent herb by strength and availability:

Oak - *Quercus spp*

Sweet Sumac - *Rhus aromatica*

Comfrey - *Symphytum off. fol.*

Yarrow - *Achillea millefolium fol.*

Coneflower - *Echinacea spp. rad.*

Self Heal - *Prunella off.*

Shepherd's Purse - *Capsella bursa-pastoris.*

- Boil 15 minutes in pure water to make a strong tea
- Cool and strain the tea
- Use to clean and irrigate wounds and sore tissues.
- Wound may be wrapped w/ tea soaked gauze + covered w/ occlusive dressing prn.
- Leave in place for one hour.
- Repeat ad lib.

Arnica Fomentation:

An arnica fomentation is indicated for sprains, haematomas, contusions with swelling, and for the resorption of blood.

CAUTION: DO NOT USE ON OPEN WOUNDS.

May be painful and toxic if absorbed systemically.

- Mix tincture of *Arnica Montana* with pure water 1:4 (20% solution)
- Soak gauze in solution and place several folded layers over effusion
- Cover with occlusive dressing & Repeat BID until resolved

Euphrasia Fomentation:

Euphrasia Fomentation is indicated where there is eye inflammation and/or infection.

- Combine 10g. each of the following dried herbs:
 - Eyebright – *Euphrasia officinalis*
 - Chamomile – *Matricaria recutita*
 - Golden Seal – *Hydrastis Canadensis*
- Bring 250 ml of pure water to a boil
- Infuse herbs until cool, then strain
- Soak folded gauze in infusion and place over the patient's closed eyes.
- Have patient recline for ½ hour
- Repeat ad lib.

BATHS

Herbs have a long and well-documented history of use in folk traditions, on the battlefield, and in the clinic. Emergencies and acute and chronic conditions have been successfully treated with herbal remedies taken internally and acting systemically. When herbal remedies are topically applied they tend to act locally, affecting mainly the tissues with which they come into direct contact, and the adjacent tissues through perfusion of the medical elements if they are in a suitable carrier. What conditions are we likely to see in the home and which external treatment protocols are practical, appropriate and harmonious?

Father Sebastian Kneipp developed a wonderful system of Hydrotherapy which included soaking the whole body or body parts in temperature controlled water. Adding herbal extracts of teas, tinctures, essential oils, hydrosols and salts provided an enormous variety of treatments, and is itself a complete subject of study. The following herbs are still used in European naturopathic hydrotherapy, which was imported to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century by Benedict Lust. There are still Kneipp therapists in European health spas and the list of herbs below are made into liquid extracts and are dispensed in unit size and bulk bottles. John H. Kellogg MD has also written an excellent treatise on hydrotherapy. Most of the following list of herbs can be found in proprietary compounds ready for use in a bathtub or sitz bath. Most good health food stores have a selection of therapeutic bath products.

Valeriana officinalis ; tranquilizing & sedative

Picea spp. (Spruce needles) : respiratory problems

Hayseed: anti-rheumatic

Acorus calamus & *Rosmarinus spp* : circulatory & nervous system stimulant

Thymus vulgaris & *Calendula off* & *Hydrastis*: anti-bacterial & anti-fungal

Humulus lupulus: sound sleep

Zingiber off : colds & flu

Quercus off. : skin diseases major astringent

Avena sativa: sedative

Matricaria recutita & *Hypericum* : reduces inflammation and eases tension

Melissa off & *Lavandula off* : mild sedative

Juniperis off : muscular relaxation

Mustard powder : influenza & colds, muscle aches

Capsicum anuum : (footbath) chill with flu

As water is one of the four primary elements, we must recognize how integral it is to all life. There could be no life on Earth, as we understand it, without water. How often do you think of water as one of your primary healing choices? We use water to extract our herbs as tea and tinctures but do we realize that water is one of the necessary ingredients in our formulations? Besides the four elements we have temperaments. Water helps transmit temperature by intimately touching all surface areas when we are suspended in it. In hydrotherapy there is a scale of temperatures and a requisite time for immersion in order that the effects be controlled and safety is observed.

