

The Quick Guide to Home Remedies

Caring for the Children of the
Washington Heights and Inwood
Communities

Community Pediatrics Program,
Columbia University Department of Pediatrics at Morgan Stanley
Children's Hospital of New York-Presbyterian

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All parents treat their children at home for one reason or another. Whether their children are sick with colds, coughs and stomach complaints, are experiencing pain from teething, are having trouble sleeping, or are going through any other difficult time, parents want to make things right. The remedies may be over-the-counter medicines purchased at the local pharmacy, or they may be traditional or natural treatments used in the native culture of the families. In order for you to have a better understanding of what treatments are being used at your patients' homes, a survey about home remedies was conducted in the waiting rooms of various clinics and in the waiting room of Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center's pediatric emergency room in the summer of 1999.

This pamphlet is a summary of the results from 29 surveys, with additional information from the referenced resources. These products are sold in pharmacies and botánicas, or made at home from readily available ingredients. You will find the names of familiar herbs, the names of medicines manufactured in and imported from the Dominican Republic, and the names of common items found in everybody's kitchen.

We have tried to be careful and systematic in researching these products, but **THIS IS NOT A DEFINITIVE REFERENCE**. It is not meant as either the final word on potential toxicities or as the complete list of what people in our community are using at home. It is likely that many more remedies are used, but were not mentioned by the participants. We hope that this list will help providers begin to talk to their patients about what they are doing at home.

This is Version 2 of this manual. We welcome input and hope to publish future editions. Please send comments, suggestions and questions to Dr. Mary McCord or Dr. Dodi Meyer, Community Pediatrics, Columbia University Department of Pediatrics, Room VC4-402, 622 W 168th St., NY, NY 10033. Email: mm26@columbia.edu.

Prepared by:

Lauren J. Waxman, *Health Research Training Program* Intern

July addendum prepared by Tanya Williams, student, Center for Population and Family Health; Spring 2001

With advice, supervision and other help from:

Dr. David Fagan, M.D.

Dr. Mary McCord, M.D., MH

Dr. Dodi Meyer, M.D.

Dr. Karen Sawitz, M.D.

Vim Pharmacy, 766 W 181st Street

July 2001 Addendum

“It behooves the practitioner to be familiar with traditional medical values adhered to within the community. In order to promote health, foster growth and development, and treat disease, the provider must intervene at the level meaningful to the patients and their families” (1). It has been found in a series of studies that among patients presenting to the emergency room in Washington Heights, about 24% used complementary or alternative medicine for their presenting complaint and 40% use some form of religion or prayer in dealing with a health problem. The majority of these patients used alternative remedies in the form of an infused tea or drink (2). In addition, children are often treated using complementary and alternative medicine by their parents and these children are also taking prescription or over-the-counter medications (3). Therefore, it becomes essential that questions regarding the use of alternative or complementary therapies become part of the medical encounter.

In a questionnaire given to pediatric attendings and residents at the 180th Street clinic, it was found that difficulties with language, lack of knowledge and fear of broaching the spiritual issue kept them from asking patients about the use of traditional home remedies. To address this situation, some possible questions were suggested by the staff and translated for your future use. In addition, information about home remedies, especially herbal remedies, is abundant and can be found at various internet sites and books, some of which are listed below. Finally knowledge can be gained through lectures and interactions with the members of the community. We hope that these additions may help open discussion with patients regarding their use of traditional home remedies and spiritual practices.

Suggested questions:

1. What medication are you giving your child?
Que medicamento le está dando a su niño/niña?
2. Anything else? From the pharmacy? Or a neighbor? Or your grandmother?
Algo más? De la farmacia? De la vecina/el vecino? De su abuela?
3. Anything else that makes it better or worse?
Agluna otra cosa que usted le da a su hijo/hija que mejore or empeore su condición?
4. Are you giving anything not prescribed by the doctor?
Le está dando algo que el médico no le recetó?
5. Have you tried anything else?
Ha tratado algo más?
6. For example, some people use Vick Vaporub for asthma. Have you tried anything for your child's asthma?
Por ejemplo, alguna gente usa el Biba Poru para el asma. Ha tratado algo para el asma de su hijo/hija?
7. Do you use home remedies? Like tea from leaves or roots?
Usa remedios caseros? Como té de hojas o raises?

