

SKIN CURES



FROM YOUR KITCHEN CABINET
Davina London

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**Digital edition first published in 2013
by The Electronic Book Company**
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Language: US English with some UK variant words

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION



It has long been known that people have turned to what was available around them to remedy their ailments and cure pain. Home remedies have no side effects and can be easily obtained and used for treatment. Natural, homemade remedies are also best suited to those who have allergic reactions to certain medicines.

Home remedies are also inexpensive when compared to most modern medicines. But don't forget that home remedies and herbs, like pharmacy drugs, can contain powerful compounds and just because something is natural, it does not necessarily make it safe for everyone. Listen to your body and discontinue any treatment that causes further irritation.

We can now benefit from the tips that have been passed on through the years, and be grateful to the people who discovered them.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE



Some home remedies and supplements are not suitable for babies or children and advice should be taken from a doctor or health visitor. Be extra cautious if you are allergic to certain foods and herbs. If you are taking prescription medicines talk to your doctor before taking any herbs or supplements. If you are pregnant do not take any herbs or supplements before discussing with your midwife.

If you have or suspect you may have a serious skin problem, you should first consult your appropriate health care provider. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this book.

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this book is accurate, the author, publisher or any other contributors cannot be held responsible for unforeseen adverse reactions, or problems caused by the application of the remedies contained within. We recommend a test be carried out on a small, discreet area of your skin prior to using the remedies. If you notice any pain, reddening of the skin or early signs of a rash appearing, you should cease treatment immediately. If in doubt, first consult a professional health care provider. The author does not claim any medical qualifications.

FOREWORD



WELCOME TO SKIN CURES FROM YOUR KITCHEN CABINET

My passion for health has inspired me to explore other areas of health and well-being, and this has enabled me to research and put together a helpful guide for all those niggling day-to-day ailments that don't necessarily need a doctor. Health should not be taken for granted, and if you are like me, it should be at the top of your life list.

My name is Davina, I am 42-years-old and from London. I have two children and I work from home - this allows me to use my creative abilities too. Because I'm passionate about health, I go to the gym early in the morning before starting work. I have a keen interest in foods for beauty, health and fitness.

I have been focusing for a while on foods that improve the vital organs in the body, such as the heart, immune system, blood and circulation. It became obvious to me that the old adage, 'you are what you eat' is completely true. The healthier we are, the less likely we are to become ill, and if we do become ill, the quicker we heal if we are healthy in the first place. Once I discovered that there are foods that can help cure everyday ailments I was so excited, I couldn't wait to research this and let everyone know.

The skin is an area which is always visible in part. Depending on what your ailment is, it can make the difference between waking up in the morning and confidently stepping outside the door, or not, as those of you with cold sores or an eye infection will know only too well.

This is a handy, comprehensive guide covering many home remedies for skin ailments including shaving and breastfeeding problems, to warts and verrucas. I also include some beauty tips. While it contains a wealth of comforts and cures, there's nothing like good judgment when it comes to using any home remedy. Who wants to see a doctor, unless you absolutely have to? But as I said before, always listen to your body.

I hope you enjoy this guide as much as I have enjoyed researching it.

Davina London

CHAPTER 1 – ACNE TO BOILS



ACNE

Acne is usually hereditary. Your skin is producing too much sebum and the excess is blocking your pores. There are two kinds of acne. Acne vulgaris is the most common form and occurs on your face, chest, shoulders or as blackheads on your back. Whiteheads or red spots are also common.

Cystic acne occurs as firm, painless lumps or as painful cysts. Hormone fluctuation caused by periods, puberty, taking contraceptive pills, pregnancy or the onset of the menopause often increase sebum production, which can trigger an outbreak of acne. Sunbathing, stress and certain types of make-up can also be a contributing factor.

With no sign of a cure on the horizon, it's up to you to deal with the outbreak of spots that can damage your looks and your self-esteem long after the teenage years. There are products that can be purchased over the counter and there are simple natural remedies. In this guide I will be focusing on the natural remedies, but also let you know of a product which can be purchased at a pharmacy.



Aloe vera contains anti-inflammatory compounds

Apply a drop of tea tree oil three times a day to blemishes to speed up healing and discourage infection.

When your acne flares up drink 1-2 cups of chasteberry tea a day. Some studies have shown that the herb chasteberry helps to regulate female hormones. A flare-up could happen before menstruation.

Using a cotton wool pad, apply vinegar or lemon juice to pimples. The acids present can help to flush out pores.

Try using toothpaste. Smear it on an outbreak before going to bed. This tip has been known to work well.

Mix nutmeg with honey and apply it to the pimple. After 20 minutes rinse it off. Honey has antiseptic properties.

Use aloe vera. Squeeze the gel from the middle of a freshly cut leaf and apply it to the skin or buy a product containing aloe vera, preferably the purest form available as some aloe vera products are mixed with chemical nasties. It is rich in anti-inflammatory compounds.

Keep your skin clean - but not too clean. Over cleansing can cause acne by stimulating the sebaceous glands to produce more oil.

Avoid granulated cleansers. Use disposable cleansing pads and don't use a face cloth, these can harbor bacteria and are abrasive.

To make a skin cleanser add Epsom salts and iodine to water. Once boiled and cooled, apply on a clean cotton wool ball.

Men - always clean your razor with surgical spirit after using to stop the harbor of bacteria.

At the first sight of a pimple, wrap an ice cube in a piece of cling film and hold it to the affected area at least twice a day. If you can, do this every hour but for no longer than five minutes each time. The coldness from the ice will ease the inflammation and reduce the redness.

