



May 17, 2023

Updated Natural Summer Potions

This is an update to the May 17, 2023 ReFresh column. We have received member feedback regarding information in the column that could be viewed as medical advice, specifically related to the information provided about possible treatments for sunburn relief, poison ivy, and cuts and scrapes. We recognize and agree that without having situational awareness of an individual's context or underlying medical conditions, these suggestions – even when/if they are accurate— may have unintended and harmful consequences and could potentially delay appropriate medical treatment in more serious cases. We have amended the article to list scientifically backed recommendations from the Academy of Dermatologists.

We at the BCPVPA are not medical professionals. The intent of ReFresh is to provide you with ideas and information as well as link you to sources. We always recommend that you speak to your own medical team when considering any change in your health routine based on your own unique health needs.

If you have decided to embrace the health benefits of being in nature, you will be heading outdoors this summer to restore your well-being. To maximize the health benefits of your outdoor adventures, be prepared to prevent or address ailments that can arise when you are in nature.

A few weeks ago, I wrote about the dangers of chemicals in our house cleaners and the health value of using home-made products instead. Similarly, many of the 'potions' we spray or spread on our skin, from bug sprays to sunscreen to bite remedies, may contain chemicals that, in the long run, are not as safe as those made from natural ingredients.

Personally, I do not like to put anything on my skin that I wouldn't eat!

Check out these natural remedies to consider for a safe and healthy, summer.

Repelling and removing ticks (for humans and pets!)

To prevent ticks from climbing onto you or your animals, here are some natural remedies. As with any essential oil, always dilute it in water and/or a carrier oil. ***Check with your vet before using on your pets.***

Cedar oil spray: A known toxin to fleas, ticks, and mosquitoes but completely non-toxic to humans and pets. Mix 2 ounces of cedar oil concentrate with 1 gallon of water in a spray bottle.

Eucalyptus oil: Effectively repels and kills ticks. Combine 4 ounces of purified or distilled water in a small spray bottle along with 20 drops of eucalyptus essential oil. Safe for use on dogs and cats but must be diluted with the water before pet application.

Neem Oil: A natural remedy to repel and remove ticks. Add several drops to the palm of your hand and rub on exposed skin. It can also be diluted and mixed with almond or another light carrier oil. When diluted, it's safe for pets. To remove a tick, apply a drop or two of neem oil directly on the tick and it will extract itself quickly. You can find neem oil in natural food stores or the supplement section of Walmart.

Apple Cider Vinegar: Apple cider vinegar can be mixed with water to make a tick repellant spray. Add some neem oil, and you and your pets should be well covered!

Combine the following in a spray bottle:

- 2 cups of water
- 4 tablespoons of apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons of organic neem oil

Lint Roller: If you see a tick crawling on your clothing, or if you have ventured into a known tick-infested area, a sticky tape lint roller is an excellent way to pick ticks off your skin and clothing. Carry one with you on the trails, and periodically brush it over your skin and clothes (and your pet's fur).

Keeping Away Mosquitoes and Other Bugs

The best essential oils to keep mosquitoes away include:

- Basil

- Cinnamon Oil - this can actually kill mosquito eggs as well as repel!
- Citronella - they hate this one!
- Lemon grass - which contains citronella
- Peppermint oil – which also has anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties
- Tea Tree Oil – also known for its antiseptic and anti-inflammatory uses, it can also help ward off other biting insects (NOT good for pets)
- Thyme Oil – use on your skin and put thyme leaves in your campfire to help keep mosquitoes away!

If you do not have essential oils handy, here are two herbal recipes to repel common bugs, that you can mix up with herbs from your garden or your local produce market:

1. Steep 2 tbsp each of chopped fresh mint, basil, and lavender leaves in 1 cup boiling water until cooled. Strain, add 1 cup witch hazel and shake.
2. Boil 1 cup water, add a few cloves and 3-4 tablespoons of dried herbs including peppermint, catnip, and lavender. Mix, cover, cool, and strain. Add 1 cup witch hazel or isopropyl alcohol.