References:

1. Ruiz PM. Dominican concepts of health and illness. Journal of the New York State Nurses Association. 21(4): December 1990.
2. Allen R et al. Use of complementary and alternative medicine among Dominican emergency department patients. American Journal of Emergency Medicine. 1S(1): Jan 2000.
3. Pitetti R, Singh S, Hornyak D, Garcia SE, Herr S. Complementary and alternative medicine use in children. Pediatric Emergency Care 17(3): June 2001.

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General References on Herbs

Books

- Blumenthal M. ed. *The Complete German Commission E Monographs*. Austin, Tex: American Botanical Council: 1998.
- Greenwald J., Ed. *PDR for Herbal Medicines*. Montvale, NJ: Medical Economics Company; 1998.
- Newall C. *Herbal Medicines: A guide for Health-care professionals*. London, England: Pharmaceutical Press; 1996.
- Tyler V. *Tyler's Herbs of Choice, The Therapeutic Use of Phytomedicinals*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press; 1998.
- Weiss R. *Herbal Medicine*. Beaconsfield, England: Beaconsfield Publishers; 1988.

Periodicals

- Herbalgram. American Botanical Council and Herb Research Foundation; <http://www.herbalgram.org> (1-800-373-7105)
- Medical Herbalism: A Clinical Newsletter for Clinical Practitioners. Bergner Communications: <https://www.medherb.com> (1-888-373-4637)
- Prescribers Letter. Therapeutic Research Center. Email: mail@pletter.com (209-472-2240). CME credit available.
- Review of Natural Products. Facts and Comparisons. (1-800-223-0554)

Databases

Herbal Information and Abstracts

- MEDLINE: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov>
- BIOSIS, the world's largest collection of abstracts and bibliographic references to biological and medical literature: <http://www.biosis.org/htmls/common/biosis.html>
- CHEMICAL ABSTRACTS SERVICE: <https://www.cas.org>
- NAPRALERT: Natural Products Alert: <http://info.cas.org/ONLINE/DBSS/napralertss.html>
- IBIDS DATABASE: <https://odp.od.nih.gov/ods/databases/ibids.html>

Toxicology Information

- Toxicology Information Resource Center: <http://www.onl.gov/TechResources/tirc/hmepg.html>
- TOXLINE and TOXNET, from the National Library of Medicine: <https://sis.nlm.nih.gov/ToxSearch.htm>

Web Sites

Government

- NIH Office of Dietary Supplements: <http://odp.od.nih.gov>
- FDA MEDWATCH, monitoring program for reporting adverse effects: <http://www.fda.gov/medwatch> (1-888-FDA-1088)
- NIH Center for Alternative Medicine, includes CAM citation index: <http://altmed.od.nih.gov>
- USDA: Phytochemical and Ethnobotanical Database: <http://www.ars-grin.gov/duke/>

General Alternative Medicine

- University of Pittsburgh-The Alternative Medicine Homepage: <http://www.pitt.edu/~cbw/altm.html>
- McMaster University Health Care Information Resources—Alternative Medicine: <http://hslmcmaster.ca/tomflem.altmed.html>
- Rosenthal Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine: <http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept.rosenthal/>
- Natural Health Village: <http://www.naturalhealthvillage.com>
- Center for Holistic Pediatric Education and Research: <http://www.childrenshospital.org/holistic>

Information on Herbs

- The Herb Research Foundation: <http://www.herbs.org>
- American Botanical Council: <http://www.herbalgram.org>
- Longwood Herbal Task Force: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/default.htm>
- HERBMED: http://www.amfoundation.org/vti_bin/shtml.exe/herbmed.htm
- Internet Directory for Botany: <http://www.helsinki.fi/kmus/botecon.html>

Source: Gardiner, M. and Kemper K.; Herbs in Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. Pediatrics in Review Vol. 21, No. 2; February 2000