Take painkillers like aspirin or ibuprofen in the recommended dose up to four times a day. These painkillers are anti-inflammatory and can help to calm an acne outbreak. Never give aspirin to a child under 16.

Glycolic acid, a chemical otherwise known as AHA (alpha-hydroxy acid), helps to keep pores clear and unblocked by removing the outermost layer of dead skin cells. This is available as a gel, lotion or cream from a pharmacy.

Another product which can be purchased over the counter is benzoyl peroxide. It encourages dying cells to flake away by mildly irritating the skin, which in turn helps to reopen blocked pores, it then kills the bacteria that infects blocked pores. It is available as a cream, liquid, lotion or gel from a pharmacy.

See your doctor if your skin becomes severely inflamed, reddish or purplish, or painful with

fluid-filled lumps. If your skin problem does not respond to over-the-counter treatments within three months, or if your skin is continuously flushed and red. See your doctor even if acne is not present but you have similar concerns. Rosacea is a skin condition displaying persistent redness, enlarged blood vessels and pimples, and will require medical attention.

AGE SPOTS

Also known as liver spots, these are flat areas of brown pigment that often occur on the backs of the hands and on the face. Despite their name, these spots are not caused by age. Using plenty of sunscreen is the best way to prevent them and to protect yourself from skin cancer.

They are simply areas of excess pigment; the result of years of exposure to sunlight. Sun damage takes decades to see and many people don't notice the marks until later in life. People in their twenties and thirties can develop them if they have had significant sun exposure. Certain drugs can make you more vulnerable to sun damage and age spots, such as drugs for high blood pressure and diabetes.



Lemon juice can lighten age spots

If you already have age spots, look for an over-the-counter fading cream or apply a simple natural bleaching agent. It can take several months to see improvements. From now on - never go out without proper sun protection.

An old folk remedy is to wipe them with buttermilk. This contains lactic acid, which gently exfoliates sun damaged skin and pigmented areas.

Take some aloe vera gel straight from the leaves of a living plant if possible and coat your spots. Cut the leaf and squeeze it to extract the gel. Apply this once or twice a day. The plant helps to remove dead cells and encourage healthy new ones.

Make a mixture of honey and yogurt to create a natural bleach that can lighten age spots. Mix 1 teaspoon of honey and 1 teaspoon of plain yogurt. Apply it to the age spots and let it dry for 30 minutes, then rinse. Try to do this once a day.

At least twice a week apply the juice of a lemon to the spots, preferably twice a day. The mild acidic juice of the lemon may be strong enough to take off the skin's outer layer and remove or lighten age spots.

The over-the-counter product available is a cream that lightens skin, this contains a solution of the bleaching agent called hydroquinone. Ask the pharmacist, and carefully read the manufacturer's instructions before use. A stronger solution will be needed for darker spots and you will need to get a prescription from a dermatologist.

To prevent age spots, avoid the sun as much as possible during peak hours in summer or in hot climates.

Apply sunscreen which has a high sun protection factor (SPF) 30 minutes every day before you go outside.

Wear a sunhat. This will keep the sun off your face and neck and help prevent age spots from appearing in these areas. A hat with a cotton lining is better than a straw hat, which may not protect as much.

After sun exposure apply some vitamin E oil. The antioxidant in vitamin E neutralizes skin damaging free radical molecules, and may help to prevent age spots.

You can cover them up with a cosmetic camouflage if necessary, which comes with oils to also moisturize your skin. These are concealers, available in varying skin shades to suit. Sold in a pharmacy.

Most age spots are generally harmless. However if a spot starts to itch, tingle, bleed, change size or color, you should see your doctor. Melanoma is a skin cancer which can look like age spots.

See your doctor if home remedies do not work on your age spots and they bother you, he/she may be able to recommend a dermatologist to treat them.

ATHLETE'S FOOT

Athlete's foot is caused by a fungus called tinea pedis which targets the nails, skin and hair, causes skin to redden, crack, burn, scale and itch. The classic symptom is itching, flaking skin caused by the fungus invading the area between the toes. It can even spread to the toenails. It may also appear on the soles and sides of the feet. A common breeding ground for tinea is a warm, damp floor, but it loves anywhere warm and moist. An ideal breeding ground for tinea is when the feet are confined in sweaty shoes and socks.

This highly irritating fungal infection, contrary to popular belief, is not just confined to athletes. Anyone walking barefoot in damp changing rooms at the swimming pool or bathrooms can get into contact with it. Make sure you dry your feet and toes thoroughly in these environments and check your feet regularly. You have to get tough once the infection takes hold. Follow the prevention tips in this guide so it doesn't strike again. The home remedies can help to soothe the itching and fight the fungus that causes it.

These suggestions may seem a little bit strange but have come from athlete's foot sufferers who have tried them and swear by them.



Use honey to treat athlete's foot

Apply any one of these three or four times a day: garlic powder, apple cider vinegar, surgical spirit, raw honey or hairspray.

Soak 4-5 teabags in a liter of boiling water for five minutes. Leave this to cool until lukewarm. Soak your feet in the tea bath for 30 minutes. Tea contains tannic acid, a natural astringent that works wonderfully when used to dry out sweaty feet.

Add 5-6 teaspoons of salt per 500ml of warm water for a soothing foot soak. Soak your feet for five to ten minutes. At frequent intervals keep repeating this until your feet have completely healed.

Add enough water to 1 tablespoon of bicarbonate of soda to form a paste. Rub the paste into your feet, then rinse and dry your feet thoroughly. Dust off with corn flour for finishing. Simple bicarbonate of soda can relieve the itching and burning on your feet and between your toes.

