



# Dental Herbalism: Natural Therapies for the Mouth

By Leslie M. Alexander Ph.D. RH(AHG)

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**Dental Herbalism: Natural Therapies for the Mouth** By Leslie M. Alexander Ph.D. RH(AHG)

A comprehensive practical reference to herbal dental care for all ages

- Details the use of 41 safe and effective herbs for the mouth
- Explores 47 common conditions that affect the mouth, such as gingivitis, periodontitis, acid reflux, and tooth loss
- Provides recipes for herbal toothpastes, mouth rinses, pain-relieving poultices, and teas for prevention and daily care
- Examines infant and toddler oral care, including remedies for teething and thrush

Our oral health is intimately linked with our overall health and well-being. In this practical guide to herbal dental care, medical herbalist Leslie Alexander and registered dental hygienist Linda Straub-Bruce detail how to use 41 safe and effective herbs for the mouth for optimum oral health, prevention of decay and inflammation, and relief from pain and discomfort.

The authors provide recipes for herbal toothpastes and rinses, poultices for pain and inflammation, and teas and tinctures for intervention, prevention, and daily care. They explain how recent research confirms the link between poor oral health and many diseases, such as diabetes, stroke, and heart disease. They examine the risk factors, symptoms, causes, and herbal preventives and remedies for 47 common conditions that affect the mouth, such as gingivitis, periodontitis, bruxism, acid reflux/GERD, and tooth loss. They explore the complete anatomy of the mouth and explain proper brushing, flossing, and tongue-cleaning techniques to prevent tooth decay and gum disease and maintain bridges, implants, and braces. The authors address the importance of diet and nutrition in oral health as well as controversial topics including fluoride. They provide an in-depth chapter on pregnancy, infant, and childhood oral care, including herbal remedies for teething and thrush.

Ideal for those looking to improve their own oral health, herbalists looking to address the root cause of systemic inflammation, or dental professionals searching for natural alternatives, this authoritative yet practical guide empowers each of us to reclaim the health of our mouths and sustain a full, strong set of teeth for a lifetime.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

“A rich and dynamic handbook to support everyday dental care for the layperson, it also offers intricate answers to complex questions for practitioners.” (*Emily Ruff, herbalist and director of Florida School of Holistic Living*)

“Brilliant, practical, and eminently empowering, *Dental Herbalism* is a ‘veritable owner’s manual for your mouth.’ The authors marry decades of herbal experience with decades of dental practice to create a book like no other. *Dental Herbalism* is sure to revolutionize the way we approach dental health.” (*Rosemary Gladstar, herbalist and founder of United Plant Savers and author of Rosemary Gladstar*)

“The authors have provided an excellent overview of oral conditions and relevant discussion of anatomy through this well-thought-out text. They also further provide non-pharmaceutical methods to prevent oral disease that complement traditional, well-accepted approaches for maintaining oral health. I commend both authors and would encourage the layperson and clinicians alike to read this text.” (*Michael T. Kolodychak, MPH, DMD, oral and maxillofacial surgeon*)

“An essential guide to natural oral health, *Dental Herbalism* is full of useful advice--herbal and otherwise. I had never truly understood how important a healthy mouth and teeth were for health and well-being.” (*Andrew Chevallier, FNIMH, MCPP, herbal practitioner and author of Encyclopedia of Herbal Medicine*)

“The accessible and detailed information in *Dental Herbalism* is required reading. Whether you want to do it yourself or simply be more knowledgeable about how to support what your dentist is doing, you’ll find it here. A great book.” (*Susun Weed, author of the Wise Woman Herbal series*)

“*Dental Herbalism* takes holistic herbalism to a new level, applying it to the realm of oral hygiene. This book will make an invaluable contribution to integrative herbal medicine and a resource for all types of health practitioners.” (*Mary Bove, ND, author of An Encyclopedia of Natural Healing for Infants and Children*)

“*Dental Herbalism* empowers personal responsibility for dental health. It is rich with lifestyle and hygiene tips and reliable herbal references. For health professionals it offers a clinical depth that will serve as a resource for clinical herbalists and dental professionals alike.” (*Mimi Prunella Hernandez, MS, RH(AHG), executive director of the American Herbalists Guild*)

