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88 NATURAL REMEDIES



88 Natural Remedies

Ancient Healing Traditions
for Modern Times

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Cover: Lemon, mint, and a cup of herbal tea can soothe everything from congestion and indigestion to cold hands.
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Dandelions may be a bane to allergy sufferers, but dandelion leaf tea is an effective diuretic.
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Important Note to Readers

This book is meant to increase your knowledge about home remedies and other ways to care for your health at home, and to the best of our knowledge the information provided is accurate at the time of its publication. It is not intended as a medical manual, and neither the author nor the publisher is engaged in rendering medical or other professional advice to the individual reader. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not strictly regulate supplements and herbs, so there is no guarantee of strength, purity, or safety, and effects may vary. The illustrations in this book are general and are not intended to be used as guides to identification or instruction. You should not use the information contained in this book as a substitute for the advice of a licensed health care professional. Because everyone is different, we urge you to see a licensed health care professional to diagnose problems and supervise the use of any of these home remedies to treat individual conditions.

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CHAPTER ONE

Breathing Difficulties

15 ways to take a deeper breath

At rest, a healthy adult takes between 8 and 16 breaths per minute. Most of the time, you're hardly aware of your breathing. It's a largely unconscious reflex controlled by the nervous system, much like blinking or the beating of the heart. But you notice immediately when breathing becomes even the slightest bit difficult, or when something interferes with that rhythmic and usually effortless intake and release of air. Serious breathing problems, including those associated with asthma, severe allergic reactions, injuries, or something caught in the airways, always require immediate medical attention. But minor breathing difficulties such as the annoying stuffy nose that often accompanies a cold usually can be relieved by taking simple steps at home.

Congestion

When tissues and blood vessels lining the nasal passages become inflamed and swollen, it's difficult—and sometimes nearly impossible—to breathe through your nose. Doctors call this stuffy, plugged-up condition “nasal congestion.” Colds and flu can bring it on. So can common allergens such as pet dander, pollen, and mold, as well as airborne irritants like dust and smoke. Most acute cases of nasal congestion eventually clear up on their own, but try the following tips and techniques to make breathing a little easier.

Breathe Easier

Try a Nasal Wash Nasal lavage is a time-honored technique for flushing

out nasal passages with a saltwater solution. A nasal wash helps rinse away mucus, germs, and allergens that contribute to congestion. Make the wash by stirring ½ teaspoon noniodized salt into 1 cup warm water (use distilled water only) until completely dissolved. Alternatively, use a store-bought nasal saline solution. Two of the most common tools for getting the salt water into your nose are a small bulb syringe and a neti pot. If using a syringe, draw up some of the solution into the bulb. While leaning over a sink, place the tip of the syringe in one nostril and gently squeeze the bulb, causing the solution to fill the nostril, run through the sinuses, and flow out the other nostril. Blow your nose gently to get all the water out. Then flush the other nostril in the same way. If using a neti pot, tip your head forward and slightly sideways and then pour the solution into the uppermost nostril; repeat on the other side. Thoroughly clean and air-dry the bulb syringe or neti pot after each use. Discard any unused salt solution.

Use Steam Therapy Inhaling steam is an old-fashioned remedy for helping to clear congestion. Carefully pour 4 cups of just-boiled water into a large, heatproof bowl. Place a towel over your head and shoulders and lean over the bowl, keeping your face at least 12 inches above the water's surface. If the temperature feels comfortable, inhale deeply. Continue inhaling the steam for about 10 minutes. To boost the congestion-clearing power of the steam, add a drop or two of eucalyptus essential oil to the hot water in the bowl before you begin.

Go Warm and Cold Place a warm, wet washcloth across the bridge of your nose. Hold it against your face for about a minute. Then switch to a cold, wet washcloth and hold for about the same length of time. Repeat several times.

Have a Cup of Herbal Tea A steamy cup of an aromatic herbal tea, such as peppermint or ginger, can help clear a stuffy nose. To brew peppermint tea, place a heaping teaspoon of dried peppermint in a cup, fill with just-boiled water, cover, and steep 10 minutes. Strain and add honey or maple syrup to sweeten, if desired. To brew ginger tea, steep 1

teaspoon freshly grated ginger root in a cup of just-boiled water for 10 minutes. Sweeten as needed, or add a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.

Snoring

Snoring is the rough, rattling, sometimes thunderous sound that occurs when a person's breathing is partially obstructed while sleeping. This can happen when muscles in the roof of the mouth, tongue, and throat relax. As air flows past, these relaxed tissues vibrate, which creates the irritating noises. Habitual snoring, especially if marked by episodes of breath holding, can be a sign of a serious condition. Infrequent light snoring, such as that caused by temporary nasal congestion, is less serious. The following remedies may help.

