

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

Slippery Elm III – Applications of Slippery Elm

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Slippery Elm III – Applications of Slippery Elm
by Tatia Nelson

Bathing or washing infectious skin conditions such as boils, abscesses, acne, or other afflictions with Slippery Elm is soothing. Culpepper states that “Bathing in a decoction of the leaves, bark or root heals broken bones. The decoction of the bark of the root mollifies hard tumours and the shrinking of the sinews.” Comfrey would be a good herb to combine with Slippery Elm in a bath for the healing of bones and other tissues because of its *cell-proliferant* properties that help speed healing.

Dandelion leaf may be combined in a Slippery Elm decoction to further help *mollify* tumors. Any combination of a Slippery Elm decoction may be used as a fomentation to wrap around an affected area each night. Hot and cold packs rotated over the fomentation would help increase the effectiveness of the therapy. This may be done every night, and throughout the day if possible until desired results are achieved.

Salves and ointments often include Slippery Elm for its *emollient* properties and because it tends to preserve fatty substances to prevent rancidity. A principle ointment used in the herbal world called “Marshmallow ointment” includes 3 ounces of Marshmallow leaves, 2 ounces of Slippery Elm powder, 3 ounces of beeswax, and 16 ounces of lard. Mrs. M. Grieve explains how to make the ointment: “The Marshmallow and Slippery Elm are boiled in 3 pints of water for 15 minutes. This is strained and reduced to half a pint, the lard and wax are melted together by gentle heat and the herbal extract added. Shake constantly till all are thoroughly incorporated and store in a cool place.”

A tooth powder formula for brushing the teeth clean can be made with Slippery Elm. Mix the following powdered herbs: 3 parts White Oak Bark, 3 parts Comfrey root, 3 parts Peppermint, 3 parts Horsetail, 1 part Slippery Elm Bark, 1 part Cloves, 1 part Bayberry Bark, and 1 part Stevia.

The same herbal tooth powder can be used in cases of pyorrhea or severe gingivitis. The powder is simply mixed with an herbal antiseptic such as Dr. Christopher’s X-ceptic tincture. Just enough of the tincture is mixed in to form the consistency of pie dough. This “dough” is molded around the teeth and held between the gums and the lip as an overnight treatment. Tooth guards or tooth trays such as those found in tooth whitening kits can help hold in the “dough” longer. The treatment is continued each night until desired results are attained. Some people say the treatment has saved good teeth their dentists would have removed infections in the gums did not clear up. I am one whose teeth were saved by this treatment.



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Slippery Elm *gelee* may be used as a facial mask or added into natural skin care products such as lotions, liquid soaps, and more. A gelee can be made by simmering 3 parts liquid with 1 part Slippery Elm powder, or the equivalent in weight of cut or shredded Slippery Elm bark. It works best when simmered in a double boiler. I weighed 1 tablespoon of Slippery Elm powder and it was just shy of 1/4 oz or to be more exact, about 6 grams. So, for every tablespoon of Slippery Elm, 3 tablespoons pure water may be used. After the water is boiled, the cut or shredded bark and liquid need to be simmered 30-60 minutes to draw out more *mucilage*. The Slippery Elm needs to be strained off to yield a gel. A nylon, layers of cheese cloth or a fine sieve may be used to strain off powder or cut bark.

Other liquids may be added to the gelee at this time, including herbal infusions, aloe vera, or fresh juices such as papaya juice.

Apply a coat of the finished gelee over the face and allow it to soak into the skin for 30-45 minutes. Wash off with pure water or leave on the skin as a base for makeup. The gelee may be substituted for liquid in skin care product recipes or added in addition, yet it will thicken the recipe a bit. The emollient properties of Slippery Elm tend to leave the skin soft and supple and the astringent properties may be used to reduce redness, such as in conditions of “wine nose” or rosacea.

A Confectionary Bowel Aid recipe found in Dr. Christopher’s Herbal Home Health Care is made by mixing a pint of chopped or ground up fruit (such as raisins, prunes, apricots, peaches, apples, dates or figs) with 1 oz powdered Slippery Elm bark, 1 oz powdered flax seed, 1 oz powdered licorice root. Then pour in enough sorghum or blackstrap molasses to moisten the dry ingredients. Mix ingredients well and mold into small bars. Then roll these in equal parts of Slippery Elm bark and carob powder so the confection is no longer sticky. Eat these as needed to encourage bowel movements. Nuts may also be chopped up and mixed as part of the portion of dried fruit. Honey or agave may be substituted for some of the molasses if a sweeter taste is desired.

In preparing foods, Slippery Elm may be added to puddings as a thickening agent. One recipe for “Slippery Elm Delight” consists of “a handful of agar-agar in about 3 cups of water, heating till it's all melted. Two tablespoons are then added of Slippery Elm powder, 4 tablespoons of Chia seeds, 4 tablespoons of Flax seeds, 1 mashed ripe banana, a handful of raisins, Cinnamon and carob powder.

All ingredients are mixed well and the pudding is placed in a refrigerator to cool and set the gel. All ingredients are selected to “tone up sluggish bowels” (146).

Slippery Elm may also be added to vegan ice cream for added smoothness. It seems that about 1 tsp added to any 1 quart vegan recipe for ice cream works well.

There remain a myriad of recipes prepared with Slippery Elm untold in this document because so many recipes exist. The basic infusion, decoction, gruel, and capsule recipes may be mixed with

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any number of herbs to intensify the healing action desired. The same principle applies when using poultices, salves, enemas, suppositories, pessaries, and cosmetic preparations. A world of opportunity exists for formulating new Slippery Elm combinations. Likewise, endless opportunities exist for adding Slippery Elm into food recipes as a thickening agent or to add a smooth texture to a cuisine. I have had great success with this herb in the kitchen! Bon Appetite!

Herbal Definitions:

Cell-Proliferant: the growth or production of cells

Mollify: mitigate or reduce; soften

Emollient: having the power of softening or relaxing, as a medicinal substance; soothing, esp. to the skin

Gelee: a jellied substance, esp. a cosmetic gel or a jellied food

Mucilage: gummy secretions or gelatinous substances present in plants