

CLINIC

Practitioner Focus

Medical Herbalist

Herbal medicine is the most popular form of medicine in the world. It is now widely available in shops as an "over the counter" treatment throughout the UK. Books are regularly being published about the uses of herbs and nearly every newspaper has an expert on complementary health recommending herbs in their columns. With all of this information readily available why should you bother to visit a trained medical herbalist?

There are hundreds of herbs which may be used to treat a wide range of conditions. Each of these herbs may be used on their own, or as a combination of several herbs to treat a condition. The medical herbalist has studied a large number of herbs which they can choose from to write a prescription. They are also trained to know the contraindications for herbs, and any possible interactions between the prescribed herbs and also between herbs and any other medication.

Medical herbalists also work holistically, this means they don't just treat the disease, or the symptoms of that disease, they treat the person as a whole. They learn how to diagnose a condition, not just giving it a name – such as dermatitis or psoriasis – but also asking questions to find out the cause of the condition and the lifestyle of the patient. This makes the consultation longer than a consultation with the GP, but is all part of finding out about the person, not just the disease. By having a full consultation with a medical herbalist it is more likely to uncover things that may be missed when treating yourself over the counter.

Currently within the UK a "herbalist" may practise with a range of different qualifications. At Woodland Herbs all of our medical herbalists have completed 4 years full time training in medical herbalism, and are members of the National Institute of Medical Herbalists

(NIMH). Proposed legislation means that Medical herbalists will soon be registered, ensuring that all those who practise under the title "herbalist" have the appropriate qualification. All members of the NIMH will be included in the register.

We are lucky to have three NIMH herbalists practising with us. If you are considering consulting a medical herbalist then any of our practitioners should be suitable but you may have a preference.

Ian Boyd has been practicing medical herbalism since 2000. He qualified as a shiatsu practitioner in 1996. This gives him the unique opportunity to treat the patient with herbs, shiatsu or with both.

Katrina Telford combines her work as a herbalist with working as a nurse. As well as seeing a full range of patients she also runs the subsidised clinic at Woodland Herbs, offering a subsidised service to students and those on a low income. (Please contact us for details).

Maureen Russell has more qualifications than we care to mention. She originally taught physics, but has also taught aromatherapy and she currently runs the introductory course at the Scottish School of Herbal Medicine.

We have a copy of the NIMH register. Contact us if you would like to visit a medical herbalist outside the Glasgow area.

Feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*) was traditional used to treat headaches. It has now been shown in clinical studies to be effective in the treatment of migraine.



Herbal Dispensary and Complementary Medicine Centre

LEMON BALM – MELISSA OFFICINALIS

At the start of spring we were contacted by the Herald Newspaper for some information on Lemon Balm (Melissa officinalis). They had received a press release about research at University of Northumbria which showed that it improved the memory of young healthy volunteers. Once it reached the national papers the information spread like wild fire and the herb has been extremely popular ever since (both with those who have felt their memory was failing through age and those who were busy revising for exams).



In the study a single dose of lemon balm in a capsule was found to improve the long term memory of young healthy volunteers. The researchers also found that levels of a particular chemical (acetylcholine) increased in the brain after taking lemon balm. This news caused a great deal of excitement, as patients with Alzheimer's disease have reduced levels of acetylcholine.

Lemon balm has been very popular over the past 1,000 years for a large range of conditions. Notably it was recommended in the 17th century by Culpeper for improving both the mood and memory.

Uses of Lemon Balm:

Mood: Lemon balm has always been a popular herbal tea for relaxation. It has a gentle lemon taste, which most

people find pleasant. The essential oil may also be added to a carrier oil for a relaxing massage blend. Scientific studies have shown the essential oil (commonly known as Melissa) to be relaxing.

Memory In the middle ages lemon balm was recommended to students at Oxford University to help with their studies. The sense of this practice has been confirmed by the recent studies. The relaxing nature of the herb will also benefit those trying to study.

Digestion: Fresh lemon balm leaves may be eaten in a salad. Like many herbs that are eaten it has benefits to the digestive system. It may help with cramps (especially those of a nervous origin), bloating and flatulence.

Anti-viral: Topically lemon balm has an anti-viral action. For this reason it is often applied to cold sores. It has also been shown to be anti-bacterial.

Insect bites: Lemon balm has long been applied to insect bites and stings. This may be due to an anti-histamine action. It also may be employed as an insect repellent.

Possible Contraindications: Recent scientific studies have shown that lemon balm has a negative effect on the receptors in the thyroid gland. While this is useful medically, it may interact with some thyroid medication. There have also been suggestions that it may interact with some sedatives. If you are taking either of these and would like to take lemon balm then consult a medical practitioner or qualified herbalist.

Bibliography

Chevallier, 2001 Kennedy *et al*, 2003
McIntyre, 1999 Mills & Bone, 2000

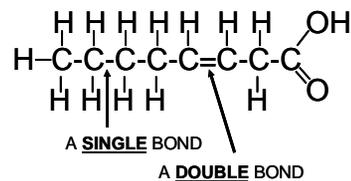
News & Views

FATS

The news is full of articles telling us what and what not to eat. Fats and oils have been focused on in the media several times during the past couple of months, but often don't help answer some of the key questions, for example, what is the difference between a polyunsaturated oil and a hydrogenated oil, and what should I be eating more of or avoiding? Here is a few things that we have found out about the current view on what is healthy, and what's not.