Dangerously Hot 125 F/ 52 C	may cause injuries
Painfully Hot 111-124 F/ 44-51 C	intolerable
Very Hot 105-110 F/ 41-43 C	tolerable for short time periods
Hot* 98-104 F/ 37-40 C	tolerable and causing redness
Warm / neutral 93-97 F/ 34-36 C	comfortable
Tepid 81-92 F/ 27-33 C	just below skin temperature
Cool 66-80 F/ 19-26 C	produces goose bumps
Cold* 55-65 F/ 13-19 C	tolerable but uncomfortable
Very cold 32-54 F/ 0-12 C	painfully cold

(Boyle & Saine 1988)

There are a few principles that can be addressed here. The more extreme the temperature of the water is from comfortable temperature, the less time spent immersed. Extremities of the body can better tolerate extremes in temperature. The body will always react two times for each immersion. For example: cold water will immediately constrict blood vessels and reduce blood volume in the submerged area. Blood will collect in the centre of the body to be heated and protect the viscera.

A neurological response will cause vaso-constriction throughout the whole body. The second response will be like a rebound. Hot blood will then move out from the centre to the periphery. Circulation will return and the vasculature, having been exercised, will be more responsive. Cool and cold water will have a tonifying and stimulating effect whilst warm and hot water will have a relaxing and sedating effect. Extreme hot or cold focused at a point will overcome the nerve force but will register as hot like a burn. Alternating hot with cold immersion especially with the limbs will improve circulation and accelerate healing of damaged soft tissue.

Water as steam in a sweat bath has many benefits particularly with respiratory conditions like influenza, COPD, tuberculosis and even cancer. It is beyond the scope of this little essay to expand upon all the benefits of hydrotherapy other than to alert you to the experience and literature.

Herbal Actions for Topical Treatments On Skin

Antifungal: *Angelica archangelica radix*, *Calendula off.*, *Melaluca alternafolia*,
Olea europa folia, *Tahebuia impetigosa*, *Usnea barbata*,

Anti-inflammatory: *Calendula officinalis*, *Hypericum perforatum*, *Lavandula officinalis*, *Matricaria recutita*. *Plantago species*

Anti-microbials: *Baptisia tinctoria*, *Berberis species*, *Echinacea species*, *Hydrastis Canadensis*,
Lavandula off., *Malaluca alternafolia*, *Rosmarinus officinalis*, *Usnea barbata*

Antipruritic: *Avena sativa*, *Calendula officinalis*, *Hammamelis virginiana*,
Hypericum perforatum, *Lavandula officinalis*, *Stellaria media*.

Astringent: *Achillea millefolium*, *Aesculus hippocastanum*, *Agrimonia eupatorium*,
Geranium maculatum, *Hamemulis virginiana*, *Potentilla tormentilla*, *Quercus alba*,
Rhus aromatica, *Rubus species*, *Thea sinensis*

Emollient: *Althea officinalis*, *Ascophyllum nodosa*, *Cetraria islandica*, *Fucus vesiculosus*, *Linum usitatissimum*, *Malva sylvestris*, *Symphytum off.*, *Ulmas fulva cortex*

Vulneraries, *Calendula off.*, *Commiphora mol-mol*, *Echinacea spp. radix*, *Equisetum arvense*, *Impatiens capensis*, *Lavandula spp.*, *Matricaria recutita*, *Populus balsamifera*, *Prunella vulgaris*, *Stellaria media*

Select the herbs from the appropriate herbal action category as indicated by the patient's condition. You may choose to brew a pot of tea and apply locally as a fomentation or brew a large pot and fill the tub with the appropriate temperature water to work with the herbs. Lastly the herbs, fresh or dried, can be directly applied to the skin. Make a paste by grinding the fresh herb in a blender or cuisinart or suribatchi with a little added water if necessary. Apply paste to a gauze pad and place pad, herb side in, on the treatment site. Hold in place with a gauze roll or strips of bed sheeting. In some cases you want an occlusive dressing. Wrap with seran to seal in or out moisture and air. Leave in place for an hour to overnight as needed.

Poultices and Plasters

We would do well to reinstate the ancient art of poulticing as a valued healing tool in the modern herbal renaissance. As practitioners become more involved in providing therapy as well as dispensing herbal prescriptions, the line between clinical herbal therapist and folk practitioner will blur, with or without the approval of the orthodox health care community.