Don't allow the fungus to spread. Tinea fungus can cause uncomfortable itching in the groin too, so be sure to wash your hands thoroughly after touching your feet. Do not pull your underwear on over your bare feet. Put your socks on first!

Go barefoot whenever possible, but not on wet, damp floors or you risk spreading the infection. Getting the air to your feet is beneficial.

To kill the fungus and prevent any recurrence, wash your socks or tights in very hot water, or microwave washed socks.

Yogurt, one of my favorite foods, is an instant remedy for athlete's foot (but do not use flavored yogurt). Plain yogurt contains live acidophilus bacteria and these friendly microorganisms keep the fungus in check. Dab the yogurt on the area infected, allow it to dry, then rinse off.

Mustard can also help to kill the fungus. Add a few drops of mustard oil or a sprinkle of mustard powder to a footbath. Soak your feet for up to 30 minutes in the footbath.

Lavender has antifungal properties and is a heavenly scented herb. Make a massage oil by adding a few drops of lavender oil to one teaspoon of vegetable oil, rub well into the infected skin every day.

Another skin softener is tea tree oil and aloe gel. Mix tea tree oil to aloe gel, and rub twice a day into the infected area. Allow six to eight weeks for this treatment to work. These products contain antiseptic and skin softening compounds.

The oil of the Australian tea tree is another potent antiseptic. It changes the surface of the skin, making it harder for the fungus to do its evil work. Mix the tea tree oil with the same amount of olive oil and rub into the affected area twice a day. The skin that has been toughened by athlete's foot will be tenderized by the use of the olive oil, enabling the tea tree oil to be well absorbed.

When purchasing an over-the-counter remedy from your pharmacy, look for creams and ointments that contain miconazole or clotrimazole - ideal for fungus. Use two or three times a day, massaging into the affected area, and do not stop when your symptoms subside. Continue using it for at least two weeks after the problem appears to have cleared up in order to keep the fungus away permanently.

Give your home treatments time to work; at least three weeks. See your doctor or a chiropodist if your symptoms are severe. If left untreated a fungal infection can cause the skin to crack, which will allow the bacteria causing the infection to enter deeper into the skin.

See a doctor as soon as possible if you notice signs of a more serious infection, such as skin

that is tender to the touch, is oozing, or is a vigorous red. Swelling of the foot or leg, followed by a fever or red streaks radiating from the infected area are other very serious warning signals.

BITES AND STINGS

Some insects see you as food and bite you because they are hungry. Mosquitoes, ticks and fleas fall into this category. Wasps and bees sting you because they see you as a threat. These stings penetrate skin with a poison that can be painful, while mosquitoes inject you with a little of their saliva which leaves an irritating, itchy bump.

Contact with these irritating predators is inevitable. An insect repellent is an effective deterrent for many of these pests. However, others are bold and will bite or sting you anyway. Here I will guide you on how to recover from a bite or sting and protect your skin from further attack.



Peppermint can help cool down stings

To stop the itching, apply an aspirin paste. Crush one or two tablets and make a paste using just enough water, then dab the paste onto the sting. The ingredients in the aspirin help to neutralize the venom. *If you are allergic to aspirin or you are a child under 16 do not use this tip.*

Use an enzyme based meat tenderizer to treat the area straight away. Add a few spoonful's of tenderizer powder with enough water to form a paste. Smear the paste onto the affected area for an hour. The tenderizer contains enzymes that break down the venom, reducing inflammation and swelling.

Soak the area in vinegar or a solution of bicarbonate of soda in water for a few minutes as soon as you have got the sting out. Mix 1 teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda with a glass of water. Dip a cotton wool ball in the liquid and tape it to the sting area. It will help with the relief of swelling and redness. *Make sure you use the right solution: bee stings are acidic so you need an alkaline neutralizer – bicarbonate of soda, whereas wasp stings are alkaline so you need acidic vinegar to neutralize.*

Using the edge of a credit card, scrape away the sting as soon as possible. You can also use your fingernail or the back of a knife (not the blade). The longer the sting remains in your skin, the more the little sac of poison attached to it keeps pumping its contents into your body. Do not pinch the stinger with your fingertips or use tweezers as you will squeeze more venom into your skin.

Numb the area and slow down swelling apply an ice pack. You can leave the ice pack in

place for up to 20 minutes, but put a face cloth between the ice pack and your skin.

Sugar works well. Dip your forefinger in water, dip it in sugar and touch the sting area.

Tea tree oil will also help to reduce the swelling. Several times a day, apply a drop. It contains antiseptic compounds.

If you have papaya fruit in your fruit bowl simply lay a slice on the sting for an hour. This contains enzymes that neutralize insect venom.

Bromelain is a protein digesting enzyme derived from pineapple and helps to reduce swelling. It is available from health food shops. Do not continue taking after the swelling goes down.

Dab on a drop or two of lavender oil to stop the itching. Wait 15 minutes to allow the oil to take effect. Apply more if the area starts to itch again - but just one or two drops at a time.

If you get an insect bite, instead of scratching, rub an ice cube on the bite straight away. This helps to decrease the inflammation that causes the itching.

Eucalyptus oil, clove oil or peppermint oil can help to stop the itching from mosquito bites. On a cotton wool ball put a small amount of oil of your choice and apply it to the area.

Peppermint has a cooling effect and can also increase circulation to the bite, speeding up the healing process. Use it if you have it or check to see if your toothpaste contains peppermint oil. If it does, smother some over the affected area.

Try spraying or rolling on some deodorant and see if it works. Underarm deodorants contain ingredients that reduce skin irritation.