Snuff Out Snoring

Raise Your Head Try a different pillow, one that lifts your head while keeping your neck relatively straight. This may alleviate minor blocking of your airways caused by sagging muscles in your mouth and throat.

Try Your Side When you sleep on your back, your tongue and soft palate (the soft area on the roof of your mouth) may move down as they relax, contacting the back of your throat. Sleeping on your side helps prevent this. If you've been a back sleeper most of your life, however, changing position isn't easy. Try the tennis ball trick: Sew a pouch on the back of a T-shirt or pajama top and tuck a tennis ball inside. Whenever you start to roll onto your back, the bulge of the tennis ball may encourage you to stay on your side.

Tape Your Nose Those nasal strips football players wear do actually help to spread the nostrils and increase airflow through the nose. Available at most drugstores, they are worth a try.

Control Allergens If you have allergies that are causing congestion, they can make snoring much worse. Wash your sheets frequently in hot

water, and zip up your pillow in an allergen-blocking case. Vacuum and dust your bedroom at least once a week. And keep your pets off the bed.

Hiccups

The annoying and often embarrassing hics of hiccups are caused by involuntary contractions of the diaphragm, the large sheet of muscles underlying your lungs. The contractions lead to abrupt, uncontrollable intakes of air. Spicy foods, overeating, swallowing air, drinking carbonated beverages or too much alcohol, sudden excitement, and emotional stress can bring on a case of hiccups. Hiccups usually resolve within a few minutes or hours. But these time-tested remedies may bring them under control sooner.

Nix the Hics

Hold Your Breath Take a deep breath and hold it as long as you can. Swallow when you feel a hic coming. Alternatively, take a deep breath and hold it for ten seconds. Without exhaling, take another breath and hold for five seconds more. Then, still without exhaling, take a third small breath and hold for an additional five seconds. Holding your breath causes a buildup of carbon dioxide in your lungs, which can help restore normal breathing.

Gargle Try gargling with water. This essentially forces you to hold your breath.

Increase the Carbon Dioxide Cup your hands around your nose and mouth and keep rebreathing your exhaled breath. You can get the same effect by breathing into a paper bag. Both these remedies lead to a buildup of carbon dioxide in your lungs.

Sip or Suck Take quick sips from a glass of water, or suck on a slice of lemon, a dill pickle, or an ice cube.

Try a Spoonful of Sugar Swallow a teaspoon of white sugar. The challenge of getting the dry crystals down your throat is distracting and can interrupt breathing and the hiccup response.

Compress the Chest Lean forward or lie down and pull your knees up to your chest. Compressing your chest in this way may help calm a diaphragm that is in spasm.

Do What Granny Says A number of simple cures for the hiccups have been passed down through the generations: Drink a glass of water from the opposite side of the glass. Pull on your earlobes. Have someone sneak up on you and yell “Boo!” to scare the hiccups out of you. Not a one of these can be proved to work—but they won’t hurt, either.

CHAPTER TWO

Chest and Throat Ailments

18 aids to ease cold and flu ills

Runny nose, scratchy throat, sneezing, coughing, watery eyes. Sound familiar? These are all classic symptoms of colds and flu, two common ailments caused by viruses. Unfortunately, there is no cure for either one. Part of the reason is that viruses have a knack for mutating quickly, which is why new strains of colds and flu make the rounds every year. Antibiotics are no help—they have no effect on viruses. Over-the-counter cold and flu medicines suppress some symptoms but often have undesirable side effects. Home remedies can be a healthier, safer alternative.

Colds and Flu

Though they share some symptoms, colds and flu are caused by different types of viruses. So, how can you tell which illness you've got? An old rule of thumb states that if your symptoms tend to be from the neck up, you've probably got a cold. With the flu, you may have a runny nose and sore throat, but on top of that, expect body aches, fever, and fatigue. Colds tend to last longer, but the flu generally causes more discomfort.

Upper Respiratory Rescue

Hydrate “Drink plenty of fluids” is the mantra. Water is best, but clear broth, green and herbal teas, and diluted juices are also good choices.

Try Chicken Soup It's a time-honored treatment backed up with modern research. Chicken soup—especially recipes rich in garlic and onions—

does indeed provide more than comfort. Some ingredients fight inflammation or thin mucous secretions to help relieve congestion.

Rinse the Sinuses Nasal irrigation can help relieve congestion caused by colds and flu. Even just spritzing your nasal passages with saline nasal drops several times a day can make a difference.