“I fully endorse *Dental Herbalism: Natural Therapies for the Mouth*.” (*Reza Nassiri, DSc, FACC, professor of clinical pharmacology and associate dean of Global Health Pro*)

“*Dental Herbalism* is an easy-to-read guide on oral health and herbal medicinals and is a must read for both patients and dental professionals.” (*Michelle Hurlbutt, RDH, MSDH, associate professor of Dental Hygiene, Loma Linda University School of*)

“This is an extremely informative, reader-friendly resource of natural remedies for the dental professional and their patients.” (*Lisa E. Stillman, RDH, BS, founder of Dental Voice for Mental Health*)

“Written in a comprehensive style that allows for effortless integration into today’s practice of dentistry. Kudos to the authors for a job well done!” (*Betsy Reynolds, RDH, MS, oral biology educator*)

“*Dental Herbalism* carves a unique place in the terrain of medical herbalism. It is thorough, drawing upon the expertise of senior practitioners alongside contemporary research. It is my go-to reference for dental care.” (*William Morris, PhD, DAOM, Lac, coauthor of Li Shi-Zhen Pulse Studies*)

“*Dental Herbalism* presents us with valuable insight into a topic that has previously been allotted only a page or two in most herbals. It offers a truly holistic perspective of dental wellness that’s sure to enrich both herbalists and dental professionals alike.” (*Jim mcdonald, herbalist and teacher*)

“The in-depth knowledge and the practical approach to herbal oral care contained between the covers of this book will change the way you look at and deal with your mouth and teeth.” (*Vatsala Sperling, PhD, PDHom, RSHom(NA), CCH*)

#### About the Author

Leslie M. Alexander, Ph.D., RH(AHG), is a medical herbalist and former research scientist. A professional member of the American Herbalists Guild, she is co-owner of Restoration Herbs. Linda A. Straub-Bruce, BS Ed, RDH, is a practicing registered dental hygienist and member of the American Dental Hygienists Association. Both authors are members of the American Academy for Oral Systemic Health and live in western Pennsylvania.

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## Chapter 8

### Gum Diseases

Periodontitis refers to inflammation “around” (*peri-*) the “tooth” (*-odons*), namely our gums and the bones that support our teeth.

Periodontitis is not something to ignore. It is of concern because the mouth is not isolated from the rest of ourselves. Inflammation in the mouth can antagonize our general health, weaken our immune health, and lead to chronic inflammation not just in the mouth but throughout the body.

The American Academy of Periodontology now estimates that about 47 percent, or 65 million, American adults have mild, moderate, or severe periodontitis.

The question is: Is periodontitis inevitable and preventable?

The answer: Preventable (entirely).

However, often periodontitis can be a “silent disease,” presenting without a single recognizable symptom. With the exception of very small changes to our gum tissues, sometimes only observable by trained professionals, we may appear entirely symptom free. As periodontitis advances, we move further and further away from a healthy mouth, inflammation becomes chronic, and we set up a cascade of inflammation throughout the body. In more severe situations, it cannot be reversed. We must not wait until it’s too late.

However, before discussing diseased gums, we need to be able to recognize healthy gums.

### Healthy Gums

If we think of our gums as holding our teeth in place, then it makes sense that our gums are firm and not

spongy.

Healthy gums don't allow our teeth to jiggle when we walk. They rise up to greet each tooth at its edge and then fall away slightly before rising up again to greet an adjacent tooth. Healthy gums fill the spaces between our teeth. Some people say that our gums "grasp" the bases of our teeth.

## **What is Gum Disease?**

Here we focus on two of the most common types of gum disease, gingivitis and periodontitis. Together these encompass the "mild," "moderate," and "severe" forms of gum disease that are rampant in the U.S. adult population.

### ***Gingivitis***

Simply put, gingivitis is inflammation of the gums. It is the mildest form of gum disease. Gingivitis is preventable. It is easily reversed with proper oral hygiene, attention to food and drink, regular dental cleanings, and an overall regard for well-being.

