

Elderberry Tincture

For documented validation of the following information please go to <http://www.herbalgram.org/files/pdfs/elderberry-scr.pdf> This is information based on *Sambucus nigra*, the black European elder. This information does not apply to any other variety of elder. DO NOT USE any other variety of elder as a medicinal preparation. Other varieties are toxic i.e. leaves, berries, bark, root and can cause nausea, varmint, and diarrhea. ONLY *S. nigra* BERRIES and flowers are used medicinally.

1. Do elderberries stop flu?

As the above linked article documents, elderberry tincture tested in the laboratory and in double-blind human studies cut the severity and length of Influenza A and B measurably and significantly IF taken at the onset of symptoms and taken appropriately.

2. Do elderberries stop colds?

No. Colds, though virus caused, do not respond to elderberry – they are an entirely different strain of virus.

3. How does elderberry preparations work against Influenza A and B virus?

Laboratory documentation shows elderberry preparations prevent the influenza virus from replicating, thereby preventing an overload of virus in the body, thereby allowing the immune system to do its job of attacking the virus and neutralizing it.

Studies do show elderberry preparations do increase some immune system cytokines which in large, overwhelming numbers can be damaging to human tissue, BUT opinions are divided on whether keeping the viral load low outweighs the relatively low percentage of a possible cytokine storm (which is the actual killing cause in known cases of infection by H5N1 known as bird or avian flu).

4. Where does one get elderberries?

Most natural or health food stores in the US carry dried elderberries or they can order them for you. There are economical sources on-line also. I get all my herbs and spices from www.herbalcom.com. As of today, 10/07/2005, they are out of stock on elderberries, but will have them back in stock 10/12/2005. AT \$5.30 a pound which will make a tad over 3 quarts they are not that expensive. No

shipping charges, no minimum orders, fast UPS. There is a flat rate \$5.00 handling charge.

5. How does one use elderberry effectively?

Tinctures are primarily the most medicinally potent herbal preparations for treatments. An elderberry syrup (see reference below) is a good choice for kids or for those who wish to avoid alcohol. Capsules are the third alternative though the least medicinally potent.

6. How to make elderberry tincture(or any herbal tincture)?

Use any REALLY clean, preferably sterilized, glass jar – size does not really matter, but quart canning jars seem to be preferred for ease of storing, sterilizing, and filling. In ANY size glass jar, fill the jar 1/3 full of dried black (*S. nigra*) elderberries, this does NOT have to be exact, eyeball measurement is just fine. One pound of dried elderberries will eyeball fill 3 quarts with a bit left over or you can just evenly divide a pound of the dried berries between 3 quart jars. More really does NOT make the tincture stronger. Now fill the jar almost to the top with vodka, not less than 80 proof. DO NOT USE any other alcohol you happen to have in your stash no matter the proof, brand or type. VODKA = TINCTURE; Other alcohol = non-medicinal alcohol. Now, cap the jar securely, give a shake or two, and store in a cool, dark area for 7–10 days. That is the universally accepted time period to produce tincture. Longer does not make stronger; phases of the moon MAY have some effect but there is no documentation on that so far. After the 7–10 days you can strain off the liquid and toss the berry residue. DO NOT think to reuse that residue, the resulting liquid will not work as you expect. Your tincture is now ready to use should there be influenza in your area. You do not have to strain off the liquid, but the tincture is not going to get any more medicinal just sitting there soaking the berries. The alcohol molecules fill up to capacity within the 7–10 days and can absorb no more no matter how long it soaks.

7. How do you use elderberry tincture?

Since elderberries medicinal properties work directly on Influenza A or B virus present in the body it is NOT a preventative, so taking it in hopes of avoiding infection will not work. When an adult exhibits symptoms of influenza infection i.e. sudden onset of high fever, dry persistent cough, weakness, commercially prepared elderberry preparations suggest taking internally 2 teaspoons of preparation

every 4 hours i.e. Sambucol. To use homemade elderberry tincture consensus of opinion seems to be that taking 2 Tablespoons every 6 hours or so for 8–10 days will do the trick. There will be a reduction in symptoms within 2–3 days of taking elderberry tincture as per recommended above, but the virus will still be present so take for the full 8–10 days just like taking an antibiotic for a prescribed treatment course.