If you are going on a hiking or camping trip, several days before you go start eating garlic. The smell of garlic in sweat repels many insects. Have a clove or two every day.

Avon's Skin So Soft works too as insects do not like the smell – but you might prefer it to garlic! Use the shower gel or bath oil too.

Avoid wearing scented products and brightly colored clothes if you don't want to attract bees, they'll think you are a flower.

If you are purchasing an over-the-counter product buy an anti-itch cream, one which contains hydrocortisone (a steroid) plus crotamiton - an anti-itch ingredient specifically for insect bites.

The most effective insect repellent for use on the skin is an insect repellent that contains DEET (N N-Diethyl-meta-toluamide). Adults can safely use this product following the directions. Do not use any cream containing more than ten percent DEET, and you should not let a child handle insect repellents.

If you are bitten by an animal, thoroughly clean the area no matter how small the injury; animals mouths are full of germs. Clean a small bite using plenty of water. Deeper bites should be cleaned and dressed by a doctor or nurse.

You may need a tetanus jab after a bite, your doctor will advise you. This is not necessary if you have had five tetanus injections during your lifetime. If you are unsure about your immunity, have a booster as soon as you can.

See an emergency doctor if after a sting or bite there are signs of a potentially fatal allergic reaction such as feeling faint, hives, having trouble breathing, swelling in the mouth or throat, or a rapid pulse. See a doctor if you develop a raised, circular red rash which appears infected or ulcerated. You must seek medical attention if you have received multiple bites or stings.

BLISTERS

The most frequent cause of blisters is excessive friction on moist skin. As a blister forms, clear fluid accumulates in a pocket between the layers of the skin. Sometimes a small blood vessel in the area is damaged, and the fluid in the blister becomes tinged with blood. These types of blisters are generally found on the hands and feet, but can occur elsewhere too. Other potential blister causes include sunburn, eczema, other types of burns and other skin conditions.

What is the best thing to do with a blister? Do you drain it or leave it alone? Generally you should not interfere with blisters that are small or those that will probably pop on their own. They are less likely to become infected if you leave the natural covering of skin intact, and this gives the area time to form new skin under its protective cushion of fluid. There is a risk of infection if you pop a burn blister, so this is not advisable. The tips in this guide will help to relieve the pain and itching and speed up healing.



Aloe vera: truly a wondrous plant

If a blister is going to pop, let it do so on its own. Leave a blister intact if possible. Keep the blister clean with soap and water. To minimize further friction you can dab on petroleum jelly such as Vaseline or some other emollient.

At night, remove all dressings from the blister to expose the area to the air. This will speed up healing. Keep it covered with a light dressing if the blister is in a vulnerable area and likely to rub on bedclothes.

Apply some aloe vera gel to the blister and cover it with a dressing. Cut a leaf and squeeze the pure gel from the middle of the plant. The gel contains anti-inflammatory compounds.

Calendula cream is a product that can be purchased at a pharmacy. It's traditionally used as a soothing healer of wounds. Once applied cover it with a band aid/adhesive plaster or a gauze.

Moleskin is a soft adhesive cushion available from pharmacies. Use this to protect the blister. Leave it on for two days. Remove it carefully so that it doesn't tear the fragile skin.

Covering the blister depends on the size of it. If it is likely to get knocked, cover it with a band aid/adhesive plaster and change it at least once a day. Otherwise it is best left exposed to the air.

If the blister pops by accident, wash the area with mild soap and water. Apply a healing gel or cream and cover it with a clean dressing. Treat the raw area four times a day with a mixture of one part tea tree oil and three parts vegetable oil. The tea tree oil will help to prevent infection and kill bacteria.

Apply a mixture of vitamin E and calendula cream to help your skin to heal faster. Slice open a vitamin E capsule, mix equal amounts of vitamin E and calendula oil and apply the mixture to the affected area. Apply more as required for up to a week.

Prevent foot blisters. Have your feet measured every time you buy shoes. Be sure when you are trying on the shoes that you will be wearing the same kind of socks after you have purchased the shoes so that the size remains the same.

Your feet swell during the day. Shop for shoes in the afternoon. If you buy a pair in the morning, the shoes may be too small by the afternoon.

There should be a thumb width of space between your longest toe and the end of your shoe. Your new shoes should be roomy in the toe area.

To reduce friction when you are going on long walks or hikes, try wearing two pairs of socks. The outer sock should be made of cotton and the inner pair should be made of a thin fabric like acrylic that draws out sweat, the cotton pair will absorb the sweat and keep it away from the skin.

Use an antiperspirant on your feet to keep them dry. Keeping them dry avoids blisters.

Cover areas that are prone to blisters with a petroleum jelly lubricant like Vaseline, or a thick ointment such as cocoa butter before jogging or running.

Gardeners, you can prevent blisters on your hands by wearing soft leather gardening gloves. If you hoe the garden and get blisters when you wear gloves, buy a hoe with a cushioned grip and a larger handle.

Racket sports players need to avoid hand blisters. Get advice from your local sports shop about changing the grip on your racket or getting it wrapped with an absorbent, soft covering.

See a doctor if your blister is extremely large, you have a raised temperature, symptoms of infection, redness extending beyond the borders of the blister, pain that is increasing daily, have thick fluid coming out of the blister or if it has an unpleasant smell. Other disorders that cause blisters such as eczema, impetigo and chickenpox may also require a doctor's attention.