Typically, gingivitis is caused by an accumulation of plaque, a biofilm of microorganisms, which attaches to our teeth. Over time, when not removed, irritation results along the gum line. Left unattended, this sticky bacteria-laden deposit hardens and becomes tartar, a hard calcium deposit that we surely want to avoid.

If gingivitis is allowed to persist, a vicious cycle begins. The gums remain swollen and begin to trap even more bacteria. This is how the disease progresses.

Gingivitis may not always lead to chronic periodontitis, however all chronic periodontitis is preceded by gingivitis.

### ***Periodontitis***

Periodontitis is the next rung on the periodontal disease ladder. It is characterized by the spreading of inflammation beyond the gum tissue to the supporting structures of the teeth, including the bone around the teeth. Once referred to as "pyorrhea," periodontitis is irreversible. Although we can stop its progression, whatever destruction occurs as a result of periodontitis remains permanently. When bone is lost, it's lost. For good.

## **Coming to Grips with Chronic Periodontitis**

The first step is identifying the disease. This means scheduling a dental appointment. If gum disease is present, a dental professional's interpretation of symptoms following an examination will shed light on how best to intercede.

### ***Intervention Strategies***

There are both surgical and nonsurgical techniques available to us. A less invasive nonsurgical intervention is everyone's preferred first choice.

A dentist or dental hygienist may perform nonsurgical periodontal treatment, sometimes called "deep scaling" or "scaling and root planing." Scaling removes deposits of plaque and tartar both above and below the gum line. The clean tooth surface will be smooth, providing ample opportunity for the gums to "tighten" around the tooth. Inflammation will slowly subside because irritants, plaque and tartar, have been removed.

For the majority of people, scaling constitutes an initial intervention, although maintenance will last a lifetime. Follow-up dental interventions will include periodontal probing. This is done periodically to monitor pocket depth. If surgery is warranted, a general dentist or periodontist will make recommendations accordingly. However, we should realize that surgical interventions can be avoided in all but extreme situations with a commitment to care.

### ***Herbal Interventions***

Herbal remedies--topically, systemically, and as mouth washes--can be used with considerable success, from supporting and sustaining healthy gums and everyday care through the care of chronic periodontitis. The key is blending herbs to address symptom experiences and possible pathogens in the mouth.

Mouthwashes are suggested for the routine care of our mouths. Antimicrobial herbs, such as sage, rosemary, thyme, and stevia, form quite palatable, even delicious, bases. While these herbs each have antimicrobial activity, the addition of calendula, cleavers, yarrow, and myrrh can be added if gingivitis or periodontitis is of concern.

As disease progresses we look toward changing the balance of a formula. It would be simple to provide a fixed formula for each stage of inflammation. However, this would leave little if any room for understanding herbal formulation or gaining confidence when it came to adjusting a blend of herbs to meet a changing situation. Perhaps most importantly, such an approach fails to consider the individual.

Mouthwashes can be a pleasure to formulate. They are also medicines and are best formulated to meet the current needs of each person.

In the presence of a shifting microbial population, it is important to moderate herbs to enhance immune responses while also providing antiseptic and antimicrobial support, enhancing oxygenation of the tissues and astringing (tightening) the gums.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Mary Edick:**

Now a day individuals who Living in the era just where everything reachable by connect with the internet and the resources within it can be true or not demand people to be aware of each facts they get. How a lot more to be smart in getting any information nowadays? Of course the reply is reading a book. Examining a book can help men and women out of this uncertainty Information particularly this Dental Herbalism: Natural Therapies for the Mouth book as this book offers you rich data and knowledge. Of course the information in this book hundred percent guarantees there is no doubt in it you may already know.

#### **Kenneth Roberts:**

Nowadays reading books become more and more than want or need but also work as a life style. This reading addiction give you lot of advantages. The benefits you got of course the knowledge your information inside the book which improve your knowledge and information. The information you get based on what kind of guide you read, if you want have more knowledge just go with schooling books but if you want experience happy read one with theme for entertaining for example comic or novel. The actual Dental

Herbalism: Natural Therapies for the Mouth is kind of guide which is giving the reader erratic experience.

**Larry Artz:**

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**Robert Bryant:**

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