

## Infusions to Embrace Your Inner Well-Being

The mind-body connection is an important one. There are many herbs that have mood-enhancing and relaxing properties that can help us in the journey of life. Saint John's wort and California poppy can lift up our emotions and put us in a better state of mind. Valerian, chamomile, catnip, lavender, lemon balm and passionflower have a calming effect and are great for unwinding at the end of a long and stressful day. Holy basil (also known as tulsi) is special in that it can help to maintain the balance of your energy centers, also called "chakras." Nettle and oatstraw can help to replenish vital nutrients that keep us feeling strong. Infused teas, tinctures and massage oils can help us to revitalize, loosen up, calm down and bring on sleep in a natural way—all the while putting a positive herbal energy into our psyche!

## Nettle & Oatstraw Long-Infused Tea for Vitality

When you are lacking energy and you need to replenish essential vitamins and minerals, this is the drink to turn to. Stinging nettle is a vitamin- and mineral-rich weed that grows nearly everywhere, and when turned into an infusion, it's like nature's energy drink. Oatstraw is rich in minerals such as calcium and magnesium, and is also high in vitamins and many other trace nutrients. Oatstraw is also effective for treating anxiety and stress. You can use oat tops in place of oatstraw if you prefer; they have a bit of a stronger effect. I particularly like to drink this infusion with a tablespoon (15 ml) of blackstrap molasses stirred in. It improves the flavor while also providing even more minerals!

Yield: about 4 cups (1 L)

### Ingredients

4 cups (1 L) water

½ cup (16 g) dried nettles

½ cup (20 g) dried oatstraw or oat tops

1 tbsp (15 ml) honey, maple syrup or blackstrap molasses (optional)

### Instructions

Bring the water to a boil and pour it over the herbs in a quart-size (946-ml) mason jar. Cover the jar with a lid and let the infusion steep for 4 to 12 hours. Strain with a fine-mesh sieve and add the sweetener, if you'd like, before drinking. This infusion is best when consumed cold over ice.

Drink 1 to 4 cups (240ml to 1 L) daily to replenish nutrients and to revitalize the mind and body.

This tea is safe for children ages 2 and older. Please follow the dosage guidelines on page 23.

Tip: Fresh stinging nettles can be used instead of dried if you have access to them. Use enough to fill your quart (946-ml) jar about half full with fresh nettles, and be sure to use a fine-mesh sieve lined with a few layers of cheesecloth to remove all of the fine hairs before drinking. Be careful of their sting when harvesting nettles—wearing gloves is recommended. No need to worry about the sting in the finished infusion, the boiling water will completely deaden it.



## Sleep Well Tea

Sometimes sleep can elude us, but there are herbs that can help us enter into the dream world peacefully. Chamomile, a gentle herb that promotes restfulness and reduces stress, is one that you may have heard of and might already have in your tea cupboard. Catnip isn't just for your feline friends, but is soothing to the nervous system and helps to relieve pain. Valerian is a powerful herb that is commonly used for sleeplessness, as it is calming for jittery nerves and beneficial for treating insomnia. One mug full of this infusion and you should be drifting to sleep in no time!

Yield: about 2 cups (480 ml)

### Ingredients

2 cups (480 ml) water  
1 tbsp (1 g) dried chamomile flowers  
1 tbsp (2 g) dried catnip  
1 tsp (2 g) dried valerian root

### Instructions

Bring the water to a boil and pour it over the dried herbs. Let the infusion steep for 10 to 15 minutes, then strain out the herbs before drinking. For a stronger tea, follow the directions on page 15 for a long or overnight infusion.

Drink 1 to 2 cups (240 to 480 ml) before bedtime to help relax and to promote restful sleep.

This tea is safe for children ages 2 and older. Please follow the dosage guidelines on page 23. For a milder tea for sleep and relaxation, try Children's Calming Tea on page 185.

Tip: Valerian root is helpful for treating chronic insomnia, but it may take a few weeks for the effects to be noticeable. Drink this tea every night for 2 weeks and you may notice sleep finding you more easily than before. It is also advised to take a week off from taking valerian root every 2 to 3 weeks.



## De-Stress Tea

Emotional stress is unfortunately something that we all deal with from time to time, but there are herbs that can help. Holy basil is particularly good at this, being an adaptogenic herb that relieves stress and anxiety, reduces cortisol and promotes relaxation. Passionflower lowers blood pressure, reduces depression and improves sleep. Sage helps to tame frazzled nerves. This is a flavorful tea that even has a calming aromatherapy effect when inhaled. Pregnant women should avoid using large amounts of holy basil and passionflowers.