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Agua de Rosas (Rose Water)

- Uses: 1 participant of this survey uses Agua de Rosas to treat “nerves”
- Properties: The ingredients, as listed on the bottle, are: deionized water, rose flavor, and sodium benzoate. Rose is used to treat inflammation of the mouth and pharynx (7). Sodium benzoate is used in chronic and acute rheumatism, and it is used as a preservative in foods (10).
- Preparation and Method of Application: Agua de Rosa comes already prepared. The participant gives a cupful of Agua de Rosa to her child once a day (when needed).
- Where to buy it: Agua de Rosa can be purchased in food stores and pharmacies.
- Safety and Efficacy: Since this product is not from the United States, a published statement about its safety and efficacy could not be found. The participant who uses the product says that it is effective. See “Warnings and Precautions” below to find out about safety issues.
- Warnings and Precautions: In large quantities, sodium benzoate is toxic.

Alcanfor

- Uses: Indigestion, URI, asthma, bronchitis, difficulty breathing.
- Ingredients: camphor oil is extracted from the plant to create a solid white crystal and oil. In studies is a bronchial secretolytic.
- Preparation and Method of Application: Indigestion: dissolved in water and taken internally. Congestion: essential oil is applied topically to chest, forehead, neck and face. For infants, the crystal is often tied to the wrist or placed in crib.
- Safety and Efficacy: external application causes skin irritation, eczema. The lethal dose when taken internally can be <1 g for a child.
- Warnings and Precautions: Children <2 years should not be administered camphor near the nose or via inhalation because absorption of small amounts can lead to seizures and nervous system over stimulation. Symptoms of overdose: delirium, irregular respiration or difficulty with breathing.

Aloe Vera

- Uses: 2 participants of this survey use aloe vera to treat asthma and colds.
- Properties: Aloe vera gel is a thin, clear, jelly-like material obtained from the inner part of the leaf. It is used both externally and internally for its wound-healing properties and as a cure-all. It is described as a “cleanser, anesthetic, antiseptic, antipyretic, antipruritic, nutrient, moisturizer, and vasodilator” (1).
- Preparation and Method of Application: The participants of this survey use aloe vera gel internally. The American Pharmaceutical Association states that the gel can be taken in doses of 1 tablespoon up to 3 times a day. 1 participant puts aloe vera in a glass jar with honey and onions, and lets it sit for a while before giving the remedy to her child. The other participant uses aloe vera in combination with onions, honey, lemon, green apples, and witch hazel.
- Where to buy it: Aloe vera plants can be purchased in botánicas. The other ingredients are available in food stores and pharmacies.

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- Safety and Efficacy: The American Pharmaceutical Association states that aloe vera (used either externally or internally) “appears to be relatively effective and safe when used in recommended amounts... according to a number of well-designed studies and common use” (4).
- Warnings and Precautions: Pregnant women should never take aloe internally because it may stimulate uterine contractions. In addition, nursing women should not take aloe internally (4). Children under 12 years of age should not take aloe internally (7).

Anise

- Uses: 9 participants use anise for a variety of reasons. The reasons include colic, stomachache, gas, vomiting, and to help the child sleep better.
- Properties: Anise has properties that make it capable of clearing respiratory tract congestion and cough, encouraging good digestion, and treating indigestion, gas, stomach cramps, infant colic, nausea, and numerous other ailments (4). Anise is an expectorant, is mildly antispasmodic, and is antibacterial (7).
- Preparation and Method of Application: All 9 of the participants who use anise treat their children by preparing a tea (typically made with crushed or powdered seeds). A tincture may also be taken internally. The American Pharmaceutical Association recommends making a tea using 1 teaspoon crushed seeds per cup of water and drinking that (approximately 2-4 ounces) up to 3 times per day. The tincture is taken in doses of ½ to 1 teaspoon up to 3 times per day (4). The participants use various other ingredients when making the anise tea, such as sugar, garlic, allspice, cinnamon, or honey.
- Where to buy it: Anise can be purchased in supermarkets, bodegas, and botánicas.
- Safety and Efficacy: The American Pharmaceutical Association states that anise “appears to be relatively effective and safe when used in recommended amounts...according to a number of well-designed studies and common use” (4). A literature search did not find any evidence to support a believe of some physicians at Columbia-Presbyterian that Anise use is associated with seizures. Anecdotal observations of this are possibly due to the widespread use of this tea and the need for a control group to confirm a true association.
- Warnings and Precautions: The patient should avoid using the herb if he or she ever had an allergic response to it or anethole (4). In addition, given the risk for contamination of honey with Clostridium botulinum spores, which can cause botulism, honey should not be used when preparing anise tea for an infant who is less than one year old (4).

