



Herbs, Herbs, Herbs

What are herbs? Herbs include flowering plants, shrubs, trees, moss, fern, algae, seaweed or fungus. In most cultures, including the Western culture, herbs are used not only as a part of the treatment of disease, but also in the enhancement of life, physically, emotionally and spiritually. **Plant parts, including flowers, fruits, leaves, twigs, bark, roots or seeds, are all considered usable.**

Herbs are available in many forms, depending on the type of plant and its use.

- Fresh are highly perishable.
- Dried, chopped or whole herbs can be steeped as teas (infusions) or simmered over low heat (decoctions). Some fresh and/or dried herbs are preserved in alcohol (tinctures), while others are better suited in vinegar extracts (acettracts), syrup, glycerites (in vegetable glycerine) or miels (in honey).
- Freeze-dried or herbal powders come in bulk, tablet, capsule, paste or concentrate.

Other ways to administer herbs may be by suppositories, creams, gels, liniments, oils, compresses, steams, aromatics (oils) or baths.

Like drugs or foods medicinal plants (herbs) have many actions in the body. Sometimes, even if you take an herb for one certain reason, there can be other unintended reactions. Natural doesn't necessarily mean safe. Herbs have chemical properties just as manufactured drugs do. Like anything that we ingest (eat) or apply (like a salve), there can be side effects. One of the major problems with many of the herbs on the market today is that the **amount and the purity of their active ingredients vary** so greatly from product to product. www.consumerlab.com can assist with product reports.



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