

COMMUNITY HEALTH

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CHAPTER

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## HOME CURES AND POPULAR BELIEFS

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# HOME CURES AND POPULAR BELIEFS

Everywhere on earth people use home remedies. In some places, the older or *traditional* ways of healing have been passed down from parents to children for hundreds of years.

Many home remedies have great value. Others have less. And some may be risky or harmful. Home remedies, like modern medicines, must be used with caution.

**Try to do no harm.  
Only use home remedies if you are sure they are safe  
and know exactly how to use them.**

## HOME CURES THAT HELP

For many sicknesses, time-tested home remedies work as well as modern medicines—or even **better**. They are often **cheaper**. And in some cases they are **safer**.

For example, many of the herbal teas people use for home treatment of coughs and colds do more good and cause fewer problems than cough syrups and strong medicines some doctors prescribe.

Also, teas or sweetened drinks many mothers give to babies with diarrhea are often safer and do more good than any modern medicine. What matters most is that a baby with diarrhea get plenty of liquids (see p. 181).



FOR COUGHS, COLDS, AND COMMON DIARRHEA, HERBAL TEAS ARE OFTEN **BETTER, CHEAPER, AND SAFER** THAN MODERN MEDICINES.

## The Limitations of Home Remedies

Some diseases are helped by home remedies. Others can be treated better with modern medicine. This is true for most serious infections. Sicknesses like pneumonia, tetanus, typhoid, tuberculosis, appendicitis, diseases caused by sexual contact, and fever after childbirth should be treated with modern medicines as soon as possible. For these diseases, do not lose time trying to treat them first with home remedies only.

It is sometimes hard to be sure which home remedies work well and which do not. More careful studies are needed. For this reason:

**It is often safer to treat very serious illnesses with modern medicines—following the advice of a health worker if possible.**

## Old Ways and New

Some modern ways of meeting health needs work better than old ones. But at times the older, traditional ways are best. For example, traditional ways of caring for children or old people are often kinder and work better than some newer, less personal ways.

Not many years ago everyone thought that mother's milk was the best food for a young baby. They were right! Then the big companies that make canned and artificial milk began to tell mothers that bottle feeding was better. This is not true, but many mothers believed them and started to bottle feed their babies. As a result, thousands of babies have suffered and died needlessly from infection or hunger. For the reasons **breast is best**, see p.317.

**Respect your people's traditions and build on them.**

## BELIEFS THAT CAN MAKE PEOPLE WELL

Some home remedies have a direct effect on the body. Others seem to work only because people believe in them. **The healing power of belief can be very strong.**

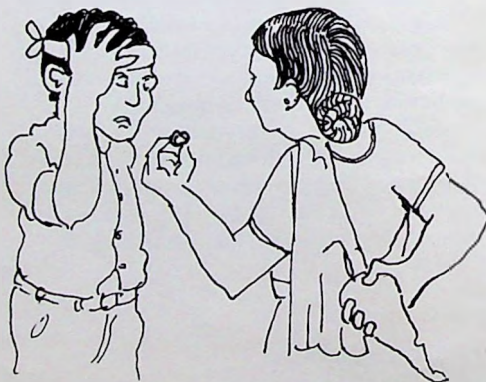
For example, I once saw a man who suffered from a very bad headache. To cure him, a woman gave him a small piece of yam, or sweet potato. She told him it was a strong painkiller. He believed her—and the pain went away quickly.

Clearly, it was his faith in her treatment, and not the yam itself, that made him feel better.

Many home remedies work in this way. They help largely because people have faith in them. For this reason, they are **especially useful to cure illnesses that are partly in people's minds, or those caused in part by a person's beliefs, worry, or fears.**

Included in this group of sicknesses are: bewitchment or hexing, unreasonable or hysterical fear, uncertain 'aches and pains', anxiety or nervous worry, and some cases of asthma, hiccups, indigestion, stomach ulcers, migraine headaches, and even warts.

For all of these problems, **the manner or 'touch' of the healer can be very important.** What it often comes down to is showing you care, helping the sick person believe he will get well, or simply helping him relax.



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Sometimes a person's belief in a remedy can help with problems that have completely physical causes.

For example Indian villagers have the following home cures for poisonous snakebite.

1. To use snake stone.



2. To eat a handful of chillies or neem leaves.



3. To drink a bucketful of plantain stem juice.

In other lands people have their own snakebite remedies—often many different ones. As far as we know, **none of these home remedies has any direct effect against snake poison.** The person who says that a home remedy kept a snake's poison from harming him at all was probably bitten by a non-poisonous snake!