Suck on Zinc Clinical trials have shown that sucking lozenges that contain zinc (in the form of zinc gluconate or zinc acetate) may help shorten the duration of a cold by several days. Follow package directions. Be aware, though, that zinc lozenges can leave a bad taste in your mouth or make some people nauseated.

Go Herbal Andrographis and echinacea are two herbs that top the list of cold and flu treatments. Research supports *Andrographis paniculata*'s effectiveness in relieving the symptoms of colds, flu, and some other upper respiratory conditions. Preparations of the dried herb are available in many health food stores and online. Follow package directions. Echinacea has been a popular herbal treatment for respiratory ailments for centuries. Echinacea tinctures (also available at health food stores), used as directed, tend to be more effective than teas for treating the symptoms of colds and flu.

Cough

Coughing is the body's way of trying to keep the airways clear of mucus and other substances. People suffering from colds and flu often develop "productive" coughs that help get rid of mucus from the back of the throat or the bronchial tubes. A nonproductive or "dry" cough is a dry, hacking—often tickling—cough that usually doesn't bring up anything. Dry coughs can sometimes develop after you've recovered from a cold, and they may linger for several weeks.

Slough Off a Cough

Reach for Horehound If you have a productive cough, try old-fashioned horehound drops. The bittersweet herb has expectorant properties.

Suck Slippery Elm For centuries, Native Americans used slippery elm to treat coughs and other respiratory ailments. Slippery elm contains mucilage, a substance that, when mixed with water, becomes a slick gel. Slippery elm lozenges can soothe irritated throats and dry coughs.

Sip Syrup Here's a home remedy that has withstood the test of time: Mix 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice with 1 tablespoon honey. Heat gently until warm. Take 1 teaspoon every hour, as needed.

Swig Ginger Tea Ginger has been shown to have anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antiviral properties. Ginger tea can soothe throats made raw by coughing. Add about a tablespoon of freshly grated, peeled ginger to a cup and fill with just-boiled water. Steep 10 minutes, strain, and sweeten, if desired. As an alternative, try thyme tea.

Rub On a Rub Chest rubs can help loosen congestion. Mix 5 drops eucalyptus essential oil with 2 teaspoons almond oil. Rub some of this mixture on your chest and cover with a hot water bottle or a heating pad wrapped in flannel or a soft thin towel. Leave on 20 minutes. Repeat once or twice a day.

Sore Throat

A sore throat often goes hand in hand with a cold or the flu. The feeling is unmistakable—a painful, raw scratchiness that intensifies when you swallow. Sore throats usually resolve on their own in a few days. But there's no need to suffer while you wait. Try the following remedies to ease throat discomfort.

Thwart a Sore Throat

Reach for the Salt Cure Gargling with salt water is a simple and effective sore throat remedy. Stir a teaspoon of salt into a cup of warm water until the salt is completely dissolved. Take a mouthful, gargle, and spit. Repeat hourly.

Sip or Gargle With Thyme Thyme tea, made by steeping a handful of fresh thyme leaves in a cup of just-boiling water for 10 minutes, is also a time-tested sore throat remedy. Sip hot thyme tea to soothe a sore throat, or transform it into an effective gargle by adding a teaspoon of salt to a cup of cooled tea. Stir until the salt is dissolved and gargle with small mouthfuls. Spit; don't swallow.

Sip Sweet and Sour Another old remedy calls for mixing equal amounts of honey and apple cider vinegar (try 2 teaspoons of each) in a cup of hot water. Take frequent small sips of this mixture to ease sore throat pain.

Pop a Lozenge Zinc lozenges can soothe a sore throat as well as help shorten the duration of a cold.

Laryngitis

Laryngitis is an inflammation of the larynx or voice box. Straining your voice from loud talking or shouting can bring it on. It can also develop as a result of irritation or infection during a cold or a bout of the flu. Although persistent hoarseness can be a sign of a more serious medical condition, temporary (acute) laryngitis typically clears up in a few days. If you're stricken with temporary silence, the following simple remedies may help.

Talk Back

Breathe Moist Air Inhale steam by pouring just-boiled water into a large bowl, draping a towel over your head and shoulders, and leaning over the water (keep your face at least 12 inches from the water's

surface).

Keep Your Throat Moist Take steps to stay hydrated. Sucking on soothing lozenges, chewing gum, and sipping warm water can help, too.

Drink Tea A variety of herbal teas can soothe a stressed throat. Try making a cup of tea from the herb mullein. Place 2 teaspoons dried mullein leaves in just-boiled water. Steep, strain, and sweeten, if desired. Drink a cup one to three times daily.