Bronquina

- Uses: 10 participants of this survey use Bronquina for a variety of reasons. The reasons include asthma, congestion, colds, flu, fever and tight chest.
- Properties: Bronquina is a remedy that comes to the United States from the Dominican Republic. It is a decongestant, similar to “Vicks’ VapoRub.” The ingredients, as listed on the package, are: methyl salicylate (also called

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- checkerberry oil, gaultheria oil, sweet birch oil, and wintergreen oil), menthol, eucalyptol (cineole), terpinol (terpin hydrate), guaiacol, and turpentine excipient.
- Preparation and Method of Application: Bronquina comes already prepared. 1 participant heats the remedy for a very short period of time before applying it. Other participants place some of the remedy in-between their hands and rub their hands together before applying it. The remedy is primarily applied to the child's chest. 1 participant combines Bronquina with Sebo de Flan (see information in this booklet under "Sebo de Flan") and rubs that on the child's chest, back and head. Another participant combines the two remedies as well, but only applies the mixture behind the child's ears, while Sebo de Flan alone is applied to the child's chest.
 - Where to Buy It: Bronquina can be purchased in bodegas, pharmacies, botánicas and grocery stores.
 - Safety and Efficacy: Since Bronquina is not a product from the United States, a published statement on its safety and efficacy could not be found. All of the participants who use the product say that it is effective. See "Warnings and Precautions" below to find out about safety issues.
 - Warnings and Precautions: Bronquina contains methyl salicylate. Topical medications containing methyl salicylate have the potential to cause toxic results, such as irritant or allergic dermatitis and anaphylactic reactions. Methyl salicylate must never be swallowed. Fatal poisonings in children have been reported (young children are more likely to experience serious intoxication at relatively low plasma salicylate concentrations). Parents must be told to keep Bronquina out of reach of children and to always supervise children when the remedy is being used (5, 6).

Chamomile (Manzanilla)

- Uses: 5 participants of this survey said they use chamomile, also known as manzanilla, for a variety of reasons. The reasons include stomachache, colds, colic, asthma, and when the child has trouble sleeping.
- Properties: Chamomile is commonly used as a carminative, an anti-inflammatory, an anti-spasmodic, and an anti-infective (1).
- Preparation and Method of Application: Chamomile is taken internally in the form of a tea or tincture. 2-6 ounces of a standard or cold infusion may be given as needed (2). The American Pharmaceutical Association recommends making a tea using 2 to 3 heaping dried flowers per cup of water. The tincture is taken in dosages of ½ teaspoon 3 times per day (3). 1 participant makes the chamomile tea with anise for treatment of stomachaches.
- Where to buy it: Chamomile can be purchased in food stores and pharmacies.
- Safety and Efficacy: The American Pharmaceutical Association states that chamomile "appears to be relatively effective and safe when used in recommended amounts...according to a number of well-designed studies and common use" (4).
- Warnings and Precautions: Chamomile contains "varying amounts of allergens as well as pollen...tea made from [chamomile] may cause dermatitis, anaphylaxis, or other hypersensitivity reactions in allergic individuals." Please be

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aware that these reactions are VERY RARE when talking about the type of chamomile that is commonly used; nevertheless “persons known to be allergic to ragweed, asters, chrysanthemums, or other members of the family Asteraceae should be cautious about drinking and chamomile tea” (1).