Calming bug bites

If bugs get through your applied repellents, here is how to ease the 'sting'.

- Apply a drop or two of peppermint oil. Its effect increases circulation to the bite which speeds healing. Alternatively, if you have toothpaste that contains peppermint oil, apply a dab.
- Lavender oil has anti-inflammatory powers and can calm itching. Just apply a few drops in the area of the bite and rub it into your skin.
- For bee stings, use Plantago (Plantain): edible lawn weed – [click here](#) for a picture - you will recognize this weed!

This weed is well known for its ability to draw out toxins and other infectious materials including dirt, stingers, and insect venom. It's called a 'spit poultice'. an herb that you can chew up and place on a wound or sting. It's a friendly plant that helps us when we're in need.

Sunscreen

In September 2021, I wrote a ReFresh article on the importance of sunscreen, and options to minimize the use of chemical sunscreen.

One idea was to use mineral sunscreens – sometimes called ‘physical’ sunscreens. If you are looking at the bottle, the active ingredients are titanium dioxide and/or zinc oxide. These form a physical layer on your skin; because they are literally physical blocks on your skin, they tend to be very hard to rub in, and can leave a whitish, or purple cast. These ingredients are safe, particularly for sensitive skin.

A good alternative to any skin application is to wear long sleeve shirts, pants, and hats. You can buy specific clothing with UV protection. Don’t forget your sunglasses – your eyes need sun protection too!

Sunburn Relief

The American Academy of Dermatology provides these scientifically-backed recommendations on how to treat a sunburn:

<https://www.aad.org/public/everyday-care/injured-skin/burns/treat-sunburn>

After a day in the sun, where your skin is only mildly red and overheated, aloe vera is a ‘go-to’ natural product. Apply freshly cut leaves – where the gel is at the surface – to slightly red, unbroken skin. Combine this with a green tea treatment: soak a few bags of green tea in cool water and apply the cool water and the tea bags to skin for some relief.

Poison Ivy

The American Academy of Dermatology provides these scientifically-backed recommendations on how to treat Poison Ivy:

<https://www.aad.org/public/everyday-care/itchy-skin/poison-ivy/treat-rash>

Motion Sickness from Travel

Take advantage of the scent of peppermint essential oil: apply it to your wrist or neck or wear it in a vial necklace. Another option is to suck on peppermint candies, or sip on hot peppermint tea.

Ginger is another edible product that can help with motion sickness. Try chewing on [crystallized ginger candies](#) or sipping from a travel mug with ginger tea or natural ginger soda.

Minor Cuts

The American Academy of Dermatology provides these scientifically-backed recommendations on how to treat minor cuts/scrapes:

<https://www.aad.org/public/everyday-care/injured-skin/burns/treat-minor-cuts>"

Hydration in the Heat

To maximize hydration, mix water, fresh-squeezed lemon juice, honey, and a pinch of salt. This acts as a natural electrolyte drink. A bit of salt mixed with fluids actually works to enhance hydration.

That's a lot of healing relief! I hope you can use these options to incorporate natural remedies into your summer routine to enhance well-being. I certainly learned something – apple cider vinegar has so many uses! Enjoy the outdoors.

Sources:

<https://www.farmersalmanac.com/7-natural-tick-remedies-work-27452>

<https://wagwalking.com/wellness/repelling-ticks-from-your-dog-naturally>

<https://www.charlottesvillefamily.com/essential-oils-that-repel-ticks/>

<https://www.almanac.com/homemade-bug-sprays-stay-bite-free>

<https://ca.iherb.com/blog/diy-natural-remedies-for-summer/143>

<https://www.thehealthy.com/home-remedies/13-home-remedies-for-summers-common-problems/>

<https://www.aad.org/public/everyday-care/injured-skin/burns/treat-sunburn>

<https://www.aad.org/public/everyday-care/itchy-skin/poison-ivy/treat-rash>

<https://www.aad.org/public/everyday-care/injured-skin/burns/treat-minor-cuts>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rochelle Morandini

Member Health & Well-Being, Director

If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.