There is no need to wait for "scientific validation" when we have recorded over three thousand years of proven efficacy in traditional healing practices all around the world. In this spirit we will re-introduce three important poultices, their preparation and use for the benefit of practitioners who can then also teach these methods to their patients and families. This re-education process will help place personal responsibility for health back into the hands of the individual and create a more humane relationship between the professional and lay community. In this article we will demonstrate the mustard poultice, the castor oil pack and the comfrey poultice to serve as a general introduction to the vast subject of external application of herbs.

Mustard Plaster

For many people, the fall and winter seasons bring increased incidents of colds and flus that may progress into more serious conditions like pneumonia. Those who suffer with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) such as chronic bronchitis, miner's lung, emphysema and chronic asthma also tend to have their symptoms worsen at this time of year.

When professional medical help has been sought and the diagnosis confirmed, a cooperative plan of action may be outlined with the agreement of the health care providers and the patient. The mustard poultice can be extremely effective when given as an external treatment along with the use of herbs and/or drugs taken internally to treat COPD. This combination of internal and external treatments can considerably shorten the healing time and make the patient more comfortable.

The Mustard Plaster

Supplies:

Single or double bed sheet cut in half lengthwise

One 2litre cooking pot

500 – 750g Flax Seed

50g mustard powder (also called mustard flour)

Large serving spoon

Large work counter

Blender or food processor

One liter water

100ml vegetable or castor oil

Medium mixing bowl

Two Tbs baking soda

Soft wash cloth

Method:

1. Fill one cooking pot with approximately one liter of water and bring to a boil.
2. Grind the flax seed to a course meal while the water is heating.
3. At this time, also prepare the patient. Find a comfortable location where the patient can recline at about a 45-degree angle. A couch, reclining chair or a bed will do. Have blankets available to cover the patient if required for warmth.
4. Have the patient remove all clothing above the waist, as well as any jewelry from the neck and torso.
5. Apply vegetable or castor oil evenly over the entire treatment area. (See illustration 1) The patient may prefer to perform this step. If a woman has sensitive nipples you can cut out from the end of the cloth a patch to cover each nipple. (See illustration 2) Use extra oil over sensitive areas like the side skin under the arms.
6. When water boils, add the flax meal and stir continuously until it becomes a thick porridge. If mix is too wet and you have no more flax seed, you may stir in wheat flour to make the mix stiffer.

Preparing and Applying the Plaster

1. Use your hands to estimate the size of the treatment area on the chest. This will be the area of the poultice square on the sheet. You will need to position the poultice square at one end of the bed sheet and equidistant from the three edges. (See illustration 3)

2. Apply the mustard flour evenly to the poultice square with the spoon. Scoop the hot flax porridge onto the square keeping the mustard layer next to the cloth. Avoid mixing it into the porridge. Use all of the porridge mix.
3. Fold up the bottom edge of the sheet at the line made by the bottom of the poultice square across the entire length of the sheet. (See illustration 4)
4. Fold the top of the sheet down using the top of the poultice square as the line across the entire length of the sheet. (See illustration 5)
5. Roll the short end towards the poultice square edge. Roll the long end towards the poultice square edge. (See illustration 5) You now have a square with a scroll of cloth at both ends.
6. Test the temperature of the poultice by placing your hand on the table palm down and putting the square over it for a minute or so. If you wince, scream or cry it is too hot. Please note that chest skin is much more delicate than the back of your hand.
7. Have the patient sit with their back facing you and their arms held over their head.
8. Pick up the poultice with the short scroll in your left hand and the long scroll in your right hand. Prepare the patient by warning them that the poultice may feel quite hot.
9. Lift the poultice over the head of the patient and pull it into place over the chest with gentle tension. Hold the right scroll in place and unroll the short scroll across the patient's back. Holding the end of the sheet with the left palm against the back, unroll the long end around the back to the front and allow the cloth to cross the front with about 1/3 of the cloth below the poultice square. Continue to wrap around and on the second pass over the chest, cross with about 1/3 of the cloth above the square and have some overlap in the middle. The poultice need not be wrapped tightly especially at the top.
10. Within a few minutes the patient will experience tremendous heat and may become apprehensive. Be reassuring and try to help the patient to relax and remain calm by gently leading them through a breathing/relaxation/prayer exercise.
11. If the experience is still too intense gently pull the poultice away from the skin at the top, leaving it wrapped around their body. Instruct the patient to blow a stream of air into the open space. Once they feel more comfortable replace the poultice against the skin. You may have to repeat this process several times. Leave the poultice in place for one hour.