Spoon in Honey and Cayenne Mix together a teaspoon of lemon juice, a teaspoon of honey, and a pinch of cayenne pepper in the bowl of a large spoon. Put the spoon in your mouth and slowly suck off the mixture, letting it coat your throat. Repeat two or three times a day.



To avoid foodborne illness, wash your hands thoroughly and often—before cooking and after touching raw meat, seafood, or eggs. Make sure to sanitize any cutting boards that have had raw meat on them before reusing them.

(Rudchenko Lilia/Shutterstock)



Thyme has a long history of use in Europe as an herbal treatment for coughs. Place 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves, or 1 teaspoon dried thyme leaf, in a cup. Cover with just-boiled water and let steep 10 minutes. Strain and sweeten with honey, stevia, or maple syrup, if desired.

(Robyn Mackenzie/Shutterstock)



Honey is a soothing and coating condiment that is delicious, has medicinal properties, and never, ever spoils. Add it to lemon juice to fight off a cough.

(Olga Miltsova/Shutterstock)

CHAPTER THREE

Digestive Upsets

16 stomach settlers

An upset stomach. A bout of belly-churning diarrhea. Painful bloat from constipation. An uncontrollable attack of gas. Sound like anyone you know? Don't worry—you're not alone. It's probably safe to say that everyone has had some form of digestive disorder at one time or another. These upsets are among the most common of all health complaints. Persistent, long-lasting digestive problems can be warning signs of a serious underlying condition. But occasional upsets tend to be triggered or at least aggravated by what—and how—we eat and drink. Viruses, bacteria, stress, smoking, and pregnancy can be contributing factors, too. The good news is that tried-and-true remedies can tame unsettled tummies and deliver relief.

Indigestion

When your last meal seems to be sitting uncomfortably in your stomach, roiling around enough to make you queasy or even threatening to come back up, you've probably got a classic case of indigestion. Eating too much or too fast can bring it on, even in people who claim they have cast-iron stomachs. Certain foods are also known indigestion inducers. Many home remedies for indigestion rely on time-tested herbs to help relieve spasms and bloating. Some promote normal digestion, helping move food out of the stomach and into the intestines so you can be comfortable again.

Tame the Tummy

Quaff Chamomile Tea made from the herb chamomile has been used to relieve indigestion for centuries. Chamomile exerts healing and protective effects on the digestive tract lining. It also relieves cramping, expels gas, and stimulates normal digestion. Chamomile tea is easy to make and quite safe for most people. (CAUTION: Though generally considered to be very safe, rare allergic reactions to chamomile have been reported in people who are allergic to ragweed, asters, chrysanthemums, and other plants in the Asteraceae family.) Add a heaping teaspoon of the dried herb to a cup, pour in just-boiled water, and steep for 5 minutes. Strain and add a little honey to sweeten, if desired.

Chew Seeds Many Indian restaurants have a dish of fennel seeds available as a digestive aid for departing diners. Fennel is a carminative, an herb that aids digestion and alleviates cramping and gas. Try chewing a teaspoon of fennel seed to soothe an upset stomach, particularly one triggered by eating spicy foods.

Try Peppermint Studies have shown that peppermint tea has a relaxing effect on gastrointestinal tissues and can relieve pain, too. Steep a heaping teaspoon of dried peppermint leaf in a cup of boiling water, strain, and sip. Research has also shown that small doses of peppermint oil may help relieve indigestion, as well as the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome. Peppermint oil may cause heartburn; if so, try coated capsules, available in health food stores.

Gnaw Ginger Ginger has been used for thousands of years to settle unsettled stomachs. Studies have shown that ginger calms intestinal spasms and can significantly reduce nausea. Try slowly chewing a few pieces of candied ginger when indigestion strikes. Ginger is available in health food stores and many supermarkets.

Sip Soda Although drinking carbonated beverages may sometimes cause indigestion, slowly sipping a small amount of club soda or real ginger ale

may help alleviate the discomfort.

Constipation

Constipation may be nearly as common as indigestion. It's the reason behind roughly 2.5 million doctor visits each year. Although what constitutes "regularity" varies widely from person to person, you're constipated from a medical perspective if you haven't had a bowel movement for more than three or four days. Typically, constipation is the result of too little fiber, not enough water, and too little exercise, although stress and certain medications can also play a role.

Restore Regularity

Add Fiber If constipation is a problem, try gradually increasing the amount of fiber in your diet. Expand your daily menu to include more whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Foods such as beans and lentils, raspberries, prunes, figs, oatmeal, and bran cereal are particularly fiber rich.