Yet any of these home remedies may do some good if a person believes in it. It makes him less afraid, his pulse will slow down, he will move and tremble less, and as a result, the poison will spread through his body more slowly. So there is less danger!

But the benefit of these home remedies is limited. In spite of their common use, many people still become very ill or die from snakebite. As far as we know:

**No home cure for poisonous bites  
(whether from snakes, scorpions, or other poisonous animals)  
has much effect beyond that of the healing power of belief.**

For snakebite it is usually better to use modern treatment. Be prepared: obtain 'antivenins' or 'serums' for poisonous bites **before** you need them (see p. 122). Do not wait until it is too late.

## BELIEFS THAT CAN MAKE PEOPLE SICK

The power of belief can help heal people. But it can also harm them. If a person believes strongly enough that something will hurt him, his own fear can make him sick. For example:



Once I was called to see a woman who had just had a *miscarriage* and was still bleeding a little. There was an orange tree near her house. So I suggested she drink a glass of orange juice. (Oranges have vitamin C, which helps strengthen blood vessels.) She drank it—even though she was afraid it would harm her.

Her fear was so great that soon she became very ill. I examined her, but could find nothing physically wrong. I tried to comfort her, telling her she was not in danger. But she said she was going to die. At last I gave her an injection of distilled (completely pure) water. Distilled water has no medical effect. But since she had great faith in injections, she quickly got better.

Actually, the juice did not harm her. What harmed her was her **belief that it would make her sick**. And what made her well was her faith in injections!

In this same way, many persons go on believing false ideas about witchcraft, injections, diet, and many other things. Much needless suffering is the result.

Perhaps, in a way, I had helped this woman. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized I had also wronged her; I had led her to believe things that were not true.

I wanted to set this right. So a few days later, when she was completely well, I went to her home and apologized for what I had done. I tried to help her understand that not the orange juice, but her **fear** had made her so sick. And that not the injection of water, but her **freedom from fear** had helped her get well.

By understanding the truth about the orange, the injection, and the tricks of her own mind, perhaps this woman and her family will become freer from fear and better able to care for their health in the future. For **health** is closely related to **understanding** and **freedom from fear**.



Many things do harm only because  
people believe they are harmful.

## WITCHCRAFT—BLACK MAGIC—AND THE EVIL EYE

If a person believes strongly enough that someone has the power to harm him, he may actually become ill. Anyone who believes he is bewitched or has been given the *evil eye* is really the victim of his own fears (see p. 31).

A 'witch' has no power over other people, except for her ability to make them believe that she has. For this reason:

It is impossible to bewitch  
a person who does not believe  
in witchcraft.

Some people think that they are 'bewitched' when they have strange or frightening illnesses (such as *tumors* of the *genitals* or *cirrhosis* of the liver, see p. 374). Such sicknesses have nothing to do with witchcraft or black magic. Their causes are natural.



**Do not waste your money at 'magic centers' that claim to cure witchcraft. And do not seek revenge against a witch, because it will not solve anything. If you are seriously ill, go for medical help.**

If you have a  
strange sickness:

do not blame  
a witch,

do not go to a  
magic center,

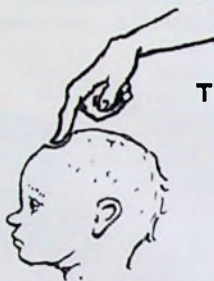
but ask for  
medical advice.



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SOME FOLK BELIEFS AND HOME REMEDIES

These are examples from different places in India. Perhaps some of these beliefs may be common in your area. Think about ways to learn which beliefs in your area lead to better health and which do not.

Is it true that when a baby has diarrhoea and the 'soft-spot' on top of his head sinks inward, it means the baby will die unless he gets special treatment.



**This is often true.** The 'soft spot' sinks because the baby has lost too much liquid (see p. 181). Unless he gets more liquid soon, he may die (see p. 182).

Is it true that if the light of the eclipsing moon falls on a pregnant mother, her child will be born deformed or retarded?



**This is not true!** The light of the eclipsing moon has no effect on a baby in the womb. For reasons of deformity and mental retardation see p. 365.

Is it true that mothers should give birth in a darkened room?



**It is true** that soft light is easier on the eyes of both the mother and the newborn child. But there should be enough light for the midwife to see what she is doing.

Is it true that the watery milk that is produced for the first two days after the baby is born, is bad for the baby?



**This is not true.** This watery milk is called **colostrum** and is very good for the baby. Colostrum has a lot of protein and antibodies which protect the baby against infection.

How many days after giving birth should a mother wait before she bathes?



A mother should wash with warm water the **day after giving birth**. The custom of not bathing for weeks following childbirth can lead to infections.

