

Gaia Garden

HERBALS

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HEALTH INFORMATION SERIES

TINCTURES

WHAT ARE TINCTURES?

Tinctures are an extraction of an herb made in water and alcohol. The proportions vary for each herb.

EXAMPLE: ACHILLEA MILLEFOLIUM (Yarrow) 1:4, 25%.

This example indicates 1 part herb to 4 parts liquid of which 25% is alcohol.

Alcohol acts as a preservative as well as providing a more complete extraction of some plant constituents. Some herbal tinctures will have an alcohol content of 45%, 60%, or like Ginger – 90%. This allows for a complete extraction of the herb's active constituents. It is important that when buying tinctures that one looks for the strength. This will allow you to determine a safe and therapeutic dose.

WHY TAKE TINCTURES?

- Tinctures are a concentrated form of herbal preparation.
- Required therapeutic doses are less than that of herbal teas: 1 teaspoon 2-3 times daily added to warm water.
- Tinctures do not require further preparation, and will work more quickly than herbal teas.
- Tinctures are assimilated more easily than capsules and tablets (which require digestion) because alcohol is readily absorbed through the digestive lining.
- Tinctures are convenient, easy to transport and easy to take. They do not require refrigeration and have a shelf life of 3 years.

WHAT ABOUT ALCOHOL?

If you are concerned about alcohol, it is possible to remove most of it by mixing the tincture with boiling water and letting it cool down for 10 minutes. The boiling point of alcohol is lower than water, and the process of adding boiling water to a tincture will vaporize off most of the alcohol.

HOW MUCH DO I NEED?

The amount to be taken of any single herbal tincture is different for each herb. Standard doses are determined in accordance with the British Herbal Compendium. For a single herbal tincture a therapeutic dose for adults ranges from 2 – 5 mls, 3 times daily. For an herbal tincture formula comprised of several herbs, a higher dose is needed to ensure that sufficient quantities of each herb are taken. Herbal tinctures are taken 2 – 3 times daily to ensure that active ingredients will be maintained longer in the body. A typical therapeutic dose is 5 mls (1 teaspoon, 100 drops) 3 times daily, in hot water before meals. A maintenance dose may require that the formula needs to be taken 1 – 2 times daily.

Please consult a health professional if you have any questions.