Hydrate Make sure you are drinking at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day. Keep an eye on your coffee or tea intake, though. Both are diuretics that can promote water loss.

Drink Hot Lemonade Warm drinks can stimulate the digestive tract, especially first thing in the day. Even before you have your morning coffee, try drinking a hot "lemon-aid" made by adding a tablespoon or two of freshly squeezed lemon juice to a cup of hot water. Sweeten with a little honey, if desired.

Get Going Physical activity can help stimulate the digestive tract to move things along. It also reduces stress, which can contribute to constipation (as well as indigestion). Walking is one of the simplest and best exercises. Try including a 20- to 30-minute walk as part of your daily activities.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea often strikes without warning and can send you running to the bathroom many times a day. Viruses can cause it. So can food poisoning, antibiotics, and foreign strains of the bacterium *E. coli* picked up while traveling. Fortunately, most cases of common diarrhea usually clear up in a few days. Simple remedies—and staying hydrated—can help you cope until the crisis has passed.

Ditch Diarrhea

Keep Hydrated Diarrhea can be very dehydrating. Fight dehydration by continuing to sip your way through eight glasses of water every day. Herbal teas and diluted vegetable and fruit juices are also good choices.

Drink Blackberry Tea Blackberry tea is an old folk remedy for diarrhea. Traditionally, though, the tea was made from blackberry roots, which may not be easy to find. An alternative is tea made from blackberry leaf. Steep 2 teaspoons dried blackberry leaf in 1 cup just-boiled water for 10 minutes. Drink up to three cups a day.

Keep It Light Avoid eating solid food for 12 to 24 hours. Then eat small amounts of simple foods such as applesauce, bananas, yogurt, white rice, soda crackers, and toast.

Try Probiotics Antibiotics can kill off large numbers of “good” bacteria that normally inhabit your intestines. You may be able to replenish these helpful microbes—and speed recovery from diarrhea—by eating yogurt, kefir, and other probiotic foods that contain live bacterial cultures, including strains of *Lactobacillus*. Helpful bacteria are also available in pill form at natural food stores.

Gas

Most intestinal gas is produced in the colon, where undigested food, such as plant fibers, ferments with the help of billions of bacteria.

Excessive gas can form if you eat too fast or too much, swallow air, consume lots of fatty or gas-producing foods such as beans and raw vegetables, or are unable to digest lactose, a natural sugar found in milk and other dairy products. Gas can also result from constipation and when the normal balance of bacteria in your intestines is disrupted by taking antibiotics and certain other medications.

Fight Flatulence

Slow Down Gulping food encourages overeating and the swallowing of air, both of which can contribute to gas formation.

Go Easy With Fiber Some high-fiber foods tend to produce intestinal gas. Among the worst offenders are beans, lentils, cabbage, onions, broccoli, cauliflower, bananas, raisins, prunes, whole wheat bread, and bran cereal. If gas is an issue, try cutting back on these foods.

Experiment With Herbs A number of herbs, including fennel, peppermint, and lemon balm, can also help relieve intestinal gas. A handful of fennel seeds or a cup of lemon balm tea can be a very effective flatulence fighter!



A clove-and-saltwater gargle can stop pain, but be careful of allergies to cloves. Rare allergic reactions to clove oil have been documented in a few people.

(motorolka/Shutterstock)



Almonds are high in protein, healthy fats, and soluble fiber. They have also been shown to help prevent a post-meal spike in blood sugar that can lead to an energy crash later on.

(Dionisvera/Shutterstock)



Lavender has many benefits beyond its wonderful smell. The medicinal properties of its oils can create a deeply calming effect.

(Norman Chan/Shutterstock)

CHAPTER FOUR

Everyday Aches

13 soothing solutions for pain

Begin with the alarm not going off, add a frantic commute, sprinkle liberally throughout the day with deadlines and meetings, and top with screaming children and a stack of bills. If this sounds like a recipe, it is—for a headache. Headaches often come on quite suddenly. So can other painful conditions such as earaches or toothaches. When something hurts, our first instinct is often to reach for over-the-counter (OTC) painkillers. Although these handy pills do effectively kill pain, they may not always be the best choices for the job. Aspirin, acetaminophen, and naproxen, the most common OTC options, all have potentially serious side effects. The alternative? Natural remedies may quell pain as well as, or even better than, these medicine cabinet staples.