Is it true that traditional breast feeding is better than 'modern' bottle feeding?



**TRUE!** Breast milk is better food and also helps protect the baby against infection.

What foods should women avoid in the first few weeks after childbirth?



**In the weeks following childbirth, women should not avoid any nutritious foods.** Instead, they should eat plenty of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, beans, milk, eggs and meat (see p. 322)



Is it a good idea to bathe a sick person, or will it do him harm?



It is a good idea. Sick people should be bathed in warm water every day.

Is it true that oranges, guavas, and other fruits are harmful when one has a cold or a fever?



NO! All fruits and juices are helpful when one has a cold or a fever. They do not cause congestion or harm of any kind.

Is it true that when a person has a high fever, he should be wrapped up so that the air will not harm him?



NO! When a person has a high fever, take off all covers and clothing. Let the air reach his body. This will help the fever go down (see p.88).

## MEASLES, CHICKEN POX (MATA)

Many places in India, people believe that these diseases are caused because the Goddess is angry with their family or their community. The Goddess expresses her anger through these diseases.

The people believe that the only hope of cure for these diseases is by giving the goddess offerings in order to please her. They do not feed the sick child or care for him because they fear this will annoy the goddess more. So **the sick child becomes very weak and either dies or takes a long time to get cured.**



These diseases are caused by extremely small germs called virus (see p. 27). It is essential that the child be given plenty of food to keep up his strength so that he can fight the infection. **This is more important in the case of smaller children.**

### *Treatment:*

Magic cures will not help.



Show the child to the health worker immediately.



Never restrict food.

Give the child plenty of nutritious food and a lot of fluid to drink.

**Prevent these infections by vaccinating your child.**



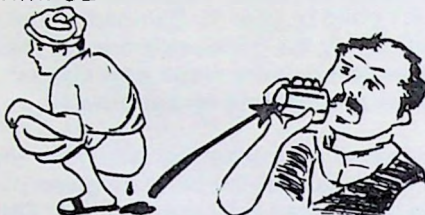
## WAYS TO TELL WHETHER A HOME REMEDY WORKS OR NOT

Because a lot of people use a home cure does not necessarily mean that it works well or is safe. It is often hard to know which remedies are helpful and which may be harmful. Careful study is needed to be sure. Here are some rules to help tell which remedies are least likely to work, or are dangerous.

### 1. FOUL AND DISGUSTING REMEDIES ARE NOT LIKELY TO HELP AND ARE OFTEN HARMFUL

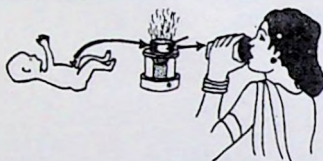
For example :

1. The idea that poisoning can be cured by drinking human feces.



DON'T

2. The idea that a sterile woman will become pregnant by drinking tea made from the umbilical cord of a newborn baby.



DON'T

These two remedies do not help at all.

### 2. REMEDIES THAT USE ANIMAL OR HUMAN WASTE DO NO GOOD AND CAN CAUSE DANGEROUS INFECTIONS. NEVER USE THEM.

Examples :

1. Putting human feces on the area of smallpox vaccination does not prevent the child from having a mild fever, and can cause infection.



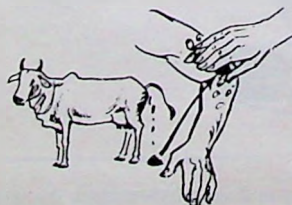
DON'T

2. Smearing cowdung on the newly cut umbilical cord of a baby can cause tetanus.



DON'T

3. Smearing cowdung on burns does not help in healing the burns. It can cause serious infection.



DON'T

### 3. REMEDIES THAT CAN CAUSE SERIOUS HARM

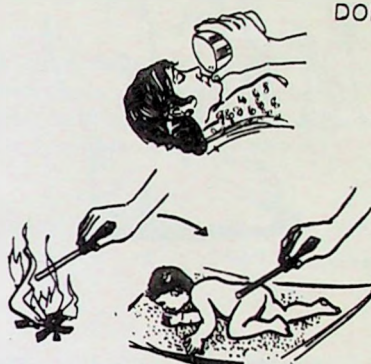
Examples:

1. Giving neem seed oil to children who are having fits can be very harmful.

DON'T



3. Branding a newborn baby with a red hot iron to make it cry.  
DON'T



2. Pouring milk into the mouth of unconscious persons to make them conscious.

DON'T



When a person is having fits or is unconscious, do not give him anything by mouth. The fluid can go into his lungs and either choke him to death, or can cause pneumonia (p. 91)

### 4. REMEDIES THAT ARE EVIL AND BRING HARM TO OTHERS

Examples:

1. The belief that a childless (sterile) married woman will get a child by giving a human sacrifice to the gods.

DON'T



There are many reasons why a husband and wife do not have any children (p. 288). Killing another person does not help in anyway.