When complete, unroll the cloth in a reverse process and examine the patient's skin. The skin will be bright pink and tender, but there should be no blistering if the mustard poultice was done correctly. End the process with a slight cooling of the skin. Fill a bowl with cool water and add the 2 TBS of baking soda. Gently dab the skin to remove oil residue.

If treatment is done during the day, have the patient recline quietly for 30 minutes. If time allows a short nap is helpful. The treatment is especially efficacious when done in the evening when the patient can retire for the night and sleep until morning.

Scrape the poultice mixture off of the cloth and discard. Rinse the cloth in running water. Cloth may be reused after laundering.

The patient's skin may still be hot/pink and /or tender in the morning, but there should be no welts or blisters. After showering the patient might feel some discomfort if they reactivate any mustard oils still in their skin. The patient should be advised not to use hot water for the first shower they take after the treatment. Only mild, fat-based soap should be used.

This process may be repeated on alternate nights depending on how deeply set the respiratory condition and the aptitude of the patient. A health professional should listen to the patient's lungs before and after each treatment with a stethoscope to evaluate the patient's progress.

Family members may participate in the whole ritual and be taught the process.

NEW SHORT PROCESS

A sheet no larger than a pillow-case can be used to make the plaster. In the centre of the cloth, mark off the area for the mustard powder and flax seed. Proceed as above with the measurements and cooking instructions. After the hot flax meal has been poured into the cloth fold in the four sides. Have the patient recline on a couch or chair and place the hot plaster on their chest. Using a small bath blanket or large Turkish towel cover the patient to hold the heat in and keep patient comfortable. If the patient stresses or panics from the extreme heat then it is much easier to lift the plaster away from the skin. The wrapping and binding feeling can be very frightening for some people and so practitioners are more often turning to the short process to alleviate that fear.

Mustard compounds were used as the first chemotherapies after a WW1 incident in which soldiers, suffering from tuberculosis were gassed and survived to come home. They were cured and medical doctors began experiments with mustard family plants and compounds. Mustard plasters can bring relief to many kinds of lung cancer and have been used successfully. *Brassica* plants like broccoli have anti-cancer compounds and are being used in fresh plant poultices for treatment of basal cell carcinomas sun-screen and more.

The Castor Oil Pack

Castor oil is a clear, viscous oil that is cold extracted from the seed of *Ricinus communis*. This plant, native to India and Africa can now be seen in many Canadian gardens. After the oil is extracted, a second extraction of the pomace yields Ricin, a poison used in cancer research and poison products. Castor oil is first mentioned in the Ebers Papyrus – 1550 BCE and was used by Cleopatra for her eyes and lips. Information available in the modern scientific literature is limited to the purgative properties of internal ingestion of the oil. A dose of 5-15 ml will produce catharsis within two to eight hours.

There is a plethora of anecdotal folk and clinical literature on Castor Oil, but this bears no stamp of authority in the academic community. A more enlightened approach regarding the use and efficacy of Castor Oil packs is found in the readings of the medical psychic Edgar Cayce, and these readings are summarized in one book.¹ Cayce describes a relationship between body organs, the lymphatic system and its various tissues, the nervous system, the endocrine system and the mind. Biochemists had not yet found the messenger chemicals that Cayce “saw” so very few people believed that these systems had an elaborate communication system that linked them together. The science of psychoneuroimmunology is just beginning to map out the relationships that many people intuitively grasped long ago. In short, Cayce says that Castor Oil, due to its unique molecular structure, is absorbed through the skin reaches the internal organs, re-establishing “coordination” which in turn brings about a state of healthy balance.

The most significant recorded success of Castor Oil Packs relates toward organs in the pelvic cavity, consistent benefits to gastro intestinal problems and conditions in the genito-urinary tract. Numerous topical conditions like warts and papilomas have been treated successfully. Even some people with acute inflammatory conditions have responded well. Of course in all serious medical conditions professional help should be sought.

