

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

Slippery Elm II – Applications of Slippery Elm

February 11, 2009

Slippery Elm II – Applications of Slippery Elm
by Tatia Nelson

Slippery elm is a phenomenal herb that fulfills Hippocrates's suggestion in 400 BC to "let your food be your medicine, and let medicine be your food." For centuries, Slippery Elm has been used as both food and medicine in many herbal traditions including Native American, Ayurvedic, traditional Chinese, and Western medicine. Dr. John R. Christopher, founder of the School of Natural Healing, concluded that "Slippery Elm is one of the most valuable medicines in the herbal world."



Slippery Elm may be prepared for use in many different fashions and for many different purposes. It seems to be a universally beneficial herb with few precautions.

Preparations include forms of food such as a gruel, a hot cereal, infusions, and decoctions. The powder may also be taken in capsule form with a lot of water.

A basic gruel of Slippery Elm is made by mixing the powdered inner bark with a little water and then slowly stirring in hot (already boiled) water until a thick paste is formed. Mrs. M. Grieve notes that only "10 grains of the powdered bark will make a thick jelly with an ounce of water" (132). This gruel, or thick paste, may be taken as food, as a soothing agent for the throat or any other smooth muscle organ. One tablespoon of gruel every waking hour is a therapeutic dose.

When mixed with licorice root (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), the two herbs work synergistically together in soothing and nourishing the digestive organs. The ratio is 70 % Slippery Elm and 30% licorice root powders mixed together and water is slowly added until it becomes a gruel. This combination taken in a dose of 1 tablespoon every waking hour for 2 weeks is said to help the body heal any digestive organ tissues. Sometimes cleansing of the bowel is first necessary before these herbs will be able to make contact with bowel tissues needing nourishment. Once impacted fecal matter is cleansed out of this area, the bowel may then absorb the healing properties of Slippery Elm and licorice root to begin healing itself.

Basic Slippery Elm food eaten as a hot cereal is made by first making a gruel out of 1 tsp powdered inner bark and cold water, then thinning the gruel with about a 1 1/2 to 2 cups more of hot water, whisking ingredients into a smooth porridge. The porridge may be seasoned with cinnamon, nutmeg, vanilla, lemon rind, etc. and may be sweetened with pure maple syrup, honey, agave, stevia, etc. Dr. Christopher taught that "when babies are teething, their digestion often becomes disrupted. They are hungry but don't want to eat their normal food. We often give them

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

Slippery Elm gruel sweetened with honey and perhaps flavored with a warming herb such as Cinnamon to help their digestion. This seems to nourish them, balance their system and help bring back a normal appetite.” 1 tsp or more of 100% pure maple syrup may be used in proportion with 1 oz Slippery Elm powder and 1 pint boiled water.

A basic Slippery Elm infusion is made by first making a gruel and thinning the gruel down until desired consistency is reached. Anywhere from 1-6 teaspoons of powdered herb in 2-4 cups or more of water have been indicated in recipes for Slippery Elm tea.

One website says a proportion of 1 part Slippery Elm to 8 parts water yields a good infusion. The book *Prescriptions for Herbal Healing* suggests that 2 teaspoons in a cup of water is the minimum dosage needed to see any health benefits or results and 5 teaspoons is the maximum amount of powder 8 ounces of water will dissolve. I suppose it all depends on how thick one likes their drink.

The cut bark may also be simmered as a decoction where a quart of distilled water is boiled and brought to a simmer before adding 1/4 oz of cut or shredded bark. The decoction is simmered for 30 minutes and the bark is strained off. The tea may be sweetened with honey, combined with other flavorful herbs, or spiced with a little cinnamon because Slippery Elm is rather bland by itself. Other digestive herbs are often added including peppermint, licorice root, ginger root, fennel, anise, cardamon, etc.

Wintertime drinks such as healthy versions of hot apple cider and hot chocolate also taste good with a little Slippery Elm tea added. The infusion or decoction may be added to any liquids such as soups, creams, sauces, or drinks for added smoothness.

The equivalent of 2-3 cups of the tea a day is suggested for a tonic dose. During pregnancy, perhaps only one cup a day is indicated.

A decoction made to help with Gastritis contains 1 oz. Slippery Elm, 1 oz. Red Raspberry leaves, 1/2 oz. Marshmallow, 1/2 oz. Agrimony, and 1 teaspoon cayenne. The first 4 herbs are simmered for 20 minutes and strained hot over the cayenne. Two fluid ounces of the finished decoction may be taken every hour or more frequently if needed. If persistent vomiting prevents the gastritis decoction from staying down, lobelia taken as an emetic can clear the stomach and then the decoction may be administered.

Catnip or Slippery Elm enemas are recommended in cases where fluids cannot be retained in the stomach, especially in cases of dehydration.

When taking capsules, the milligrams of Slippery Elm per capsule may vary. Suggested doses also vary. The equivalent of 300 mg - 3,000 mg taken three times daily are ranges of doses recommended, depending on the person and the ailment. This is up to 9,000 milligrams of Slippery Elm daily from capsules. The equivalent is about 1/3 ounce of the powder or about 2 tablespoons.

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

Capsules must be taken with large quantities of pure water, equaling about 8 oz water for every 3 or more capsules. Capsules of the powdered bark are usually taken to act as a demulcent for ailments in the digestive tract.

Nothing compares to Slippery Elm as an emollient herb used for poultices. Dr. Christopher's well-known poultices for abscesses, boils and even gangrene use Slippery Elm paste as a main ingredient. A paste is made by moistening the powdered bark with a small amount of hot water or raw milk. Poultices vary according to what herbs are added to a Slippery Elm paste. To avoid complications with Slippery Elm poultices, make sure the bark granules do not heal into an open wound as it closes. Sometimes it is better to use an antiseptic infusion such as a wash several times a day until a wound closes and apply the thicker poultice after danger of contamination is over.

An antiseptic poultice good for old gangrenous wounds is prepared by mixing an infusion of wormwood with equal parts of very fine charcoal and Slippery Elm powder. This antiseptic poultice is applied over the affected area and reapplied until the condition clears. Another poultice used to prevent a wound from festering takes brewer's yeast or baking yeast stirred into Slippery Elm powder and moistened with new, raw milk. Mrs. M. Grieve's "Compound Bran Poultice is made by mixing hot vinegar, equal quantities of wheaten Bran with Slippery Elm powder." It is used externally over affected areas as needed for severe rheumatism, gout, joints, synovitis, etc. Simply adding an antiseptic herb such as plantain and or goldenseal powder to a Slippery Elm poultice makes it antiseptic. It proves to be the best carrier for any herb when used as a poultice.

Next week we will learn more applications for slippery elm including herbal injections, bathing or washing infectious skin conditions, decoctions, salves, ointments, tooth powder, facial masks and more.