2. The idea that syphilis can be cured by having sexual contact with a girl who has not yet reached puberty. This does **not** cure syphilis. The girl most often dies of shock and bleeding. If she lives, she may also have syphilis.

**No one is ever helped by harming someone else.**

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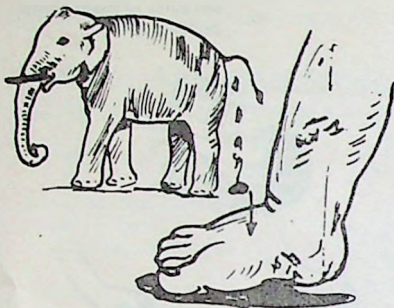
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# 5. THE MORE A REMEDY RESEMBLES THE SICKNESS IT IS SAID TO CURE, THE MORE LIKELY ITS BENEFITS COME ONLY FROM THE POWER OF BELIEF.

The association between each of the following illnesses and its remedy is clear in these examples:



1. For elephantiasis, stamping on elephant dung.



2. For mumps, wearing a necklace borrowed from a neighbour.



3. For scorpion sting, tying the claws of the scorpion on the area of the sting.



4. For sore throat, smearing a paste of turmeric on the throat.



5. For diarrhoea, when a child is teething, tying a tiger's claw around the neck.



6. For jaundice, washing the hands with turmeric powder and water.

These remedies and many other similar ones have no curative value in themselves. They may be of some benefit if people believe in them. But for serious problems, be sure that their use does not delay more effective treatment:

## SOME HELPFUL HOME CURES

Many plants have curative powers. Some of the best modern medicines are made from wild herbs.

Nevertheless, not all 'curative herbs' people use have medical value, and those that have are sometimes used in the wrong way. Try to learn about the herbs in your area and find out which ones are worthwhile.



**CAUTION:** Some medicinal herbs are very poisonous if taken in more than the recommended dose. For this reason it is often safer to use modern medicine, since the dosage is easier to control.

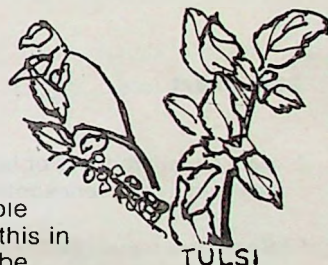
The medicinal plants are given in various ways as home cures. Here are some examples of home cures that can be useful if used correctly.

## HOME CURES ARE EFFECTIVE ONLY IN MILD DISEASES. ALWAYS TREAT A SERIOUS ILLNESS WITH MODERN MEDICINE.

### Cough and cold (see p 200 )

If a child has a cough and cold:

- crush some 'tulsi' leaves. Give one or two drops of this juice three times a day to babies
- \* Heat two teaspoons of coconut oil. Crush one table spoon of camphor (K Kapoor or Karpura). Dissolve this in the oil. Keep it stored in airtight bottles. This can be rubbed on the chest and throat of the child to relieve congestion.



If an adult has cough and cold:

- Boil a handful of eucalyptus leaves in two glasses of water, till only one glass is left. Strain this water and add sugar. Drink this three times a day.
- Another effective medicine for cough and cold is *Leucus aspera*

(Hindi : Guma, Tamil : Thumbai)

This is a wild plant with white bellshaped flowers. Boil the leaves in water with a pinch of turmeric powder (haldi). Inhale the steam. This helps to relieve congestion. To produce more steam, throw red hot stones into the water.



If the cough and cold persists for more than seven days, or if the person develops a fever, see pages 205 and 206 for treatment.



**Sinusitis** (see p. 202 )

- Soak a piece of turmeric in castor oil and burn it. Inhale the fumes.  
Burn a few pepper corns (Hindi : Kali mirchi, Tamil : Milagu). Inhale the fumes
- Roast garlic in hot ash and take in three times a day.
- Crush a field crab along with the shell. Add some water and strain it through a fine cloth. Grind together some coriander seeds (Hindi : dhania; Tamil: Kothamalli) and cummin seeds (jeera), garlic, pepper and salt. Add to the juice of the crab. Boil and drink this soup hot. Then cover yourself with a sheet. This is good for cold with a slight fever.
- Mix together half a cup of bitter gourd (Hindi:karela; Tamil: Paharkai ) juice, half a lime juice and one tablespoon of honey. Drink three times a day.