Castor Oil Pack:

Supplies:

- 2 Blankets and 2 Towels (May be stained during treatment.)
- Double Boiler or Cook Pot and Hot Water Bath
- 1 Bed sheet cut into 8 parts
- 100 – 250 ml Castor Oil
- Large Mixing Bowl
- Hot Water Bottle
- Plastic Wrap
- Small Mixing Bowl
- 2 Tbs Baking Soda

Method:

1. Have patient recline comfortably on a bed, couch or reclining chair with the area of their abdomen or pelvis to be treated exposed.
2. Heat the oil over simmering water in the double boiler or water bath
3. Fold a strip of the bed sheet until it is 3 to 5 layers thick and place in the small bowl.
4. Pour the hot oil over the cloth and knead it into the fabric.
5. Fill the hot water bottle with the simmering water bath.
6. Wring out the Castor Oil pack so that it remains soaked, but not dripping.
7. Place the pack over the abdomen centering it on the area of concern and extending beyond the area a bit.
8. Cover the pack with plastic wrap.
9. Place the hot water bottle over the plastic and cover with towels to insulate.
10. Cover the patient with blankets for comfort.
11. Have the patient lay quietly for an hour engaged in some internal exercise of relaxation/breathing/ or prayer exercise or simply resting. When time is up, remove the pack and discard.
12. Mix 2 Tbs of baking soda into a bowl of tepid water and wash the skin free of oil.
13. Have the patient lay quietly again for a while, or take a nap. If treatment was given in the evening patient may go to sleep for the night.
14. Repeat the process on alternating days with deep-set chronic conditions for the duration of the internal program.

Viriditas Herbal Products

Phytolacca and Viola Oleum

Phytolacca decandra infused Castor Oil

Viola odorata infused Olive Oil

Boswellia thurifera Tincture

Styrax benzoin Tincture

Monarda didyma Essential Oil

Lavandula officinalis Essential Oil

The castor oil pack can be amplified in its efficacy especially when there are hardened tissues. Uterine fibroids, ovarian cysts, fibrocystic breasts, lipomas, endometriosis, and other tumours & cysts can be softened and resorbed into adjacent tissues or the blood stream. The addition of phytolacca to the castor oil stimulates the immune system and increases the movement of lymph through the tissues perfused by the compound oil. It was in the 13th century that Hildegard of Bingen documented the use of viola infused olive oil for the use of softening all hardened tissues, which were all called tumours regardless of their origin or contents. She ran a busy infirmary that treated people for many miles around including providing for labour and delivery. *Boswellia* is strongly anti-inflammatory, anti-neoplastic and can also cross the blood brain barrier. *Benzoin* is antiseptic, anti-oxidant, vulnerary and acts as a preservative in the compound. *Monarda* is antinauseant, antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, and aromatic. *Lavandula* is anti-inflammatory, anti-rheumatic, anti-spasmodic and nervine sedative.

Additional indications for the Phytolacca oleum compound are for post-op healing of surgical scars or dissolving internal adhesions as a result of traumas causing tears in the fascia or surgical intervention. Lymphoedema can be relieved with internal use of fluid moving herbs and external use of the phytolacca oleum. With the addition of rosehip seed oil the treatment of deep scars and cleft lip may be possible.

Honey Salve

Hydrastis Canadensis

Commiphora mol-mol

Symphytum officinalis

Unpasteurized organic honey

Salving with honey goes way back in history in every culture that gathers honey from the bees. The herbs are powdered to 60 – 80 mesh fineness and mixed into the honey until it becomes thick but still pliable. The mix is spread on a gauze pad instead of directly into the wound so as not to disturb the healing process. Use on open cuts, wounds, pustules sores, decubitus ulcers and fistulas. Even deep wounds will heal by first intention and not by granulation and generally leave no scar. Perineal tearing can be treated with baths filled astringent, antiseptic and vulnerary herbs and with the honey salve. One case of a seriously large haemangioma that was not resorbing was treated successfully with the honey salve.

The Comfrey Poultice:

Whenever there is trauma causing damage to soft or hard tissues e.g. haematomas or broken bones (especially in the limbs) a comfrey poultice is indicated. It is easy to make when there is fresh comfrey to be found. Roots or leaves can be used interchangeably though it is much easier to regenerate leaves, so, when using fresh plant material we will rely principally on leaves and stems.