8. Are there alternative preparations not using alcohol or for children?

My friend in NY, Summerthyme, uses the following formulation with great success and it would be better for children than a straight alcohol-based tincture. Only drawback is the preparation uses fresh or frozen elderberries!

"side note– I don't really think you need to use sterilized jars. I put that in because I have no control over people's practices, and have no way of knowing how clean they are, etc. Better safe than sorry, ya know? I generally just make sure my jars are very clean and rinsed with hot water. But I do always add the alcohol, rather than using the extra sugar. I'd probably do the extra step of sterilizing jars if I wasn't using any alcohol at all)

I take fresh (or frozen) elderberries and crush them in a stainless steel or heavy enamelware kettle. I add a TINY bit of water (just enough to barely cover the bottom of the kettle to keep the berries from sticking) and heat it *gently* over *LOW* heat, stirring the whole mash up until it's no warmer than 150°. The heat helps release the juice from the berries, but I'm not certain of whether high heat would possibly deactivate the antiviral properties. So I'm erring on the side of caution...

I either run the whole mash through my Vitamix at this point, or, if they seem to have been quite macerated already, just pour them into a jelly bag and let them drain. I've found that I get the most yield by putting them in two fine mesh bags and then putting the whole thing in my cheese press and pressing it. A cider press would work well, too. But if you don't have anything like that, simply taking the bag of mash, and twisting it tightly in your hands will get most of the juice out.

This is all contrary to most jelly making instructions (for those who are wondering) because you usually end up with some of the berry pulp in the juice. Since my goal is medicine, not "clear" jelly, I don't mind this a bit.

Anyway, once you've got your juice, you need to add enough sugar to preserve it. I've found that a equal ratio of sugar to juice by volume is sufficient- IF YOU WILL ADD ALCOHOL to help preserve it for storage. If you have an objection to any alcohol in the mix, you then need to use a 5:3 ratio of sugar to juice... this will give you a saturated syrup high enough in sugar so it won't spoil at room temperature.

If you prefer using honey, you need to use a slightly higher ratio.... approximately 1 1/4 cups of honey to every cup of juice. This is because of the water content already in the honey. Or, if you want to use pure honey without any added alcohol, you need a 2:1 honey/juice ratio.

Anyway.... stir in the sugar or honey into the warm juice, until it's all completely dissolved. If you've used the lower 1:1 ratio, at this point you need to add some alcohol for preservative. I've used Blackberry Brandy quite frequently for this... hoping to get some of the astringent and stimulant effects of the blackberry in the mix. If you use brandy, you need to add 3-4 ounces per pint of syrup.

If you simply want the alcohol as a preservative, you can add 3 ounces of 100 proof vodka, or a little more than 3 tablespoons of 160 proof vodka. (we can't get pure grain alcohol here... if you can, you can use 1 1/2 ounces of that instead). (SHE'S REFERRING TO EVERCLEAR)

Stir it gently, and decant it into STERILIZED jars or bottles. Use the same techniques you'd use when canning jelly- except this won't be hot enough for you to expect the seals to seal completely. As long as you sterilized the jars and the lids before bottling it, it shouldn't be necessary for it to seal.

LABEL IT!! You always think you'll remember what is in those jars, or when you made it. Wanna bet!? LOL! Seriously- make sure you put

the date and at least whether or not there is anything but elderberry and sugar in there.

Store it in a cool, dark place (dark is especially important if you are using clear glass jars).

9. What are the side effects and/or drug interactions of using elderberry preparations?

None documented with the use of *S. nigra* elderberries or flowers. The leaves, bark, roots of *S. nigra* are toxic as are the berries and flowers of the other elder varieties. They can cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. There are no known drug interactions documented at this time and therefore, no contra-indications.

edited to correct dosage!!