Cordial de Monell

- **Uses:** 7 participants of this survey use Cordial de Monell to treat pain from teething. The remedy calms the child.
- **Properties:** Cordial de Monell comes to the United States from the Dominican Republic. The ingredients, as listed on the bottle, are potassium bromide, betula oil (also known as sweet birch oil and methyl salicylate), oil of anise, and a syrup base.
- **Preparation and Method of Application:** Cordial de Monell comes already prepared. According to the package, the recommended dosage is as follows: for a child from a few days to 1 month old—5 or 6 drops to half a teaspoonful, for a 3 month-old child—1/2 to 1 teaspoonful, for a child who is 6 months or older—1 or 2 teaspoonfuls, 3 or 4 times a day. In addition, the instructions state that for cramps, bowel complaints, etc., repeat the above dose every 2 hours, or until change in the patient is perceived for the better.
- **Where to buy it:** Cordial de Monell can be purchased at pharmacies, bodegas, and botánicas.
- **Safety and Efficacy:** Since Cordial de Monell is not a product from the United States, a published statement about its safety and efficacy could not be found. All but one of the participants who use the product say that it is effective. See “Warnings and Precautions” below to find out about safety issues.
- **Warnings and Precautions:** Cordial de Monell contains potassium bromide, a sedative and hypnotic. It also contains methyl salicylate, which can cause toxic effects when ingested (see “Warnings and Precautions” under “Bronquina”).

Higuerita (Tree Oil)

- **Uses:** 2 participants use this remedy, but only one participant gave a reason for its use. The participant uses it to treat asthma. A worker in a botánica says that it is used to treat the flu. Higuerita is also used to treat constipation.
- **Properties:** No information available.
- **Preparation and Method of Application:** The remedy comes already prepared. 1 participant gives 2 drops of the remedy to her child, two times a day (when needed).
- **Where to buy it:** Higuerita can be purchased in botánicas and pharmacies.
- **Safety and Efficacy:** Since Higuerita is not a product from the United States, a published statement about its safety and efficacy could not be found. All of the participants who use this product say that it is effective and safe.
- **Warnings and Precautions:** No information available.

Honey

- **Uses:** Honey is used by 5 participants for various reasons. The reasons include constipation, cough, congestion and asthma.

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- Properties; Honey does not really possess any therapeutic value, but it is still used in folk medicines for its soothing effects, especially in cough remedies (1).
- Preparation and Method of Application: For coughs, 1 participant makes a tea-like drink out of honey, garlic and onions (she boils the ingredients in water and then strains them). For coughs, another participant makes a drink out of honey, radishes, onion and watercress. For asthma, 1 participant makes a remedy using honey, lemon, radishes, and baby onions (she puts the ingredients in a blender or chops everything). For congestion, 1 participant makes a drink by boiling onions, honey and salt.
- Where to buy it: All of the ingredients can be purchased in food stores.
- Safety and Efficacy: The American Pharmaceutical Association states that honey “appears to be relatively effective and safe when used in recommended amounts...according to a number of well-designed studies and common use” (4).
- Warnings and Precautions: Given the risk for contamination with *Clostridium botulinum* spores, which can cause botulism, honey should not be given to infants under one year old (4). In addition, when using onions as part of the remedy, a batch of the remedy should be prepared that will last no more than three days (to prevent the onions from going bad).

Lemon with Salt

- Uses: 2 participants use this remedy. 1 uses it to treat stomachaches, and 1 uses it to treat coughs. It is also used to treat sore throats. Externally, it can be rubbed on the skin to treat minor scrapes.
- Properties: Lemon has citroflavonoids, which “affect vascular permeability, are anti-inflammatory, diuretic, and are a source of Vitamin C” (7). Salt has properties that allow it to be beneficial as a topical treatment for inflammatory lesions (10).
- Preparation and Method of Application: For internal use, squeeze juice from a lemon directly onto a tablespoon, add salt, and give to child. The remedy can also be made into a gargle by adding warm water to the combination of lemon juice and salt. No directions were given for the external use of the remedy.
- Where to buy it: The ingredients can be purchased in a supermarket or food store.
- Safety and Efficacy: Both participants state that the remedy is effective and safe.
- Warnings and Precautions: None.