**Sore throat** (see p. 356 )

- Mix equal amounts of honey and lime juice. One tablespoon every ten minutes is very soothing to the throat.
- Boil some water. Add the juice of one lime and sugar or salt. Take this hot.  
Boil milk with a pinch of turmeric powder and drink it hot.
- Add a pinch of pepper powder to glass of milk and drink it hot.

**Intestinal cramps, stomach-aches, and gall-bladder pain** (see p. 378)

- The leaves of angel's Trumpet (Hindi : dhatura) contain a drug that helps calm intestinal cramps, stomach-aches, and even gall bladder pains.

- Grind up one or two leaves of Devil's Trumpet and soak them for a day in seven tablespoons (100 ml.) of water.
- Give adults only between 10 to 15 drops every four hours.



**WARNING:** Angel's Trumpet is very poisonous if you take more than the recommended dose. It is safer to use antispasmodic pills when possible (see p.415).

#### Diarrhoea (see p. 181)

If a person has mild diarrhoea without any fever or vomiting or blood in the stools, and no signs of dehydration:

- roast rice till it becomes completely black. Crush it. Give adults two tablespoons after each loose motion. Give children one tablespoon after each loose motion.
- Strong black tea without any milk or sugar and with lime juice is effective for mild diarrhoea.
- Grind guava leaves to a paste and boil with water. Strain and give 2 teaspoons three times a day.
- Peel a tender pomegranate and grind it. Mix with some curds or buttermilk and give twice a day.
- Unripe bananas also help in mild diarrhoea.

If mild diarrhoea is accompanied with blood or mucus without any signs of dehydration:

- Take the white sap from a banyan tree and mix with some water. Give an adult two teaspoons and a child one teaspoon after each loose motion.



If diarrhoea is accompanied by vomiting:

- roast some cummin seeds (jeera). add the juice of one lime and some salt. Drink this three times a day.

#### **GIVE REHYDRATION DRINK (p. 182) TO ALL PERSONS HAVING DIARRHOEA**

**Vomiting in pregnancy** (see p. 294).

- Powder 6-7 cloves (laung) and soak in a glass of water for half an hour. Strain and drink this water.

**Fresh cuts and wounds** (see p. 97)

- Wash the cut well with clean water. Wash a piece of fresh ginger and grind it with some sugar. Apply on the cut, and bandage it with a clean cloth. Do not remove the bandage till the cut has completely healed and the ginger comes off on its own. Keep the bandage completely dry.



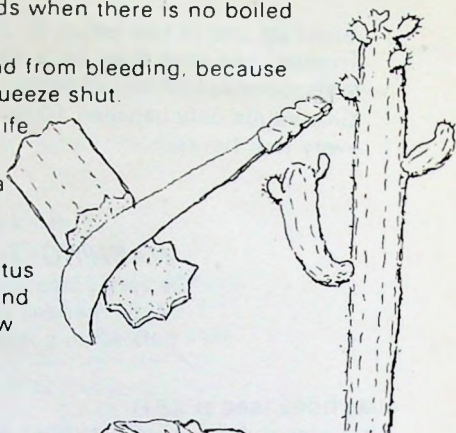
- Cactus juice can be used to clean wounds when there is no boiled water and no way to get any.

Cardon cactus also helps to stop a wound from bleeding, because the juice makes the cut blood vessels squeeze shut.

Cut a piece of the cactus with a clean knife and press it firmly against the wound.

- When the bleeding is under control, tie a piece of the cactus to the wound with a strip of cloth.

After two or three hours, take off the cactus and clean the wound with boiled water and soap. There are more instructions on how to care for wounds and control bleeding on pages 95 to 106



### Clean ulcer

When an ulcer is clean without any pus, boil some ink nuts (Hindi : Zangihar, Balhar, kalepar; Tamil : Kadukai) in water. Strain the water and wash the ulcer with it.

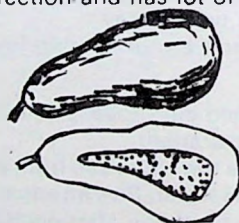
Then rub the nut on a stone. Apply the paste on the ulcer. Keep the ulcer clean.



### Old ulcers and wounds (see p. 101)

When an ulcer or a wound is not treated, it gets infection and has lot of pus.

- Cut a green papaya. Scoop out the inside pulp and apply on the ulcer. Wash it off the next day and apply papaya pulp again. Continue till the ulcer becomes clean. Then treat as for clean ulcer (see above) with ink nut. **This is very effective in the case of leprous ulcers.**



- The sap from the banyan tree is also good for cleaning ulcers, with pus. This sap can also be used for cracked heels.