Yield: about 2 cups (480 ml)

### Ingredients

2 cups (480 ml) water  
2 tbsp (3 g) dried or ¼ cup (6 g) fresh holy basil (tulsi)  
1 tbsp (3 g) dried or ¼ cup (6 g) fresh passionflowers  
5–6 (2 g) fresh sage leaves

### Instructions

Bring the water to a boil and pour it over the herbs. Let the infusion steep for 10 to 15 minutes, then strain out the herbs before drinking. For a stronger tea, follow the directions on page 15 for a long or overnight infusion. This tea can be consumed hot or iced.

Drink 1 to 2 cups (240 to 480 ml) daily as needed to help reduce stress and anxiety.

This tea is safe for children ages 2 and older. Please follow the dosage guidelines on page 23.

Tip: Holy basil, also known as tulsi, is truly an amazing herb. It helps to restore vitality, renews energy and balances the chakras. A tea made with holy basil is also beneficial in aiding meditation and deep personal introspection. As a variety of basil, it is easy to grow and is the perfect addition to any herb garden.



## Calming Massage Oil

When muscles are tight due to tension and stress, reach for this calming massage oil. Sometimes a good neck, shoulder and back massage is what is needed to release unnecessary tension. Have a friend or partner use this sweet-smelling oil to make the experience even more relaxing.

Chamomile, lavender and lemon balm are all calming herbs that will also help to soothe sore muscles.

Yield: about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (180 ml)

### Ingredients

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup (6 g) dried chamomile flowers  
2 tbsp (5 g) dried lavender flowers  
2 tbsp (4 g) dried lemon balm  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) sweet almond oil  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) coconut oil, melted  
5–10 drops lavender essential oil (optional)

### Instructions

Combine the chamomile, lavender and lemon balm with the sweet almond and coconut oils in a half-pint (236-ml) jar. Cover the jar with a lid and shake to mix well. Put the jar in a cool, dark place to infuse for 4 to 6 weeks. Strain out the plant material with a fine-mesh sieve. If the coconut oil has solidified in the oil infusion, gently heat it by setting the jar in a pan of warm water to melt the oil before straining. Then add the lavender essential oil (if using) and stir well.

Use the oil as often as needed for massage and to aid in relieving muscle tension. If you prefer, the oil can be heated prior to use by placing the jar in a pan of warm water.

This massage oil is safe to use on children ages 1 year and older following a patch test (see page 23). Omit the lavender essential oil for those under age 13.

Tip: Other calming and muscle-soothing herbs that can be used in this massage oil are peppermint, Saint John's wort, ginger, rose petals, geranium flowers, calendula flowers, sage and whole vanilla beans.



## Saint John's Wort Tincture for Lifting Low Spirits

When your spirits are low and feelings of melancholy abound, this Saint John's wort tincture can help. Saint John's wort has been proven to be very effective for treating mild depression, seasonal affective disorder and for when you're generally feeling down. If you have access to fresh Saint John's wort flowers, which are abundant in many areas during the summertime, definitely use them to make this tincture as they lose some of their potency when dried. To experience the most benefit, this tincture is best taken in a cycle of 2 to 3 weeks on, then 1 week off. It may take several weeks to notice an improvement in spirits when taking this tincture. For severe depression, please consult your doctor.

Yield: about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (180 ml)

### Ingredients

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup (15 g) dried or  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (30 g) fresh Saint John's wort flowers and leaves

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup (180 ml) vodka or other neutral spirits

### Instructions

Combine the Saint John's wort and spirits in a half-pint (236-ml) jar, then cover with a lid. Put the jar in a cool, dark place to infuse for 4 to 6 weeks. When ready to use, strain out the herbs with a fine-mesh sieve. Store the tincture in small bottles with droppers for easy use.

Take 1 teaspoon (5 ml) twice daily as a mood enhancer and to mitigate the effects of depression for 2 to 3 weeks, then take 1 week off before repeating the cycle again.

For children and those wishing to avoid alcohol, this tincture can be made with vegetable glycerine instead of the neutral spirits. If made in this manner it is safe for children ages 8 and older. Please follow the dosage guidelines on page 23.

Tip: Saint John's wort is often considered a "weed" because it grows without abandon in the summertime. As with many weeds, this one is highly useful to us for so many things, so it is a good one to learn how to identify when you're out wildcrafting. Collect the little yellow flowers when you see them for use in this tincture and for the Saint John's Wort & Cayenne Warming Oil recipe on page 53.