Linden Tree Flowers (Tila-Tilo)

- Uses: No participants reported that they use linden tree flowers, but the remedy is found in botánicas. Linden tree flowers are used to treat feverish colds, flu, and other conditions associated with chilling, because linden flower tea promotes sweating. The tea is also used to alleviate congestion associated cough and throat irritation. Latin Americans use it to treat nervousness and other conditions believed to benefit from a sedative or tranquilizer (this claim, however, is not supported by experts who study medicinal herbs) (4).
- Properties: The flowers of the linden tree contain tannin and mucilage. These substances are very important when talking about the taste of the linden flower tea. The taste is important because relatively large amounts of the tea need to be

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drunk to induce perspiration. Flowers with a higher concentration of tanning and relatively low mucilage content produce a more tasty tea than flowers with a lower concentration of tannin and relatively high mucilage content. Flowers of *Tilia cordata* and *Tilia platyphyllos* are preferred sources of the herb because they contain a higher concentration of tannin and a lower concentration of mucilage than flowers of other species. Teas prepared from these two species taste much better (1).

- Preparation and Method of Application: An infusion is made using 1 to 2 teaspoons of the flowers. The tea is drunk once or twice a day (4).
- Where to buy it: Linden tree flowers can be purchased in botánicas.
- Safety and Efficacy: The American Pharmaceutical Association states that linden tree flowers “appear to be relatively effective and safe when used in recommended amounts...according to a number of well-designed studies and common use” (4). Flowers should be stored in airtight, light-resistant containers in order to preserve maximum fragrance (1).
- Warnings and Precautions: It has been reported that using the tea too frequently may result in damage to the heart. While this is rare and is only the result of excessive intake of the beverage, those with known cardiac problems may want to avoid drinking linden flowers tea (1).

Miel de Rosa (Rose Honey)

- Uses: 1 participant uses this remedy to clean her child’s tongue. Miel de Rosa is also used to treat herpes sores.
- Properties: Miel de Rosa comes to the United States from the Dominican Republic. The ingredients, as listed on the bottle, are: sodium borate, rose extract, and honey. Sodium borate is used to treat the mouth sores and skin infectious eruptions. Rose is used to treat inflammation of the mouth and pharynx (7). For information about honey’s properties, see “Properties” under “Honey.”
- Preparation and Method of Application: Miel de Rosa comes already prepared. There are no directions on the bottle. The participant wipes the remedy on her child’s tongue to clean the tongue. To treat herpes sores, the remedy is wiped on the sores.
- Where to buy it: Miel de Rosa can be purchased at botánicas.
- Safety and Efficacy: Since Miel de Rosa is not a product from the United States, a published statement about its safety and efficacy could not be found. The participant who uses the product says that it is effective. See “Warnings and Precautions” below to find out about safety issues.
- Warnings and Precautions: Given the risk for contamination with *Clostridium botulinum* spores, which can cause botulism, honey should not be given to infants under one year old (4).

Rábano Yodado (Syrup of Horseradish)

- Uses: Rábano Yodado is used by 1 participant to treat asthma. A worker in a botanica says that it is used to treat coughs. The description on the package states that the remedy is “an anticatarrhal preparation with expectorant action.”

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- Properties: Rábano Yodado comes to the United States from the Dominican Republic. The ingredients, as listed on the bottle, are: iodine, potassium iodide, and iodized radish fluid extract. Potassium iodide is used as an expectorant. Horseradish is used to treat cough/bronchitis for several reasons. Horseradish clears congestion (by acting as an expectorant), soothes coughs and other respiratory ailments, and helps fight respiratory tract infections (4).
- Preparation and Method of Application: The remedy comes already prepared. The following dosages are recommended according to the instructions on the bottle: for adults—3 tablespoons daily, for children—3 or 4 teaspoons daily, for infants—10 drops, 3 times a day, pure or diluted in water or juice.
- Where to buy it: Rábano Yodado can be purchased in pharmacies.
- Safety and Efficacy: Since Rábano Yodado is not a product from the United States, a published statement about its safety and efficacy could not be found. The participant who uses the product says that it is effective. See “Warnings and Precautions” below to find out about safety issues.
- Warnings and Precautions: Preparations of horseradish should not be administered to children under 4 years of age (4). Parents should be advised about the amount of Rabano Yodado that should be given, since the instructions on the bottle do not specify ages. In addition, the description on the package states that the remedy should not be administered “to patients with a history of hypersensitivity to iodine or iodines.”