**An ulcer which is clean will heal without any antiseptic.**

- In a teaspoon of curd, rub a crystal of copper sulphate (Neela Thotha) till the curd is pale blue. Add a little clean soot from the bottom of a cooking pan. Apply to the ulcer. This helps to keep the flies away. Do not wash. When the ulcer heals, the black

### Diabetic Ulcers

Roast a brinjal. Mix with camphor (kapoor, karpura) and apply to the ulcer. The ulcer will heal. Follow the diet for diabetes (see p.149)



**Pus under the Nails (Paronychia)**

- Make a hole in a ripe yellow lime. Keep your finger in this till the pus disappears.

**Boils and abscesses (see p. 244)**

When a boil is painful,

- apply a paste made of soap and turmeric powder. Turmeric powder is antiseptic. The boil will burst fast and will heal quickly
- Apply castor oil on the boil. Cook some rice flour with turmeric powder and apply this on the boil. Tie with a clean rag. The boil will burst within 12 hours.

After the boil bursts treat it like an ulcer with pus (see above)

**Ulcer in the Mouth or Tongue (see p. 270)**

Ulcers in the mouth or tongue are often caused by not eating the right kind of food (malnutrition). These ulcers are painful and the person does not feel like eating. This leads to more malnutrition.

These ulcers can be made less painful, so that the person can eat his food properly. Only proper nutrition can cure these ulcers completely.

The following remedies help in making the ulcer less painful, by forming a protective coat on the ulcer.

- Grind the bark of a banyan tree. Put this juice on the ulcer.
- The sap of the banyan tree can also be applied on the ulcer to make it less painful.
- Chew some guava leaves before eating. These leaves have pectin in them, and this coats the ulcer, making it less painful.
- Apply the paste of ink nut on the ulcer.

**Stomach Ulcer and Heart Burn (see p. 149)**

- Soak some cooked rice in water for one night. In the morning add two teaspoons of fenugreek (Hindi : methi; Tamil: Vendayam) seeds to the soaked rice and eat it on an empty stomach (before breakfast)
- Fresh ash gourd (Hindi : Petha; Tamil: Chambal Pusanikai) juice taken every morning helps in relieving stomach burn
- Dilute plantain stem juice with water and drink it three times a day. The juice is alkaline and neutralizes the acids in the stomach.

- \*To make an antacid solution add a pinch of baking soda to a glass of water and drink this.

**Fungus Infections of the Skin Tinea circinata. (see p 246)**

Take the leaves of Cassia Alata

Tamil : Seemai agathi) and grind it.

Apply the juice three times a day.

**Chicken pox blisters (see p358)**

- Spread neem leaves on the bed of the sick person. Neem leaves are cooling and antiseptic. They will help relieve itching.





- Boil neem leaves in water. Bathe the sick person with this water. A daily bath is good.

#### **Scorpion sting** (see p. 123)

- Cut a piece of onion and rub it on the site of the sting. This helps to relieve pain
- Grind up a small pinch of potassium permanganate with equal amount of citric acid. (If you cannot get citric acid powder, you can use one drop of lime juice). Collect the powder into a paper and spread it over the **exact** site of the sting. Add a single drop of water. It will begin to bubble vigorously and will become very hot. This usually gives immediate total or partial relief

**WARNING:** Tender skin may get badly burnt or blistered. **Spread the powder only on the exact site of the sting.**

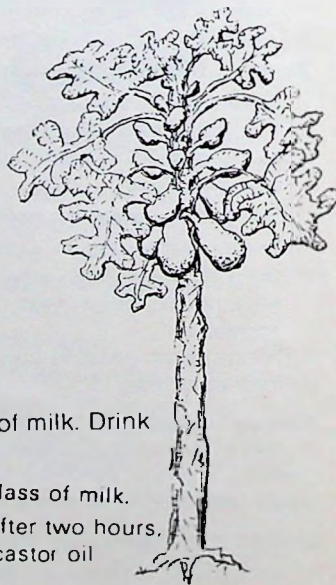
#### **Worms** (p. 193)

- Papaya can help get rid of intestinal worms, although modern medicines often work better.
- Collect 3 or 4 Teaspoons (15-20 ml) of the milk that comes out when the green fruit or trunk of the tree is cut.
- Mix this with an equal amount of honey and stir into a cup of hot water. If possible, drink along with a laxative.

#### **Roundworms** (see p. 193).

Crush two papaya seeds and mix it with a glass of milk. Drink this. Do the same the next day also.

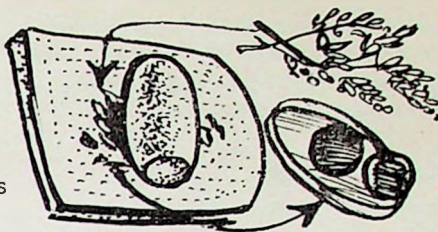
Crush some pomegranate leaves, and boil with a glass of milk. Drink half of it early in the morning before eating. After two hours, drink the rest of the milk. Give two tablespoons of castor oil after another two hours.