Supplies:

- Cut fresh leaves close to the ground to include the whole leaf and stem.
(Five to ten large leaves should suffice.)
- 1 bed sheet cut into 10cm wide strips cut across the width of the cloth. Roll into individual bandages.
- Large cook pot filled with boiling water
- 1 Vegetable knife or food processor
- 1 Medium-size mixing bowl
- Tongs
- Plastic Wrap

Method:

1. Bring the water to a boil in the large pot.
2. Immerse the leaves until they turn dark green in order to burst the leaf hairs which would be irritating to the skin.
3. Using the tongs, lift the leaves out of the pot and shake off excess water.
4. Put the leaves into the food processor and liquefy. (Alternately, finely mince the leaves with a knife.)
5. Put pulp into the mixing bowl.
6. Make patient comfortable.
7. Expose the area to be treated.
8. Thickly slather the comfrey pulp over the treatment area.
9. Cover with plastic wrap.
10. Using the bandage rolls, wrap the poultice securing it into place. N.B. When wrapping a limb, you always start distally and wrap towards the heart. Use enough bandage rolls to hold the poultice in place comfortably and securely. To avoid impeding circulation, test for correct tension of the bandage and you should be able to comfortably insert one finger underneath the bandage.
11. Leave the poultice on for one hour or over night if treatment is given in the evening.
12. After removing the poultice, discard the pulp and launder the bandages.
13. Repeat poultice daily in conjunction with internal therapy, for duration of the healing process

Note: If you must use dried herb:

1. Grind separately a large scoop of root and leaf.
2. Soak the root powder (2 parts water to 1 part root powder) in cold water for at least an hour.
3. Bring water to a boil and add enough leaf powder to make a paste.
4. Apply hot paste mix to the treatment area and follow above procedure.

Principles of healing related to remedies taken internally (i.e. tinctures, teas, etc.) are not addressed here, as these are patient-specific and the topic too vast for the scope of this paper. Poultices can be seen to be more generic and system specific viz. the mustard poultice for the respiratory system (CODP), the castor oil pack for the digestive system, reproductive system and for the integration of the lymphatic, endocrine and nervous systems and the comfrey poultice for the musculo-skeletal and integumentary systems.

Through the art of poulticing intimate contact between plants and people is established, and the healing process is brought home to a family setting with group participation, a perfect model of holistic healing.

There are many examples of common foods and plants used in folk medicine:

- **Clay:** Infections, boils, tumours, - apply $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick.
Mix with hot water, herb tincture, or tea.
- **Cabbage Leaf:** Remove rib and use rolling pin to flatten a few leaves to cover area. This removes poisons and pus. Change the poultice when it gets hot. It is an excellent poultice for cystic breasts.
- **Carrot Pulp:** For sores, chapped skin and cracked nipples. You may use pulp from your juicer.
- **Figs:** Boil in water for 3 minutes. Cut open and place over infected sore to bring to a head.
- **Garlic:** Press garlic into a mush. Mix with a small amount of water and flour. Good for pustulant sores and infections.
- **Potato:** Peel and grate raw potato. This will remove stingers and pus. Good also for styes and some eye infections.
- **Plantain:** Chew or bruise raw leaves and place directly on bee stings or open wounds.
- **Bread and Milk:** Soak a piece of baguette in milk and apply to splinters.
- **Seaweed:** Fresh or rehydrated seaweed is wrapped around arthritic joints.
- **Cucumbers:** Fresh slices are placed over closed eyes to soothe and hydrate.
- **Used teabags:** After brewing black tea place tea bags over irritated eyes.
- **Honey:** Pour honey into open wound and cover with gauze and tape.