Sancochito

- Uses: 3 participants use Sancochito as a decongestant, to treat congestion, wheezing, and the flu.
- Properties: Sancochito comes to the United States from the Dominican Republic. The ingredients, as listed on the bottle, are: castor oil and syrup of tolu.
- Preparation and Method of Application: Sancochito comes already prepared. According to the instructions on the bottle, the recommended dosage is as follows: little children—1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon, older children—1/2 teaspoon, adults—1 teaspoon, 3 times a day.
- Where to buy it: Sancochito can be purchased at grocery stores, bodegas, and pharmacies.
- Safety and Efficacy: Since Sancochito is not a product from the United States, a published statement about its safety and efficacy could not be found. However, castor oil “appears to be relatively effective and safe when used in recommended amounts...according to a number of well-designed studies and common use” (4). With syrup of tolu (a stimulant and expectorant), there is a slight possibility that allergic reactions can occur, but it is generally safe (7). All 3 participants believe that this is an effective remedy.
- Warnings and Precautions: Parents should be advised about the amount of Sancochito that should be given, since the instructions on the bottle do not specify ages. The *PDR for Herbal Medicines* states that castor oil should not be administered to children under 12 (7). In addition, castor oil is a strong laxative (some participants believe that the child’s phlegm comes out of his or her stool). Excessive use of castor oil may cause extreme loss of important fluids, salts, and

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nutrients, and it may also cause the colon to become “lazy” and not function as well (4). Since a laxative effect occurs within 2-6 hours after ingestion of the drug, it should not be given at bedtime (8).

Scott's Emulsion

- Uses: Scott's Emulsion is used by 1 participant to treat cold, fever, asthma, and tight chest. It is also taken daily to prevent colds.
- Properties: The main ingredients, as listed on the package, are: water, soybean oil, and cod-liver oil. Scott's Emulsion is rich in Vitamins A and D.
- Preparation and Method of Application: Scott's Emulsion comes already prepared. According to the instructions on the package, the following dosage is recommended: 4 teaspoons per day at mealtimes.
- Where to buy it: Scott's emulsion can be purchased at bodegas, botánicas, and pharmacies.
- Safety and Efficacy: The American Pharmaceutical Association states that cod-liver oil “appears to be relatively effective and safe when used in recommended amounts...according to a number of well-designed studies and common use” (4). Soybean oil is safe when used properly (7).
- Warnings and Precautions: Soybean oil may have occasional gastrointestinal side effects, such as stomach pain, loose stool and diarrhea (7).

Sebo de Flan (animal lard) (also known as Lamb's Wool Oil)

- Uses: 5 participants use Sebo de Flan. 4 of the 5 participants use the remedy as a decongestant. 1 participant uses Sebo de Flan to treat cradle cap.
- Properties: Sebo de Flan is animal lard.
- Preparation and Method of Application: Sebo de Flan is a remedy that is externally applied to different areas of the body. 1 participant uses Sebo de Flan along with menthol and camphor; the combination of ingredients is placed on the child's chest, back and behind the ears. 2 participants use Sebo de Flan with Bronquina (see information in this booklet under “Bronquina”). 1 participant rubs Sebo de Flan and Bronquina together in her hands and places the mixture behind the child's ears, while she applies only Sebo de Flan to the child's chest. The other participant who uses the two remedies rubs them together in her hands, and then places the combination on the child's chest, back and head. They report doing this once or twice a day, when needed. To try to make the remedy as effective as possible, after the Sebo de Flan is placed on the child's chest, an empty, flattened, brown paper bag from the supermarket may be placed on the child's chest. Then a tight T-shirt is worn to hold the bag in place. For cradle cap, Sebo de Flan is applied to the child's head.
- Where to buy it: Sebo de Flan can be purchased in pharmacies and botánicas.
- Safety and Efficacy: All participants who use this remedy state that it is effective.
- Warnings and Precautions: When using camphor with Sebo de Flan, do not apply the camphor-containing mixture more than 3-4 times a day. Overuse may cause tissue irritation, and even poses the risk of absorbing camphor into the body (4).