Headache

Headaches come in different sizes and intensities, but there are two common types. Tension headaches typically begin as a constant dull ache at the back of the head or in the forehead. At their worst, they spread into a sensation that your head is being squeezed in a vise. Tension headaches can be brought on by stress, anxiety, eyestrain, or lack of sleep. Migraine headaches are often characterized by a throbbing, stabbing, or aching pain in one part of the head that may be coupled with nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light and sound. The triggers for migraines may include foods, hormones, stress—even a change in the weather. If you have chronic headaches or excruciating pain, see your doctor immediately. But for the typical headache after a hard day, try the following approaches.

Head Off a Headache

Grab an Ice Pack When your head is pounding, using an ice pack may bring relatively speedy relief. You can use a frozen gel pack, a bag of frozen peas or corn, or a do-it-yourself pack made by placing a few ice cubes with a little water in a zip-top bag. Cover your ice pack with a paper towel or a thin dish towel and apply it to the part of your head that hurts for 10 minutes every hour.

Combine Heat and Cold If ice doesn't ease the pain of a headache, try heat. Heat can help relax tight muscles, which can contribute to tension headaches. Try putting a warm, moist compress on the back of your head, neck, or wherever the pain seems to be concentrated. Repeat as needed.

Apply Acupressure Several acupressure points, when activated, can ease headache pain. Here's one to try: With the thumb and index finger of one hand, grip the meaty webbing between the thumb and index finger of the other hand. Apply firm, squeezing pressure for several seconds, release gently, and then squeeze again. Repeat this massaging action for about a minute, and then switch hands.

Use Essential Oils Massaging your temples with a diluted aromatic essential oil may bring headache relief. Mix a drop of either peppermint or lavender oil with a teaspoon of a neutral carrier oil, such as sweet almond oil. Wet your fingertips with this mix and rub your temples gently using small circular motions. Be careful not to get the oil in your eyes.

Try a Scalp Massage Use your fingertips to massage the skin all over the head and neck, but focus mostly on the sides of the head above and around the ears. Ideally, ask someone to do this for you, so you can more completely relax.

Earache

Earaches caused by infections of the middle ear (otitis media) are one of the most common ailments of childhood, especially in children younger than three. But this type of earache can strike adults, too. The problem often begins following a cold or a bout of sinusitis. Bacteria or viruses migrate into the middle ear via the Eustachian tube—the tubular structure that connects the middle ear to the back of the throat—where they cause inflammation and swelling. Swelling may block the Eustachian tube, trapping accumulating fluids and microbes and causing a painful throbbing along with a feeling of fullness. Consult your health care provider to rule out medical problems such as a perforated eardrum, then consider home remedies to ease the discomfort.

Ease an Earache

Try Heat Make a warm compress by soaking a hand towel in hot water (not hot enough to burn skin); wring out the excess. Fold the towel in thirds the long way and position it under your chin, wrapping the ends up alongside the jaw line and continuing up to your ears. Hold it there until the compress cools, then rewarm the towel in hot water and repeat. Do this two or three times a day.

Ease Pain With Oil Pierce a garlic oil capsule (available at health food stores). Squeeze a few drops of the garlic oil onto a small cotton ball and place the oil-dampened portion gently inside your ear (leave enough sticking out to make it easy to remove); leave it in for several hours. Recent studies have shown that warm olive oil, applied in the same manner, can also relieve earache pain. (CAUTION: Avoid applying oil to ears shortly before seeing your health care provider, as the presence of the oil may interfere with an ear examination.)

Massage à la Qigong Qigong (pronounced chee-gung) is an ancient Chinese form of healing movement therapy. To encourage circulation and drainage of fluid trapped in the ear canal, try a qigong-inspired massage. Place your middle and index fingers on either side of your ear

(middle finger in front, index finger behind). Starting near the earlobe, press firmly while moving your fingers (maintained in a V shape) upward alongside the ear. Release the pressure when you reach the top of the ear. Return to the starting position and repeat about two dozen times. Try this twice a day.

Drink and Gargle Make sure you're drinking lots of fluids. The act of swallowing tends to stimulate the muscles surrounding the Eustachian tube to contract, which may help trapped fluid to drain. Gargling with warm water can have a similar effect.

Toothache

Toothache can be caused by untreated tooth decay or gum disease, a broken or cracked tooth, a missing cap, or a lost filling. Professional care is required as soon as possible, either from your dentist or a medical doctor. But if toothache strikes late at night or over a weekend and you can't get an appointment right away, these simple steps can help ease the pain temporarily.