**Do not give the person anything to eat before and during the treatment.**

**Threadworms** (see p. 194)

- Grind neem leaves to a fine paste. For one week, take a marble sized ball of this paste every morning on an empty stomach. Do not take this for the second week. For the third week, take the neem leaves again as before on an empty stomach.



The whole family should take this treatment together for curing threadworms.

**Tapeworms** (see p. 196):

- Grind one betel nut with a small glass of milk. Take this early in the morning on an empty stomach.
- Take a handful of ash gourd seeds and grind it. Eat it in the morning on an empty stomach. Two hours later, take two teaspoons of castor oil.
- Dissolve a small piece of asafoetida (Hindi : heeng; Tamil : kayam) in water and drink it on an empty stomach.

**Jaundice-Hepatitis** ( see p. 209)

- Phyllanthus niruri (Hindi : Bhvin Amla; Tamil : keela nelli)

This is a small wild plant. The leaves have small berries under them.

**Treatment:** Take a whole plant and grind it. Eat this paste early in the morning on an empty stomach. This does not cure jaundice. But this helps to stop vomiting, and the sick person can eat his food.

- Eclipta prostrata (Hindi : bungran; Tamil : Karisilankanni)

The leaves of this plant can be cooked and eaten once a day. Boil a handful of the leaves along with one spoon of castor oil and a little garlic and give this to the sick person.

This also helps to reduce vomiting. The stools and urine become normal coloured.

- Take 2-3 castor leaves and grind them. Give the sick person a marble sized ball of paste every morning. This also helps reduce vomiting.

**High Blood pressure** (see p. 147).

- Crush and take one teaspoon of the juice of yellow drumstick leaves after food.

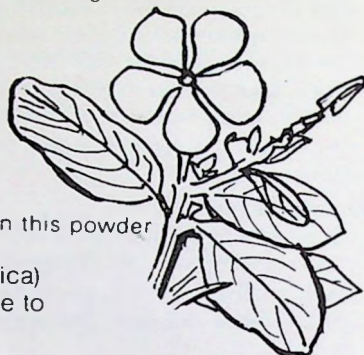




- Mix one teaspoon ginger juice, one teaspoon honey and one teaspoon powdered cummin seeds. Take this once a day.
- Curds, raw onion, garlic and turmeric powder are also good for reducing high blood pressure.

### **Diabetes** (see p. 149)

- Periwinkle with mauve flowers. Take the plant with its roots and boil it in some water. Strain and drink it before eating anything.
- Dry and powder jamun seeds. Pour hot water on this powder. Strain and drink the water.
- Pull out an entire touch-me-not (*mimosa pudica*) plant with its roots, grind it, or cook it with rice to form conji. Drink this every day.



Neem leaves and bitter gourd also help in reducing diabetes

### **Asthma** (see p. 204)

Boil the leaves of malabar nut (Hindi: Arusa; Tamil: adathodai). Roll it up in another leaf of the same and smoke it.

### **Dandruff** (see p. 257)

Apply curd or lime juice or the paste of neem leaves to the hair and scalp. Leave it for one hour. Wash well. Do this once a week.

### **Toothache** (see p. 275)

- Chew one or two cloves, and let the juice remain in the mouth for some time.
- Chew one or two cashew leaves and let the juice remain in the mouth.
- Toothpowder made of burnt mango leaves also helps in reducing toothache.

These remedies will help reduce the pain for some time. These remedies will not cure the problem. Consult the health worker to find out if the tooth needs to be filled or removed.

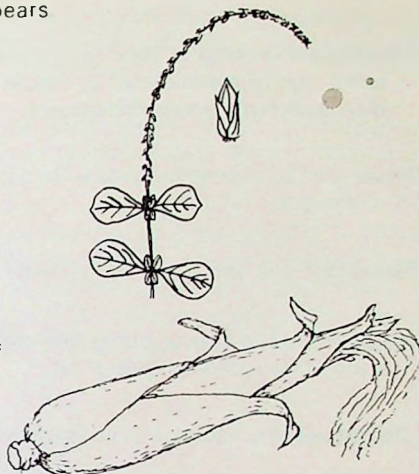
### **Pain during Menstruation** (see p. 291)

Grind the leaves of bitter gourd with some pepper and garlic. Take this once a day for three days.

### Swelling of Feet during pregnancy (see p. 294)

To reduce swelling.