Quick Guide to Home Remedies

Siete Jarabes

- **Uses:** No participants reported that they use Siete Jarabes, but it is found in botánicas and pharmacies.
- **Properties:** Siete Jarabes comes to the United States from the Dominican Republic. It is, according to the label on the bottle, “a mild expectorant.” The ingredients, as listed on the package, are: tolu syrup (a stimulant expectorant used for chronic congestion) (8), ipecac syrup, tar syrup, cocillana syrup (causes vomiting; an expectorant) (9), sweet almond oil, white pine syrup (an expectorant, demulcent, diuretic, and a useful remedy in coughs and colds) (9), honey, glycerin, and ammonium chloride (a stimulant expectorant and cholagogue) (10).
- **Preparation and Method of Application:** Siete Jarabes comes already prepared. According to the directions on the bottle, the following dosage is recommended: either by physician’s directions, or adults—1 tablespoon every 4 hours (1-6 years)—1/2 teaspoon every 4 hours, children (6-12 years)—1 teaspoon every 4 hours.
- **Where to buy it:** Siete Jarabes can be purchased in pharmacies.
- **Safety and Efficacy:** Since Siete Jarabes is not a product from the United States, a published statement about its safety and efficacy could not be found. Ipecac syrup is very effective and safe when used in recommended amounts (4). Studies on the effectiveness and safety of sweet almond oil (when it is taken internally) are conflicted, or there are not enough studies to draw a conclusion, but it is believed to be safe.
- **Warnings and Precautions:** The instructions on the bottle state that “if there is high fever, consult your physician before using this preparation.” In addition, with syrup of tolu, there is a slight possibility that allergic reactions can occur, but it is generally safe (7). Given the risk for contamination with *Clostridium botulinum* spores, which can cause botulism, honey should not be given to infants under one year old (4).

Tussibron

- **Uses:** 2 participants use Tussibron to treat congestion and cough. According to the description on the package, Tussibron is used to treat “acute infections and chronic respiratory” illnesses, such as “bronchitis, whooping cough, bronchial asthma, etc.”
- **Properties:** Tussibron comes to the United States from the Dominican Republic. The ingredients, as listed on the package, are: oxolamine citrate and excipientes c.b.p.” Oxolamine is used for the treatment of bronchopulmonary infections (10).
- **Preparation and Method of Application:** Tussibron comes already prepared. 1 participant gives 2 cc of the remedy to her child, 4 times a day (when needed). The other participant gives 1 teaspoon, 3 times a day (when needed).
- **Where to buy it:** Tussibron is bought in botanicas, bodegas and pharmacies.
- **Safety and Efficacy:** Since Tussibron is not a product from the United States, a published statement about its safety and efficacy could not be found. All of the participants who use the product say that it is effective and safe.
- **Warnings and Precautions:** No information could be found.

Products Sold in Pharmacies and Botánicas that You Should be Aware Of

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- CONTAINS BELLADONNA (DEADLY NIGHTSHADE), LOBELIA (according to the American Pharmaceutical Association, “studies indicate that there is a definite health hazard to using this substance internally, even in recommended amounts” (4)), AND EPHEDRA (MA-HUANG).

Humphrey’s #3

- Used to treat pain that results from teething
- Contains coffee and BELLADONNA (DEADLY NIGHTSHADE). However, this is a homeopathic preparation so these substances are present in minute quantities.

Tussibron Compuesto

- Contains Amoxicillin

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