Contain the Pain

Use Salt and Cloves Add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt and 3 drops pure clove essential oil to about 6 ounces of warm water in a glass. Stir until the salt dissolves. Swish small mouthfuls of this mixture around the painful tooth. Spit; don't swallow. Repeat as needed. (CAUTION: Rare allergic reactions to clove oil have been documented in a few people. This clove oil-containing mouth rinse is very dilute, but use it for no more than three days. If you experience any sign of irritation on your gums or the lining of your mouth, stop using it immediately.)

Apply a Spicy Paste Mix about a teaspoon each of powdered ginger and cayenne pepper in a small dish. Add enough water to make a paste. Scoop up some of the paste onto a cotton swab and hold it on the tooth for several minutes. Be careful not to get this mixture on your gums,

your tongue, or the lining of your mouth, as it could cause irritation.

Mix a Peppermint Mouthwash Make a cup of peppermint tea. Swish small mouthfuls of the liquid gently around the affected tooth.

Ice It Place an ice pack on your cheek (with a paper towel or thin, soft cloth in between to protect your skin) over the painful tooth. Apply for 5 minutes every hour.

CHAPTER FIVE

Feeling Tired

20 ways to wake up rested

You claw your way out of the covers in response to the beeping alarm, but you're just as tired now as you were when you went to bed. Join the club. Every day, more than two million Americans complain of being weary, worn out, done in. A lingering feeling of tiredness can be a symptom of an undiagnosed medical condition, so start by getting a thorough medical checkup. If you're otherwise healthy, bouts of fatigue usually stem from having too much to do and too little time to do it, coupled with energy-stealing habits. Periods of insomnia, when sleep won't come no matter what you do, can also lead to feeling chronically exhausted. So can long-distance travel, which leaves your jet-lagged body unsure of what time zone it's in.

Fatigue

Call it exhaustion, lethargy, sluggishness, or lassitude. Fatigue by any name is the feeling that you simply don't have the energy, and maybe not even the interest, to do what you need to do. Fatigue strikes everyone at some point or another. The usual prescription is to get more rest and exercise, eat a balanced diet, and squeeze in a little R&R. If you've done all those things and you're still dragging—and assuming there's nothing medically wrong—strategies for de-stressing and reenergizing may help.

War on Weariness

Eat Breakfast Fatigue can be a side effect of skipping meals, especially

breakfast. Try starting your day with a little low-fat yogurt, some scrambled eggs, or an almond-rich smoothie.

Go for Mini-Meals Having three small meals and two snacks helps keep blood sugar and energy levels stable all day long. These meals and snacks should contain a mix of complex carbohydrates, protein, and a small amount of fat.

Exercise to Energize Although it may seem counterintuitive, exercising gives you energy. Just taking a brisk walk every day for 20 to 30 minutes may be enough to release stress and add bounce to your step. With a little creativity and planning, you can find many easy ways to work exercise into your day to help banish fatigue.

Try Morning Yoga At first glance, yoga may seem like something people do to relax, but it can be invigorating and energizing. Get your day going with a few simple yoga postures.

Perk Up Some aromas can calm you down; others perk you up. Eucalyptus, clove, cinnamon, lemon, and peppermint are some natural scents used in aromatherapy to reduce drowsiness and increase energy and alertness. Keep a small bottle of one of these essential oils around and take a whiff when you need an energy boost. Or mix 8 drops lemon oil and 2 drops each peppermint, eucalyptus, and cinnamon oil with 8 ounces water in a small spray bottle. A spritz of this mix into the air around you makes for a fragrant energizer.

Take a Nap The Amish have a saying that a half hour's nap in the afternoon is worth two hours' sleep at night. Many cultures advocate a quick siesta during the day as a way to combat fatigue. During your lunch hour or after work, kick off your shoes, stretch out, and catch 20 winks. Fifteen or 20 minutes should do the trick; longer naps can make you feel groggy and make it difficult to fall asleep at night.

Get More Sleep Getting too little sleep can lead to chronic fatigue. Shoot for eight hours a night.

Insomnia

Insomnia is the most common sleep complaint among Americans. You have difficulty falling asleep, or staying asleep, and you end up feeling tired upon waking and all day long. Certain medical conditions can trigger insomnia, as can many medications. But for the average, healthy person, insomnia is usually brought on by anxiety and stress and can be aggravated by alcohol or caffeine. Although OTC and prescription drugs can help you sleep—most are antihistamines—they all come with side effects, including daytime sedation, and they may be habit-forming over time. When sleep escapes you, try the following natural remedies instead.