- Boil some palm sugar and fennel (Hindi : saunf ) together. Strain and drink three times a day till the swelling disappears
- Boil leaves of prickly chaff, (Hindi : Chirchira) and take it in the morning. The woman will pass more urine, and this will help to reduce the swelling of the feet.
- Sometimes decoctions made from corn silk (the tassels or "silk" from the ear of maize) can help to reduce swelling of feet. Boil a large handful of corn silk in water. Drink 1-2 glasses. This is not dangerous.



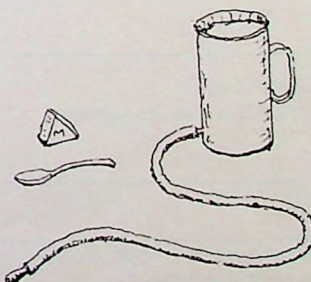
### False labour pains (see p. 304)

- Boil drumstick leaves with coriander seeds (Hindi : Suka dhania, Tamil : Kotthamalli). Take about one glass. If the contractions are false, the pain will disappear.
- Powder the bark of cinnamon (dalchini) and take some with water or milk.

## ENEMAS, LAXATIVES, AND PURGES: WHEN TO USE THEM AND WHEN NOT TO

Many people give enemas and take laxatives far too often. The 'urge to purge' is world wide.

Enemas and purges are very popular home cures. And they are often very harmful. Many people believe fever and diarrhea can be 'washed out' by giving an **enema** (running water into the gut through the anus) or by using a **purge**, or strong laxative. Unfortunately, such efforts to clean or purge the sick body often cause more injury to the already damaged gut.



**Rarely do enemas or laxatives do any good at all.  
Often they are dangerous—especially strong laxatives.**

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### CASES IN WHICH IT IS DANGEROUS TO USE ENEMAS OR LAXATIVES:

**Never** use an enema or laxative if a person has a severe stomach-ache or any other sign of appendicitis or 'acute abdomen' (p. 106) even if he passes days without a bowel movement.

**Never** give an enema or laxative to a person with a bullet wound or other injury to the gut.

**Never** give a strong laxative to a weak or sick person. It will weaken him more.

Never give a laxative or purge to a child with high fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or signs of dehydration (see p. 181).

**Do not** make a habit of using laxatives often (see Constipation, p. 151).

### THE CORRECT USES OF ENEMAS

1. Simple enemas can help relieve constipation (dry, hard, difficult stools). Use warm water only, or water with a little soap in it.
2. When a person with vomiting is dehydrated, you can try giving an enema of Rehydration Drink **very slowly** (see p. 182).

### PURGES AND LAXATIVES THAT ARE OFTEN USED:

SENNA LEAF CASCARA (cascara sagrada)	These are irritating purges that often do more harm than good. It is better not to use them.
CASTOR OIL	This will do good if only little is taken where suggested.
MAGNESIUM CARBONATE MILK OF MAGNESIA EPSOM SALTS (magnesium sulfate) (see p. 417)	These are salt purges. Use them only in low doses, as laxatives for constipation. Do not use them often and <b>never when there is pain in the belly.</b>
MINERAL OIL (see p. 417)	This is sometimes used for constipation in persons with piles . . . but it is like passing greased rocks. Not recommended.

## CORRECT USES OF LAXATIVES AND PURGES.

Laxatives are like purges but weaker. All the products listed above are laxatives when taken in small doses and purges when taken in large doses. Laxatives soften and hurry the bowel movement; purges cause diarrhea.

**Purges:** The only time a person should use a strong dose of a purge is when he has taken a poison and must clean it out quickly (see p. 118). At any other time a purge is harmful.

**Laxatives:** You can use milk of magnesia or other magnesium salts in small doses, as laxatives, in some cases of constipation. People with *hemorrhoids* (piles) who have constipation can take mineral oil but this only makes their stools slippery, not soft. The dose for mineral oil is 3 to 6 teaspoons at bedtime (never with a meal because the oil will rob the body of important vitamins in the food). This is not the best way.

## A BETTER WAY:

**Foods with fiber.** The healthiest and most gentle way to have softer, more frequent stools is to eat more foods with lots of natural fiber, or 'roughage' like **tapioca, grain, cereals, fruits and vegetables.** **Drinking lots of water** also helps.

People whose tradition it is to eat lots of food with natural fiber suffer much less from piles, constipation, and cancer of the gut than do people who eat a lot of refined 'modern' foods. For better bowel habits, avoid refined foods and eat foods prepared from unpolished or unrefined grains.



The book **Where There Is No Doctor** is available  
at Rs. 33-00 plus postage. Multiple copies of reprints  
of various chapters are also available.

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