

Definitions and Terminology

Preparations

Decoction: A tea made from boiling plant material, usually the bark, rhizomes, roots or other woody parts, in water. May be used therapeutically. Natural dyes are often made this way.

Water Infusion (Tea): A tea made by pouring water over plant material then allowed to steep. The water is usually boiling, but cold infusions are also an option. May be used therapeutically, as hot tea is an excellent way to administer many herbs.

Oil Infusion: An extraction process in which the volatile oils of a plant are obtained by soaking the plant in a carrier oil for a period of time and then straining. The resulting oil is used therapeutically and may also contain the plant's aromas.

Tincture: An extract of a plant made by soaking plant material in a dark place with a desired amount of either glycerin, alcohol, or vinegar for long period of time (generally two to six weeks). The liquid is strained from the plant material and then may be used therapeutically.

Liniment: Extract of a plant added to either alcohol or vinegar and applied topically to employ the therapeutic benefits.

Poultice: A therapeutic topical application of a soft moist mass of plant material (such as bruised fresh herbs), usually wrapped in a fine woven cloth.

Percolation: A process to extract the soluble constituents of a plant with the assistance of gravity. The material is moistened and evenly packed into a tall, slightly conical vessel; a liquid is then poured onto the material and allowed to steep for a prescribed length of time. A small opening is then made in the bottom, which allows the extract to slowly flow out of the vessel. The remaining plant material (the marc) may be discarded. Many tinctures and liquid extracts are prepared this way.

Steam Distillation: Steam distillation is a special type of distillation (a separation process) for temperature sensitive materials like herbs or flowers. Plant material tends to decompose at high sustained temperatures, so by using steam (as opposed to direct contact boiling water), the deterioration of plant material is reduced. The water vapor created carries small amounts of the compounds to a condensation flask, where the condensed liquid separates, allowing easy collection. If the substances to be distilled are very sensitive to heat, steam distillation may be applied under reduced pressure, thereby reducing the operating temperature further. The oil produced in steam distillation forms what is known as **essential oils**. The aqueous product of steam distillation are known as **hydrosols**.

Medical Terminology

adjuvant - aiding the action of a medicinal agent

analeptic - restorative or stimulating effect on central nervous system

analgesic - relieve pain

anesthetic - induces loss of sensation or consciousness due to the depression of nerve function

antianemic - preventing or curing anemia

antibacterial - destroying or stopping the growth of bacteria

anticatarrh - reduces inflamed mucous membranes of head and throat

antidepressant - therapy that acts to prevent, cure, or alleviate mental depression

antidiarrhetic - substances use to prevent or treat diarrhea

antiemetic - stopping vomiting

antifungal - destroying or inhibiting the growth of fungus

antihemorrhagic - controlling hemorrhaging or bleeding

anti-inflammatory - controlling inflammation, a reaction to injury or infection

antimalarial - preventing or relieving malaria

antimicrobial - destructive to microbes

antioxidant - prevents or inhibits oxidation

antipruritic - preventing or relieving itching

antipyretic - agent that reduces fever (febrifuge)

antirheumatic - easing pain of rheumatism, inflammation of joints and muscles

antiseptic - agent used to produce asepsis and to remove pus, blood, etc.

antispasmodic - calming nervous and muscular spasms or convulsions

antitussive - controlling or preventing cough

antiviral - opposing the action of a virus

aperient - a very mild laxative

aperitive - stimulating the appetite for food

asepsis - sterile, a condition free of germs, infection, and any form of life

astringent - agent that constricts and binds by coagulation of proteins a cell surface

bitter - stimulates appetite or digestive function

cardiotonic - increases strength and tone (normal tension or response to stimuli) of the heart

carminative - causing the release of stomach or intestinal gas

catarrhal - pertaining to the inflammation of mucous membranes of the head and throat

cathartic - an active purgative, producing bowel movements

cholagogue - an agent that increases flow of bile from gallbladder

cicatrizant - aiding formation of scar-tissue and healing wounds

counterirritant - agent producing an inflammatory response for affecting an adjacent area

demulcent - soothing action on inflammation, especially of mucous membranes

dermatitis - inflammation of the skin evidenced by itchininess, redness, and various lesions

diaphoretic - increases perspiration (syn: sudorific)

diuretic - increases urine flow

dysmenorrhea - painful menstruation

emetic - produces vomiting

emmenagogue - agent that regulates and induces normal menstruation

emollient - softens and soothes the skin

errhine - bringing on sneezing, increasing flow of mucus in nasal passages

euphoriant - produces a sense of bodily comfort; temporary effect and often addictive

expectorant - facilitates removal of secretions

febrifuge - an agent that reduces or relieves a fever

hemagogue - an agent that promotes the flow of blood

hemostatic - controls the flow or stops the flow of blood

hypertensive - raises blood pressure

hypoglyceman - agent that lowers blood sugar

hypotensive - lowers blood pressure

laxative - substance that acts to loosen the bowels contents

narcotic - induces drowsiness, sleep, or stupor and lessens pain

nervine - a nerve tonic

parturfaciant - induces contractions of labor at childbirth

purgative - laxative, causes the evacuation of intestinal contents

resorbent - aids reabsorption of blood from bruises

rheumatism - a general term for acute or chronic conditions characterized by inflammation of the muscles and joints (includes arthritis, gout, bursitis, myositis, and fibromyositis).

rubefacient - agent which reddens skin, dilates the vessels, and increases blood supply locally

sedative - exerts a soothing, tranquilizing effect on the body

soporific - inducing sleep

stimulant - temporarily increases body or organ function

stomachic - aids the stomach and digestion action

sudorific - acts to increase perspiration

tonic - a substance that increases strength and tone

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