Firstly it is important to note that despite all the bad press that fat gets, it is an essential part of our diet. The problem tends to be not that we eat fat, but that we eat too much of the wrong type of fat.

Fats consist of long chains of carbon atoms with hydrogen atoms attached. The longer the chain, and the more hydrogen atoms there are, the more solid the fat is. If a fatty chain does not have enough hydrogen atoms it has double bonds instead. Therefore fats can vary by the number of carbon atoms in the chain, and the number of double bonds in the chain. **Fats may be saturated, unsaturated or polyunsaturated.** This refers to the number of double bonds in the chain.



The picture above shows a fat with one double bond. This is an unsaturated fat. If it had two or more double bonds it would be polyunsaturated, and if had no double bonds it would be saturated. That is all there is to it!

Saturated fats tend to be solid at room temperature. Most animal fats are saturated, as are some vegetable fats (palm and coconut oil). Saturated animal fats may contribute towards

heart disease. Most diets today consist of too much saturated animal fat. Unsaturated fats tend to be liquid at room temperature.

You may have heard of 'essential fatty acids'. This is the name for two special fats which are needed by the human body but cannot be made by the body. They are used as precursors (ingredients) for a wide range of molecules within the body, and therefore need to be included in the diet.

Omega 3 essential fatty acids are polyunsaturated fats, with several double bonds, the first of which is attached to the 3rd carbon atom in the chain. They are required in the body for conversion into a series of molecules called prostaglandins, which act to reduce inflammatory conditions. Omega 3 fatty acids have also been shown to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, and to be important in the development of the nervous system. Fish oils contain omega 3 fatty acids, as does linseed (flax) oil.

Omega 6 essential fatty acids are polyunsaturates with a double bond attached to the 6th carbon atom. They are also converted into prostaglandins, some of which are anti-inflammatory, but also some of which act to increase inflammation. The omega 6 prostaglandins may also modulate hormones, helping to balance them within the body. Therefore these are often taken to help with PMS. They have also been shown to help with dry skin problems. Evening primrose oil contains omega 6 fatty acids, as does sunflower and hemp seed oil.

Omega 9 fatty acids are not essential fatty acids. They have one double bond (monounsaturate) attached to the 9th carbon atom. They are easily converted into energy, but are also incorporated into nerve fibres. Omega 9 fatty acids have been shown to have a beneficial effect on cholesterol levels. Olive oil is high in omega 9 essential fatty acids.

FATS CONT.

While the unsaturated fats are healthy they can be easily converted into unhealthy fats. Hydrogenated vegetable fats are listed as an ingredient in many of the foods we eat. Manufacturers have needed a solid fat, but have wanted to avoid animal fats as these have been implicated in health scares in the past. Therefore unsaturated vegetable oils have been converted into a solid fat by hydrogenation (adding more hydrogen atoms onto the carbon chain). However hydrogenated fats have recently been banned in the USA due to health problems, therefore try to avoid these in your diet. Cooking can also spoil fats, double bonds break down with the heat so that the more double bonds there are in a fat (or oil), then the more likely it is to spoil when it is heated. Therefore cook with a monounsaturated fat (such as olive oil) rather than polyunsaturated oils (such as sunflower oil). Some health experts now say the healthiest fat to cook with is the saturated vegetable fats such as coconut oil, or even saturated animal fats!

Fats are essential to our health, but it is important to keep to the right proportions in our diet. A good handful of nuts a day and a couple of portions of oily fish a week, or a daily tablespoon of linseed or hemp oil will give your body an adequate amount of healthy fat to keep you healthy.

What's New

Products

- **Lavender Bags** at only £1.25
The bag has a velcro top, allowing herbs to be changed easily.
- **Wedding Confetti** £2.75
Flowers and herbs in an organza bag for a pretty and natural confetti.

Information leaflets

We can now offer information on 'Detox', 'Sleep problems', 'Natural deodorants' and 'Stopping smoking', and are adding to our leaflets as they are asked for so please feel free to ask for general information

Talks & Classes

A number of courses are being run before Christmas: herbal medicine introductory workshops; baby massage classes and a homeopathic first aid course. Each of the classes have limited space so please let us know if you are interested.

Herbal Medicine Workshops

Ian Boyd, will be running a series of workshops on herbal medicine. It will include discussions, tasting sessions, making ointments and guided walks. The workshops will take place on Tuesday evenings, 7.30-9.30, starting 9th September, 2003. They last for 6 weeks, and will cost £50.

Baby Massage Classes

Samantha Shearer will be running a baby massage course starting Monday 22nd September. Massaging infants has been shown to be beneficial for a wide range of common childhood ailments, including colic and sleep problems. The course teaches parents how to massage their children, and is suitable for children between the ages of 6 weeks and 2 years. The course costs £45 and has a maximum class size of 6. An ideal present for new parents.

Homeopathic First Aid

Joan Thomson will run a course on homeopathic first aid on Tuesday evenings starting Tuesday 21st October. The course will include the homeopathic treatment of bumps & bruises, childhood ailments, coughs & colds and sports injuries. The cost is £60, which includes a homeopathic first aid kit.

Come & Try It

Woodland Herbs is running 'come & try it' evenings. The first was held in London in August, enabling customers in London to mix their own massage oils and try a few herbal teas.

If you know of a group that may be interested in an evening of making and mixing massage oils, creams and herbal teas then contact us. (Currently only London, Oxford and the central belt of Scotland available)