BOILS

Also known as an abscess. Highly infectious bacteria, usually staphylococci, work their way down a hair follicle into your skin. The boil fills with pus, swells and forms a white or yellow head as the fluid forces its way upwards. Boils usually occur where clothing rubs against your skin or where moist body parts are in constant contact: on the neck, under the arms, near the buttocks or around the inner thighs. A boil usually bursts on its own within about two weeks and that starts the healing process. You can often safely accelerate this process if you can bring the boil to a head and help pus to escape.

Getting rid of it fast is the only thing to do with a boil - and you can - but not by squeezing it. Instead use a combination of heat and moisture to bring it to a head, followed by safe and sterile methods to induce draining and provide pain relief. As an alternative, try drying treatments to shrink it to extinction.



Tea tree oil is a natural antiseptic

Soak the boil in a hot bath if it is in an area that is hard to reach. Keep the water as hot as possible without burning your skin.

An old folk remedy is to have a green cabbage to hand. Use a cooked outer cabbage leaf to draw the pus out of a boil. Boil the cabbage leaf for about a minute. Let it cool slightly and wrap it in gauze. Fix the gauze covered leaf over the boil with adhesive tape and leave it in place for an hour. Each day use a fresh leaf and gauze.

Tea contains tannins, astringent compounds with antibacterial properties. All on its own a warm moist teabag will act as a compress to apply onto the boil.

To prepare a compress, you can use warm thyme or chamomile tea. Chamomile tea contains the chemical camazulene, which has anti-inflammatory properties. Thyme contains an antiseptic compound called thymol that may help to prevent infection.

Various folk remedies contain a grocery list of items that seem to work when heated, including milk, cabbage, figs, and warm bread.

Soak a clean face cloth or hand towel in very hot water - as hot as you can without burning

yourself. Do this several times a day, wring it out and apply it to the boil for 30 minutes.

When the boil forms a head, hold a needle over a naked flame to sterilize it until the tip is glowing red. Once cool, prick the thin layer of skin on top of the boil gently, this will start the draining process.

Apply tea tree oil to help a boil clear up. The natural antiseptic kills germs and helps your skin to heal faster.

Consider switching to an antibacterial cleanser or any alcohol and water-based cleansing gel if you have had boils in the past.

Avoid tight slacks/leggings or any other type of clothing that trap perspiration and rub against your skin. Opt for loose, comfortable clothing. Don't share face cloths or clothes with anyone who has problems with boils. Keep your laundry separate.

Loosing a few pounds helps. Overweight people are at greater risk of getting boils because they tend to occur where moist skin is repeatedly rubbing against itself.

Soak a face cloth in a cup of hot water with a teaspoon of salt and place over the boil. When the head of the boil has popped on its own, place the clean, warm cloth over it. Use a liquid antibacterial soap to keep the boil and the surrounding skin clean each time you remove the face cloth. Then, to prevent the spread of infection, apply an antibacterial preparation specifically for boils. Repeat the process as the boil drains over the next few days.

See a doctor if you get boils frequently to rule out diabetes or a problem with your immune system. See your doctor if the boils are large, if you have chills, fever, detect signs of an infection or swelling anywhere, or if you develop boils in the armpits, groin, or breasts - particularly if breastfeeding. If you develop boils on the face then seek immediate treatment, as bacteria could get into your sinuses, blood or brain.

CHAPTER 2 - BREASTFEEDING PROBLEMS TO COLD SORES



BREASTFEEDING PROBLEMS

The most common problems are incorrect positioning of the baby and the baby latching on in the wrong way. Many problems arise during breastfeeding that leave the mother sore and the baby irritable and sad. For many new mothers, it's a shock to discover that what seems so natural is not that easy. Your midwife, friends and health visitors will probably provide you with useful information, but every newborn presents a brand new nursing experience.

A few days after birth, your breasts start producing a regular milk supply, but they may feel painfully tight and your baby may have trouble latching on to the nipple. Other issues include cracked or sore nipples, blocked milk ducts, breasts that don't seem to be producing enough milk, and breasts that are painfully engorged with milk. In addition to this, the first few weeks of breastfeeding can be a physically tiring process and it may take a while for mother and baby to learn how to work at it together. When problems arise, it's good to know that there is help at hand.



Herbs have many uses

Drink one glass of alcohol-free beer a day if you feel you're not producing enough milk. There are levels of increased prolactin in beer - a hormone that influences milk production.

Each morning drink fennel tea. Herbalists have been recommending fennel to first-time mothers to help increase milk production for a long time.

Eat and enjoy garlicky foods. Garlic appeals to babies as it affects the flavor of the mother's

milk, and is very good for you. Eat some garlic a few hours before breastfeeding.

Alternate the breast you offer to your baby. If one nipple is very painful, offer the other one first to your baby, as his/her first hungry mouthfuls can be very intense. Switch to the other breast when he/she has slowed down.

To relieve soreness, place a cold face cloth on each breast between feeds.

Use a healing oil. Pierce a vitamin E capsule, squeeze the oil from it and apply to the breasts. Other oils that can be used are olive oil, lanolin cream or sweet almond oil. Before the next feed clean off the oil.

If your nipples are tender or cracked, let them dry naturally in the air after a feed. Use your own milk to speed up the healing process. When the nipple is dry, express some breast milk and rub it around your own nipple. Be assured, your nipples will adjust to breastfeeding, and sensitivity will not be affected when your baby is weaned. Breastfeeding is best for baby, and it also helps the womb to contract back to its pre-pregnancy size, encourages weight loss, and helps you to bond with your baby – so don't give up!

Blocked milk ducts may present themselves as red, tender lumps in your breasts. Soap the affected area while you are in the bath or shower and then gently run a wide toothed comb over it to stimulate milk flow and help the blockage. Avoid the use of soap on your nipples as it can dry them out.