WET SHEET TREATMENT

There are two popular variations of using the wet sheet treatment. During the 1970's I worked in a Chicago hospital emergency room. Often in the late night hours a mother would come in clutching her feverish baby. The child would be examined and a temperature taken. If the child was too hot (39 – 40 C) it would be laid down on the exam table and stripped naked. A round or three of treatments would ensue. A flannel bath blanket would be soaked in tepid (neither hot nor cold) water. The sheet is wrung out so it is damp and not dripping. Place the bath sheet one layer thick over infants & toddlers and double layer over larger children leaving the face uncovered. A cool face cloth can be applied to cheeks and forehead. In the event of febrile seizure be sure first that it is not epilepsy or some other neurological condition. Remain calm and turn the child on their side in the "recovery position" and gently assure them that they are going to be fine soon. Be alert for vomiting or coughing of thick sputum that may be aspirated. A seizure may last up to five minutes and will not cause permanent neurological damage. The wet sheet will absorb the body heat and dissipate the heat through evaporative heat loss. If the temperature remains too high another round of treatment may be performed. Remove and remoisten the sheet in tepid water and repeat the process. Each round should take no more than 15 to 20 minutes to reduce the temperature to a low-grade fever. The goal is only to bring the fever under control. Fevers are a natural event of the body trying to adjust the habitat to be inhospitable to a virus that cannot tolerate higher temperatures. When the child can take fluids, a gentle diaphoretic like *mentha*, *nepeta*, or *sambucus flos* may be drunk. An infant that is refusing fluids due to nausea can be administered a clyster of approximately 100 mL of *nepeta* tea to aid in rehydration and diaphoresis.

The second method is for bringing on a fever and is less often used as it is for more hearty souls. Whilst the child is soaking in a hot bath a sheet is dipped in ice-cold water and slightly wrung out. On a bed with a plastic covering (like a shower curtain) a dry wool blanket and a dry flannel sheet are laid out. The child gets out of the tub and is wrapped in the cold sheet and is laid down on the bed. The dry sheet and blanket are wrapped around the child in a comfortable manner. At first the child will feel very cold as the peripheral blood proceeds to the core. Shivering begins soon, then a rebound occurs and warm blood returns to the surface and a fever is “ripened” and diaphoresis commences. Once a good fever temperature is reached the child is allowed to unwrap and sweat it out. This is an old Thomsonian / pioneer method and perhaps we are a little better equipped to ripen a fever today with herbal diaphoretics.

Ginger Fomentation

There are several ways to apply ginger (*zingiber officinalis*) to the body. A ginger bath is made by adding a decoction of the root to the hot bath water and soaking the whole body is one. This is done to open the circulation and release the interior heat at the start of a fever management protocol. Another way is to focus the treatment on a particular set of organs and target the circulation of those tissues. Stagnation in any viscera can be alleviated by a ginger compress or fomentation. There are two common ways to make the ginger fomentation that are part of the folk medicine traditions of Japan and China.

A large root of fresh ginger (about 150g) can be grated or thinly sliced and placed into a pot of about 4L of water. Bring the water to a boil and immediately reduce to simmer. Once the water has become golden coloured dip a small towel (like a hand towel) into the water and wring it out to the point where it is not dripping. This may require tongs and rubber gloves. Have patient undress down to their under garments and lay on their back or front to expose the treatment area. Use blankets to cover the rest of the patient’s body. Allow the soaked cloth to cool just enough to be tolerated by the patient. Place the folded hot fomentation over the treatment area. Place another large and dry towel over the wet fomentation closing off the area so that the patient is now covered up and comfortable. Around 10 minutes the cloth will be cooled down and it can be re-soaked in the slowly simmering ginger water. Keep the pot covered between uses. One full hour is sufficient for treatment. After the last application is over a fresh towel placed in very cold water is applied to take the heat out of the skin and finish the process. 10 minutes should suffice.

A second method is specific for stagnation and the beginnings of kidney failure. Take a pot that is as wide as the patient’s backside. 150g of ginger, grated or sliced, is put into 4L of water and brought to a boil and reduced to a simmer. This time the folded towel is placed over the top of the pot not touching the liquid but absorbing the ginger oil impregnated steam. Place the lid over the towel to help hold it in place and fill with ginger steam. After a few minutes remove towel and fold in half again, hot side in. Quickly get to patient and place hot side on their back over their kidneys. Have another towel ready to put on the pot whilst one is on the patient. After a few rounds the patient will be comfortable with the extreme heat. One hour for full treatment. This method will penetrate deep into the kidneys and move blood and fluids through it. Finish with a cold wet towel for about 10 minutes. On the following day many patients have discovered the silhouette of their kidneys on their nightshirt and on their backside. If the treatment area is not cooled properly there may also be welts on the skin the following day.

A ginger compress can be made by first grating the ginger root into a small cloth that is subsequently tied off and placed into a pot of slowly boiling water and then placed over an area that needs extra circulation. All tea water can be also put into the tub for a bath.

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