

Nature's first aid travel kit

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When we're packing to go on holiday, the first aid kit is often one of the last things we remember to pack. Nature has a whole host of remedies that can help with common holiday ailments, and we don't always have to resort to pharmaceutical drugs.

The journey

If you're travelling by car or boat and some of the passengers are prone to travel sickness, try Nelson's Travella which contains a mix of seven homeopathic remedies. It is ideal for car-sick dogs as well as safe for babies and children.

For those who are afraid of flying, the homeopathic remedy Argent Nit may help. Take one tablet every hour for 3 hours before the flight, and during the flight as required. Rescue Remedy is also useful to take on the plane to calm the nerves – as it is a liquid it will need to be carried in a clear bag through airport security.

If you are flying long-haul, the homeopathic remedy Arnica 30 taken every 3 hours during the flight will help you to adjust to the change in time zone. Australian Bush Flower Travel Essence (available from some health food shops) is a fabulous remedy to combat jet lag – when travelling to Australia I experienced only minor jet lag after using it and can highly recommend it.

Don't forget to drink loads of water during the flight (buy a big bottle once through airport security, as airline cups are tiny) and avoid the complimentary alcohol on the flight as it will dehydrate you even more.

The beach

We are all familiar with warnings to apply plenty of sunscreen and not stay in the sun for too long, but sunburn can happen by accident – most commonly when walking around or on parts which we missed with the sun cream (feet and ears seem to suffer most frequently).

If you do get sunburnt, lavender essential oil is fantastic at soothing the skin, and aloe vera gel also has a soothing effect. The homeopathic remedy, Belladonna will calm a sun-induced headache accompanying the burning skin.

The food

Even in countries where the water is safe to drink, if you have a sensitive stomach it may be worth buying bottled water (which is generally a fraction of the price of bottled water in the UK) at least for the first few days until you adjust to the change in food and climate. The general advice in areas where the water may be less than pure is to avoid salads and unpeeled fruit and to drink and clean your teeth only in bottled water.

If you are afflicted by severe traveller's tummy and are incapable of venturing further than the bathroom, one of the most easily accessible remedies is to drink a glass of Coke which has gone flat – the phosphoric acid in it can revive a prostrate traveller very quickly. The homeopathic remedy Arsen Alb is excellent for food poisoning. It is also worth packing a bottle of

Acidophilus (available from health food shops) which contains millions of 'good' bacteria, and will replenish these in the digestive system after a bout of diarrhoea.

When recovering from a serious digestive upset, it is essential to drink plenty of water, with sugar added to rehydrate the body.

Things that bite

If, like me, you seem to hold a special attraction for things that bite, you need to be prepared to fend off the mosquitoes. You can make your own natural repellent by mixing:

3 parts citronella essential oil
1 part thyme essential oil
2 parts lavender essential oil
1 part eucalyptus oil

in a small amount of vodka and then diluting with spring water.

Mosquitoes don't like the smell of garlic so taking a supplement of 15mgs a day may help (it may be advisable for everyone you are with to take it if you don't want to become a social outcast!). Vitamin B1 (300 mgs daily) can also prevent being bitten, as can a glass of water containing a teaspoon of cider vinegar daily.

If you do get bitten and the bites swell and become hot and red, the homeopathic remedy Apis should reduce the swelling and alleviate the pain. This is particularly good for bee and wasp stings. If the bite is bluish in colour try the remedy Ledum.

Remember that bites can occur in the UK with just as much severity as overseas – I have never experienced mosquito bites as bad as the ones I suffered in the exotic climes of Suffolk!

Holiday essentials

Here are the remedies which I always take on holiday:

- Tea tree oil – a natural antiseptic, for everything from cleaning a dodgy toilet seat to applying to a cut
- Arnica – both homeopathic tablets and as a cream or gel, for bumps and bruises
- Rescue Remedy – for its wonderful calming properties
- Lavender oil – for sunburn and promote a good night's sleep in unfamiliar surroundings
- Milk thistle – a fantastic herb to boost liver function and invaluable after a night sampling the local wine
- Aloe vera gel – a soothing gel which can be applied to burns, cuts, scratches, bites, rashes – any type of sore skin

The homeopathic remedies mentioned above are available from local pharmacies. Take one tablet every 3 hours until symptoms subside.