During each feed, empty your breasts as completely as possible.

Try to massage the lumpy area gently towards your nipple during feed.

Place a warm face cloth on your breast to increase blood flow to the area, while gently massaging the breast.

Choose the right bra, it needs to fit properly. Specialist maternity shops, lingerie shops and department stores employ people who can advise you on the right bra to choose. A cotton bra with broad straps is ideal. Make sure the opening for the feeding is not too small, as this can cause a blockage when the fabric is pressed into the breast.

Frequently breastfeeding your baby will keep your breasts better drained and the baby will be happier too.

See your doctor or midwife if you have red tender area on the breast, a raised temperature or influenza-like symptoms. These can be symptoms of infection caused by bacteria entering your breasts via the cracks in the nipples. If your baby will not breastfeed at least once a day or you feel the baby is not getting enough milk, see your midwife straightaway.

BRUISES

Your skin has gone black and blue because you've taken a bump, blow or knock that was hard enough to damage small blood vessels under your skin. Blood vessels, called capillaries, leak blood that seeps into the surrounding tissue. The skin color takes on varying changes as the pooled blood gradually breaks down from purple to green and yellow. Without any treatment a bruise normally fades in ten to 14 days. Several steps can be taken to reduce the pain of a bump and encourage the bruise to fade faster.



Apply ice to bruises

To speed up the fading process apply ice as soon as possible. Less blood leaks into the surrounding tissue if you cool the blood vessels around the bruised area. You can buy gel-filled ice packs specifically designed for injuries from sports shops. You can keep a couple of them in the freezer. Using a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel can work just as well.

Soak a face cloth in ice cold water and lay it over the bruise for ten minutes. Whatever method you choose, remove it after ten minutes and wait for 20 minutes before you repeat the process so that you don't over chill the skin underneath.

Vinegar mixed with warm water can help heal a bruise. It increases blood flow near the skin's surface which helps dissipate the blood that has pooled in the bruise area. Witch hazel is also useful in this way. This is available from health food shops.

Arnica ointment or gel applied to the bruise daily helps too. It contains a compound that reduces inflammation and swelling. Arnica is a useful herb that has been recommended for bruises for a long time.

St. John's wort has been known for a long time as a wound healer. Gently rub the oil into the bruise. It's rich in tannins - astringents that help shrink tissue and control the bleeding in the capillaries. Start treatment as soon as possible after bruising and repeat a few times a day. Available in health food shops.

Parsley, it has been claimed by some experts, decreases inflammation, reduces pain and can make a bruise fade more quickly. Take a handful of fresh parsley leaves, crush them and spread them over the bruise. Use an elastic bandage and wrap the area.

Take large quantities of bromelain until the bruise has faded. The enzyme found in pineapples is called bromelain, it digests the proteins that cause inflammation and pain.

Increase your vitamin C intake. You may be deficient in vitamin C if you feel that you bruise too easily. Eat more vitamin C rich foods and fruit, particularly citrus fruits, or take a supplement of up to 1000mg a day in split portions.

To help vitamin C to work more effectively in the body, eat more apricots, carrots and citrus fruits. These will also increase your intake of flavonoids. Another rich supplier of flavonoids is grape seed extract.

Vitamin K is highly recommended for people who are susceptible to bruising and as they may be deficient in this vitamin. Increase your intake of Brussels sprouts, kale, broccoli and leafy green vegetables. To enhance absorption take multivitamin supplements with meals.

Take acetaminophen/paracetamol as a pain relief if you bruise. *Do not take aspirin or ibuprofen as it can make things worse.* These thin the blood which can increase that black and blue effect as the blood pools easily under the skin. Those who take aspirin regularly for other reasons and bruise often should take advice from your doctor before you stop.

See a doctor if a bruise appears unexpectedly in an area that you haven't injured, as sometimes bruises are a sign of more serious health issues. If a bruise does not fade after a week and you have pain or fever, if you bruise a joint and it leads to swelling, or if you bruise the side of your head over your ear, you must consult a doctor.

BURNS AND SCALDS

A burn to the skin can be caused by wet or dry heat, chemicals or electricity. Prompt first aid is all that is needed for most burns and scalds. Most burns happen at home and are caused by scalding water, grease, hot oils or hot foods.

First degree burns are the mildest burns. They tend to be red and tender with some swelling. They can be treated easily as long as the burned area is not too large; no larger than your hand. More serious injuries may occur from fire, steam or chemicals.

Second degree burns are red and painful with blistering and swelling. Due to nerve damage third degree burns don't hurt at first, the skin is charred and black, white or red. There is serious swelling, but no blistering. *Hospital treatment is urgently required for severe burns.*



Burns dressed with honey heal with less pain

The first healing step is to immerse the burned area in cold water for at least 20 minutes. This cools the skin, stops the burning and relieves pain. Apply soothing compresses (see below) and keep the area clean. The following recommended remedies will help to boost your body's ability to heal itself.

Use another non irritating liquid such as iced tea or milk if there is no water available. They both cool and soothe.

Jewelry or clothes should be removed as they may constrict the area if swelling occurs.

Leave the burn alone for at least 24 hours so that it can heal on its own. If the burn blistered and it bursts, keep the area clean and apply some antiseptic cream before covering loosely with a dressing.

Try any of the following remedies when your burn has had two or three days to heal.

Apply chamomile cream, which can be obtained from health shops. Chamomile has been used for a long time to remedy burns. Or soak a cotton cloth in a strong fusion of chamomile to make a compress.

