

Appendix G

Folk recipes for home remedies

The participants in my study differentiated between home remedies consisting of food and those of herbs and flowers; food and flower remedies were commonly prepared at home, while herbs remedies (excluding mint, thyme, and basil) were more likely to require specialized knowledge. The latter, are thought to be potentially harmful, if not prepared properly.

It is a commonly held belief that home remedies are harmless. Cross-cultural data exists that this is not true. One example is (Trotter 1998:280) lead poisoning of Mexican children in southwest United States who were treated for a stomach ailment, *empacho*, with a folk remedy that was in fact, lead tetroxide. In Armenia, a child with undiagnosed diabetes, recently died from being given honey which the parents thought would give the child energy. However, the lay perspective is that these are not harmful, especially when compared to the medicines of doctors.

Knowledge about herbs, plants and flower remedies is obtained from books. Respondents said they own these books or have access to them through neighbors or family members. Lilig, actively studied these books, prepared various recipes and tried them out on herself. If the recipe “helped” her, she would use it for her family as well as give them to neighbors and friends. Several respondents noted that they had a family member who was knowledgeable about how to use prepare these recipes. Lucia said that her mother went to the fields, picked herbs and flowers, dried them and prepared mixtures for their use as needed. Another respondent, Mariam, said she used a special flower that grows in the mountains near Kapan; her friends pick this flower and sent them to her fresh in season. She dried them for later use. Suren, a male respondent said, “This knowledge is in the family; it is held by my mother and my father.”

All of the following recipes were given to me by the women respondents. However, men did mention the benefits of ‘greens’ and of ‘garlic’ and ‘onions’ for heart disease and lowering cholesterol noting that these benefits had been finally been acknowledge though scientific study. (This finding supported folk knowledge and further demonstrated to the informant that science does not know everything.)

Both doctors and laywomen specified the symptoms or illness for which a recipe was to be used, the laywomen were more likely to innumerate the benefits in terms of such things as -- boosting the immune system, increasing blood flow, cleaning out the system (getting rid of poisons and *toxins* that accumulate in the body) calming nerves and restoring balance. The extent to which doctors employ these same explanatory models is not clear; I suspect that they do, but did not volunteer them to me – more comfortable with a symptom based explanatory model. (Additional research is needed to fully understand these attributes, what they mean, to which foods and combinations of foods and herbs each is related, and how these are actually used in everyday practice.)

Recipes:

For colds and boosting the immune system the most popular foods, used universally, are berries, especially *hon* (a blackberry) and *malina*, a small red raspberry laypeople told me is high in vitamin C (one noted it was high in salicylates as well). The berries are picked in season and cooked with sugar, bottled and eaten almost daily as a side accompaniment when drinking tea. If ill, the amounts are increased to several portions a day.

Herbal teas are also widely used and believed to have generally beneficial effects in addition to specific medicinal uses.

Dartz (mint) is good for abdominal spasms – you just let it sit in water (don't cook it) and then drink it as a tea.

Oortz (thyme) is good for lowering blood pressure. Boil water and put the *oortz* in it and drink as a tea.

Yghenj – a green vegetable that grows in the wild, looks like arugala. Cook in water, drain and drink 2 times a day – this cures hemorrhoids

From the polyclinic doctors in Gyumri:

Stuffy nose/ congestion

Inhalation: a whole head of garlic mashed with salt and the fumes inhaled.

To open nostrils – prepared and use as drops in nose:

The juice of garlic or onion mixed with honey (For children – add oil or aloe)

Lung problems – pneumonia, bronchitis, asthma

- 100 ml aloe
- 100 ml pig fat (young pig so that it doesn't smell too much)
- 100g butter
- 100g. chocolate oil or a whole bar of chocolate

Boil. Put in refrigerator – every morning take 3 tablespns. (argument about how much to take)

Gallstones – (These instructions were written by a gastroenterologist on the bottom of the sheet of paper he gave to a patient on which he had written out the findings of his gastroscopy. The diagnosis was *cholecystit*

- 100ml olive oil
- 100 ml lemon juice
- 100 ml spirit (96% alcohol)
- mix and drink

Kidney Stones:

1. 1 cup lemon juice
1 cup glycerin or olive oil
1 cup Jermuk (spring water)
- Mix and drink the whole thing on an empty stomach.

2. 4 warm eggs (newly hatched)
3 lemons – squeeze the juice over the eggs
- Let this stay for 2 days – the shells will dissolve. Drink over two days.

Stomach ulcers 100 gm honey

- 100 gm butter
- 100 gm aloe (strained from the leaf of the plant)
- Mix; before eating meals take 1 teaspoon 3 times a day

Hemorrhoids.

- Olive oil
- Streptomycin powder
- Honey wax
- Mix and melt on burner. Wrap in cloth and insert to rectum when room temperature. Allow to stay all night.

Stops odor of alcohol and is good for coughs, hypertension, and diabetes

Bay leaf: 10 leaves in 1 cup of water

Boil until ½ cup left. Add some honey. Drink

Urine

There are a lot of folk remedies using urine. There is an Armenian book on this. The doctors mentioned it. No one gave me any remedies.

From the polyclinic doctors, Yerevan:

For gallstones

200 gm *tooti* oghi (mulberry vodka)

200 gm clean honey – wild—no sugar used

200 gm olive oil

Mix and leave for one week. Then take 1 demitasse cup while still lying down. Drink it on an empty stomach and sleep 2 hours again. This is excellent for gallstones.

For Kidneys: Take stems of cherries. Dry the stem, cook it, drain and drink as a tea.

Stomach Ulcers: Take the lizard's tongue leaf, mash it with honey and eat it.

Open sores: apply the lizard's tongue leaf directly on the open sore and wrap it with cellophane.

Laywomen gave me some of the above recipes as well. In addition, they added these:

For maintaining health in the winter (Susanne)

To keep the immune system healthy:

1 L. clean honey (it must be clean)

1 cup walnuts

1 cup dried apricot

1 cup raisins

2 lemons (washed) and ground up entirely

Mix all together and put in the refrigerator

“I give this to the children in the morning everyday in the winter and spring.

[Why then?] That is when man's organism is weak – we do not have the vitamins and the nourishment from the fruits and vegetables in these months. I don't give my children vitamins, I use this in place of vitamins.

For calming the nerves and boosting the immune system

Rose petal syrup: take ½ kg of petals with a few leaves, put in boiling water and leave for 24 hours. Drain. Add 5 kg. of sugar. Boil and put in small containers.

For cleaning the body of toxins through purging of the large intestine

12 table spoons of carrot juice

2 table spoons of red beet

2 table spoons of spinach juice

3 table spoons of celery juice

3 table spoons of parsley

1 table spoons of lemon juice

Drink in 30 days, after that break – 10 days, during which drink apple juice (250g per day).

Another recipe for cleaning out toxins from the liver and gallbladder is:

1 pomegranate squeezed

½ cup Jermuk

1 tablespoon honey

Mix and drink before going to bed. Sleep on your right side. This will clean out the gallbladder and bile. Honey cleans the colon too.