



Herbal teas (i.e. infusions) are a great way to take in the health benefits of plants. They have many uses but excel as great digestive and respiratory aids, external or topical washes, and for relaxation and reconnecting with nature. Making infusions is as easy as mixing some herbs, water, and honey together, and you can have a tasty, nutritious, and medicinal beverage.

Do I Use Fresh or Dried Herbs?

Infusions can be made with either fresh or dried plant material. When using fresh herbs, you will need to use more plant material in your infusion (generally double the amount that you would use of dried herbs)— this is because dried herbs have shrunk in the drying process, so you are actually getting more herb in a teaspoon of dried herb than you are getting in a teaspoon of fresh herb.

Do I Use Hot or Cold water?

Some herbal teas act differently in the body depending upon whether they are made with hot or cold water. For example, Chamomile is very relaxing when made with hot water, but can be invigorating when made with cold water instead. So you can use either depending upon the circumstance, although hot water is most often used.

Where Can I Get Herbs for Tea?

If you don't have herbs in your garden that you can use, you can find dried herbs in some health food stores or through online suppliers. Here in the East Bay, there is **Harvest House** in Concord and **Oaktown Spice Shop** in Oakland – both have good supplies of dried herbs. Three online supplier sources that I like to use are Mountain Rose Herbs, Pacific Botanicals, and Monterey Bay Spice Company. Buy organic when you can. You can use commercially available tea bags too.

Instructions for Making Hot and Cold Infusions

Hot infusion:

- In a cup, pour one cup boiling water over 1 rounded teaspoon of dried herb (or 2 heaping teaspoons of fresh herb or a tea bag). You can use a tea ball or tea bag for the plant material, or put it in as loose herb.
- Add some honey for sweetness if that is desired (honey is a great addition for respiratory issues like coughs).
- Let steep for 5-10 minutes. Herbs with lots of volatile oils like Lavender or Peppermint should be covered during the steeping process to keep the oils in the infusion.
- If required, strain the plant material out, and enjoy your hot beverage!

Cold infusion:

- In a cup or glass, pour one cup of cold water over 1 rounded teaspoon of dried herb (or 2 heaping teaspoons of fresh herb). Often, larger quantities of cold infusions are made, so you can use the ratio of 1 tsp of dried herb to one cup of water as the basis to make a larger batch. For example, a quart jar of cold infusion would require at least 4 rounded teaspoons of dried herb for the 32 ounces of water.
- Cover and let the infusion sit for at least 2-4 hours. You can leave it overnight as well.
- If required, strain the plant material out, and enjoy your cold infusion!

What Are Some Good Herbs to Use in an Infusion?

There are LOADS of wonderful herbs to use in tea. Some can be used for multiple purposes, as their herbal actions span across body systems. Here are some of my favorites:

- **To relax the mind and body, help with insomnia:** Chamomile, Catnip, Scullcap, Lavender, Passionflower
- **To improve digestion and help with digestive disorders:** Chamomile, Fennel, Cinnamon, Peppermint, Ginger, Dandelion Root
- **To nourish the body:** Nettle, Oatstraw, Dandelion Leaf
- **To help ease sore throats:** Sage, Licorice Root, Elderberry, Slippery Elm, Peppermint

Here are a couple of recipes that serve as illustrations of how to mix herbs together to achieve the actions that you want. These are two of my more popular blends and are generally well liked by my clients.

- **Soothing Sage Throat Tea and Gargle** – soothes a sore throat, helps with a dry cough, helps open airways, and reduces inflammation
 - Sage
 - Slippery Elm
 - Yarrow
 - Licorice Root
 - Peppermint
 - A little salt if you are using it as a gargle
 - A little honey if you are using it as a tea
- **Stress-Less Tea** – relaxes the body and calms the mind but doesn't necessarily bring on sleepiness
 - Scullcap
 - Passionflower
 - Lavender

Make tea and enjoy the wonderful health benefits of herbs!!