The herb St. John's wort contains hypericin which is a renowned substance for its ability to heal wounds and burns. It can be applied to a burn a few times a day. Use the dried flowers to make a healing compress and apply to the burnt area a couple of times a day.

Make a soothing compress using distilled witch hazel. Also you can make a compress using cooled tea made from marigold, chickweed or elderflowers. All are available from health food shops. Apply the compress three or four times a day.

Split open a freshly cut leaf of aloe vera. Squeeze or scrape out the gel and apply it to the burn. The gel reduces pain, keeps skin moist and keeps bacteria out of the burn. Alternatively apply an aloe vera based cream/gel two or three times a day.

Apply honey to the burn. Research shows that burns dressed with honey healed with less pain and didn't scar so badly, they also healed faster.

Soak a face cloth in ice cold milk and apply to the burn for ten minutes each time.

Boost your immune system and heal from the inside. Echinacea can help your skin to repair itself and fight off infection. Buy the tincture (available from health shops or the pharmacy) and take 15 drops in water three times a day or as stated on the instructions.

Try gotu kola (also known as Indian pennywort). This is a small, tropical plant that contains valuable healing properties. You can buy this as external ointments and capsules.

Ancient Egyptians used leeks to heal burns. The benefit of using leeks is that they have significant antibiotic properties that help to ward off infection.

Make a batch of herbal mouthwash. Put some blackberry leaves into water, boil and leave to soak for 15 minutes. Strain and use to gargle. The leaves have anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties, they are also known to heal.

Do not apply any fat substances such as butter (an old-fashioned remedy) to the burn. The heat on the burn will worsen as the fat holds in the heat.

Avoid hot spicy foods. These can irritate the damage in the skin.

Suck on ice cubes if you burn the inside of your mouth. This is a faster way to get the burning to stop. Children who burn their mouths could enjoy a scoop of ice cream instead!

Have a cool cup of coffee or tea if you have burned your mouth. Avoid hot drinks.

Have a salt mouth rinse. Salt is antiseptic and will help to disinfect the burn and keep it clean.

See your doctor if you have a large burn on the skin and it is very painful, if the burn is on the face or hands, if you have suffered a severe electrical or chemical burn, or if the burn oozes pus, smells unpleasant, or if you have swollen glands or vomiting.

CORNS AND CALLUSES

The outermost layer of skin piles up a thick layer of dead cells when rubbed too much and too often. This is what happens when a badly fitted shoe keeps rubbing the same toe. The epidermis gradually builds up a callus that can evolve into a corn; a callus with a hard core. Calluses on the hands and feet can be painful.

If your feet are affected, you need the right oil to soften the hard skin, and protection patches to last for the day. Socks, shoes and insoles will also be needed to help protect you from pain. The correct type of gloves will be helpful for hands that have calluses. The following tips will give you ways to ease the irritation.



Lemon: A great natural skin product

After a warm bath or shower, when your skin is wet and softened, use a pumice stone (available from a pharmacy) to remove the dead cells. Use the stone and sand down the callus a little every day. A very hard, thick callus may take a few weeks, so be patient.

You can soak and moisturize corns and calluses too until they become soft, instead of filing them. Use olive oil as a softener - a corn pad will protect it.

Get a circular pad which is non-medicated from a pharmacy. Place the pad on the corn and put a few drops of castor oil onto the corn with a cotton bud. To hold it in place, put adhesive tape over the pad. Wear some old socks in case the castor oil leaks when trying this treatment.

Epsom salts, available from a pharmacy or supermarket, are another excellent way to soften calluses and corns. Soak your feet in water containing Epsom salts. The directions on the packet must be followed.

Create your own corn softening compound. Crush five aspirins to a fine powder. Mix lemon juice with water to the crushed aspirin. Put the paste onto the area, wrap the foot in cling film, and using a heated towel cover over the cling film. After ten minutes gently scrub the skin with a pumice stone. *Do not use this tip if you have an allergy to aspirin.*

Soft corns between the toes can benefit from a foam toe separator, this will keep them from rubbing each other. These are available in a pharmacy in the foot care section.

Insert an insole to your shoes. This can decrease the pressure on the callused area and help it to recover more quickly. But make sure it doesn't make your shoe too tight, as this will make the problem worse.

Women – it's best to save high heels for special occasions. But to reduce pressure on your toes you could choose high heels that have a lot of cushioning at the front.

When doing work such as raking, pruning or painting, wear thick, padded gloves to prevent calluses on your hands.

For each sport select the appropriate type of shoes. Don't play tennis in running shoes, for instance. There has been much research, development and engineering in foot movement, and design of the correct footwear, for sport and walking.

Choose shoes that are well fitted. Shoes should have enough width so that your toes and the balls of your feet are not cramped each side. Shoes should also not be too roomy, because your feet will slide around and rub against the sides.

Shop for new shoes in the late afternoon rather than the morning. Feet swell later in the day, and if you buy shoes in the morning they may be too small when you try them at the end of the day.

See your doctor if you have a callus or corn and you are diabetic. You are at higher risk of poor circulation and it is dangerous to attempt self-treatment using non-sterile tools that could introduce bacteria. Also see a doctor if the corn or callus seems inflamed.

CHAPPED LIPS

Your lips have become dry, irritated and cracked. They may itch and become sore. It is one of the flaws of nature that our lips, which are exposed to sun, wind and other elements, don't have oil glands to keep them soft and moist. They also do not contain much melanin, which is the pigment in our skin that allows skin to tan and gain protection from the sun. This is why they are vulnerable to becoming cracked. Dry lips can be triggered by sunburn, allergic reactions, having a raised temperature, cold winter weather or even licking your lips too often. Kissable lips need some protection.