How to Invite Sleep

Take Valerian In modern herbal medicine, valerian is the leading herb recommended for insomnia. It helps most people fall asleep and sleep more deeply without causing the morning “hangover” characteristic of many prescription sleep aids. Capsules of concentrated valerian root are available at health food stores; some brands may also contain other relaxing herbs such as lemon balm and passionflower. Follow package directions.

Have a Cuppa Chamomile Both chamomile and lemon balm have been used for centuries to help induce sleep and as aids for gentle relaxation. Steep a teaspoon or two of either herb in a cup of just-boiled water (steep chamomile for 5 minutes, lemon balm for 10). Sweeten, if desired, with a little honey or maple syrup. (CAUTION: Do not use chamomile if you are allergic to ragweed or other plants in the aster family.)

Inhale Lavender The essential oil of lavender contains many medicinal components, and research has shown that simply inhaling the fragrance

can be calming. Put a sachet of dried lavender, or several sprigs of the freshly cut herb, between your pillow and pillowcase before going to bed. You might also brew a cup of lavender tea, made by steeping 2 teaspoons dried lavender flowers in 1 cup just-boiled water.

Make a Hops Pillow Hops is another traditional remedy for insomnia—it has mild sedative properties. Make a hops pillow by stuffing a cloth drawstring bag, available at craft stores, with a handful of fresh hops, available online. Tie the top shut. Place the bag between your pillow and pillowcase.

Drink Hot Milk Drinking a cup of hot milk to induce sleepiness is an old folk remedy that may have originated in New England and persists to this day. Add a little honey or a pinch of nutmeg to a cup of milk and warm until steaming. Pour into a mug and sip.

Learn to Relax Relaxation techniques such as yoga and meditation can ease stress and help you fall asleep. Also try controlled breathing exercises.

Jet Lag

What do you do when it's time for breakfast in Bangkok but your body is telling you it's bedtime instead? Jet lag is a disturbance of the normal sleep-wake cycle triggered by rapidly traveling across three or more time zones. Fatigue, insomnia, disorientation, poor concentration, headaches, and even digestive distress may set in. Jet lag can last from a day to a week or even longer, depending on the individual and the number of time zones crossed. There's no way to eliminate all jet lag symptoms, but you can minimize its disorienting effects.

Trip Tips

Consider Melatonin This natural hormone is involved in regulating the human biological clock. Research has shown that taking melatonin

supplements during the first few days of travel may relieve jet lag. (CAUTION: Talk to your doctor before taking melatonin. Although generally regarded as safe, there are rare reports of allergic reactions and autoimmune conditions associated with taking it.)

Start Rested Departing on your trip exhausted will likely make jet lag worse.

Reset Your Body Clock Set your watch to the time at your destination before you go and begin eating and sleeping accordingly.

Catch Some Zzzz's Sleep as much as you can on the plane. Invest in good travel pillows for your lower back and your neck.

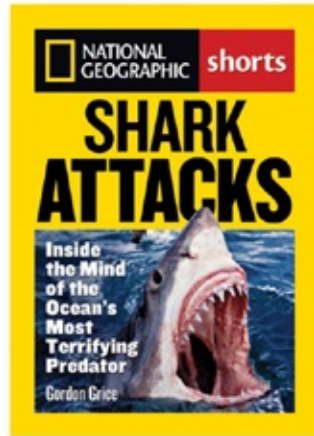
Drink Water, Not Alcohol The air in many planes is as dry as a desert. Avoid alcohol and drink plenty of water.

Use Caffeine Carefully Caffeine on long flights can further disturb the sleep-wake cycle. Once at your destination, a cup of coffee can promote daytime alertness, but avoid it after midday.

Sit in the Sun Spend time in the sun at your destination to reset your biological clock.

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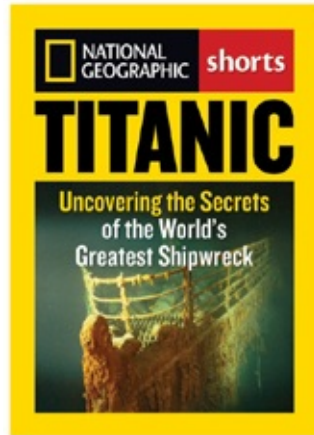
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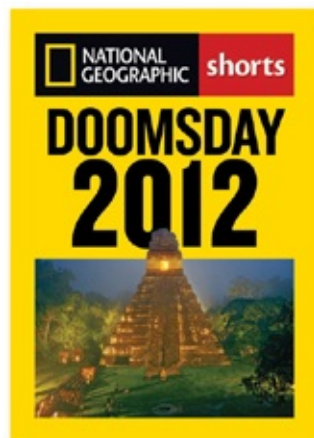
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