A little loving care usually soothes chapped lips, but if they are still chapped after you have treated them for two or three weeks then see a doctor. Dry lips can also be caused by sensitivity to ingredients in toothpaste, lip balms or lipstick. If your lips are often cracked you should see a doctor. You may have oral thrush or a yeast infection. On occasions, lips that are persistently red, dry or scaly can suggest a precancerous condition.



Olive oil will soften chapped lips

Pierce a vitamin E capsule and apply the oil to your lips. Vitamin E has healing properties.

Moisturize your lips from the inside if they are continually chapped by drinking eight glasses of water or more a day. This will prevent it from becoming worse.

Olive oil or vegetable oil is a handy home remedy which can moisturize and soften chapped lips.

Petroleum jelly like Vaseline is an effective old-fashioned remedy for chapped lips.

Cocoa butter is one of the things I swear by to relieve chapped lips. It's perfect for dry hands that are also chapped. Apply frequently if you have very dry lips. Available in health food shops or beauty stores.

Before you go out always coat your lips with balm to protect against the elements. Get a good beeswax lip balm which is also sold in pharmacies.

Creamy lipstick also helps to keep the moisture in and protects lips from the sun.

Have a humidifier on in your bedroom at night time when indoor air is dry to prevent chapped lips.

Lack of vitamin B in the diet can contribute to chapped lips. Eat more vitamin B rich foods such as meat, fish, leafy green vegetables, whole grains and nuts.

Avoid lip balms which contain camphor or phenol. These are antiseptics that can be very drying.

At least 15 minutes before you go out apply a balm with a sun protection factor. Lips, like the rest of your skin, need just as much sun protection. If after using the balm your lips turn red and itchy stop using immediately. You may have an allergic reaction to lip balms that contain sunscreen.

Saliva contains digestive enzymes that dry out tissue, so avoid constantly licking your lips.

See your doctor if you have whitish patches in your mouth, and the corners of your mouth are chapped or cracked, as this could be oral thrush (yeast overgrowth). Wash dentures, if worn, thoroughly and often to avoid the yeast growth spreading to your lips. Frequently sterilize your baby's or toddler's dummy/pacifier to get rid of the fungus, as they sometimes get oral thrush too.

CHICKEN POX

The virus first appears as a rash or red spots that spread to other areas within a few days. Chicken pox lasts only a week or two, but the end to it can't come soon enough. There may be just a few spots or hundreds of them. Over a period of about a week, many of the spots turn into small blisters which break and scab over.

After the blisters heal, the virus goes into a latent stage and lives in sensory nerves in the body. A child may also have a fever and develop itching. In later years it may surface in the form of shingles, which is a very painful ailment. Self-help and medication can help with this level of pain. Don't despair, seek help if you need to, cosmetic or otherwise.



Oatmeal can counteract itching

Ease pain with acetaminophen/paracetamol, never use aspirin. Try cool baths and a children's antihistamine if the itching is too much to bear.

Offer your child a cool, wet face cloth when they feel like scratching, get them to press it against the itchy skin. The cool face cloth can minimize the urge to scratch without doing damage.

Put gloves on your child's hands at bedtime and keep their nails trimmed.

Oatmeal added to a bath can counteract itching. This is available in health food shops Or place 500g - 1kg ordinary oats in a stocking and move it through the warm bath water to release its oat milk before you soak in the bath.

Soak your child for 15-20 minutes in a lukewarm bath every few hours. Use half a cup of bicarbonate of soda or baking powder for a shallow bath or for extra relief, a full cup of bicarbonate of soda for a deep bath. It contains, among other things, fast acting antacids which help stop itching.

To help a child, or even an adult, with a fever or headache feel more comfortable give acetaminophen/paracetamol or ibuprofen syrup. Follow the instructions and choose the correct strength for your child's age.

Cotton is less irritating than other fabrics. Put your child in fresh cotton pajamas. Choose long sleeves and long pajamas to discourage itching and scratching.

Dermatologists *do not recommend* the use of calamine lotion as they think it worsens itching.

You can try giving your child an oral antihistamine if they are at least two-years-old, to relieve very bad itching. Always read the instructions first.

Keep your child out of the sun; sunshine may make the blisters worse.

Apply sunscreen, particularly in summertime, and every day when the chicken pox blisters have cleared, as your child's skin will remain sensitive to the sun for as long as a year.

While the blisters are sore in the mouth, feed your child bland foods like rice pudding, soups, Jello/jelly, bananas and porridge.

Sucking slithers of ice can be soothing for soreness in the mouth.

Rinsing or gargling with salt water is the best treatment for chicken pox blisters in the mouth. The salt has antiseptic properties.

Although it's far better to get chicken pox as a child than have to endure it as an adult, keep your child away from other children who have chicken pox, don't send them to school.

Call your doctor if your child has a high fever accompanied by a severe headache, or has a fever which lasts a few days or more, vomits, feels severe pain in the limbs, develops a cough, repeatedly vomits, or has a sign of an infection - such as large area of redness surrounding one or more blisters.

Call your doctor if your child has convulsions, becomes disorientated or complains of pain in the neck. Chicken pox can progress into meningitis in very rare cases.

END OF SAMPLE

The book is available to buy on Amazon - Kindle.

www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B00D85JCPS (UK)

www.amazon.com/dp/B00D85JCPS (US)

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Language: US English Edition with some UK variant words



**Digital edition first published in 2013
by The Electronic Book Company
www.theelectronicbookcompany.com**

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