

# Natural Hand Care

IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

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# Skin Care = Health Care

Our skin heats and cools us, warns other body systems of invaders, and retains and excretes our bodily fluids. It's a truly amazing, waterproof, washable, and flexible substance that is able to self-mend and self-renew.

The epidermis—the self-repairing, self-renewing layer of the skin—is the first line of defense for the body's immune system and lies just below the stratum corneum, the outermost surface of our skin.

The lowest layers of the epidermis contain melanin, our skin pigment. Differences in skin color are due only to the amount, type, and arrangement of the melanin within

the epidermis. The protective purpose of melanin is to absorb ultraviolet rays from the sun, thereby protecting our skin from sun damage. The darker the natural color of the skin, the more melanin is present, and the better adapted the body is to life under the sun.

Keeping the epidermis healthy, especially on our hands, is a key part of body health. Naturally, then, the way we view hand hygiene has changed in the era of COVID-19. We now know that the maintenance of clean hands is essential in preventing the coronavirus from spreading to nearby surfaces and to others.

## Clean Hands Save Lives

Washing your hands frequently is one of the best ways to stop the spread of germs, other microscopic organisms, and harmful atmospheric pollutants. You should not, however, use dish detergent to clean your hands! To avoid this habitual tendency, place a soap dish that drains and little bars of soap at each sink in your home.

Always wash your hands:

- before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- after touching potentially contaminated surfaces or objects
- before and after preparing or eating food
- after using the toilet
- after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- after touching an animal or pet food, treats, or waste
- after touching garbage
- before and after caring for someone who is ill
- before and after treating a cut or wound
- after removing gloves

## Six Steps to Safely Washing Hands

1. Remove rings, watches, and bracelets. Wet your hands with clean, cool or warm running water. Avoid hot water, as it may increase the risk of skin problems.
2. Turn off the water. Lather the backs of your hands, palms, nails, and between your fingers on both hands. Include all surfaces of your hands and fingers. Scrape your nails across each lathered palm. Turn on the water to remove debris and dirt from underneath fingernails (an orangewood manicure stick makes this task easier).
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. You might hum a favorite song from beginning to end twice. The time it takes is less important than making sure you clean all areas of your hands.
4. Rinse your hands under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands with a disposable towel.
6. Use the disposable towel to turn off the faucet.

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**Note:** When using alcohol-based hand sanitizer, the spots most often missed are thumbs, fingertips, and between the fingers.

# Remedies for Brittle, Split Nails and Dry Cuticles

When hands are frequently in hot water and in contact with harsh soaps, detergents, or other irritating substances, nails take the punishment. Frequent use of polish remover, which dries out the nail bed, is another common cause of brittle nails and dry cuticles. The best way to prevent fingernails from splitting is to keep your hands away from hot water, drying soaps, and detergents. Apply nail oil or hand cream often. Wear waterproof gloves for wet tasks. Cotton-lined gloves or a separate pair of cotton gloves inside rubber or vinyl gloves will offer the most protection. Those sensitive to latex can use hypoallergenic gloves made from nitrile, which resists bleach and household solvents. If these methods fail, what follows are some easy remedies to help challenged nails.

## A New Look at Manicures in the Age of COVID-19

Since nail salons began shuttering when the pandemic began wreaking havoc across our country, health care providers, first responders, essential workers, and even the rest of us have been trying to perfect our at-home manicure skills. Hygiene and safety should be the main objectives of any COVID-era manicure. Keep your nails short and sweet to prevent dirt and bacteria from gathering beneath your nails and to avoid piercing vinyl, latex, or nitrile gloves. Closely clipped fingernails are the new normal. In

fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that health care providers shorten fingernails to less than ¼ inch (0.64 cm) long.

**Note:** Use different tools for fingernails and toenails. Nail scissors, similar in design to plier clippers with a palm grip, may be easier to maneuver, and offer a more precise cut. A palm grip also makes nail scissors a good choice if you have pain or weakness in your hands. It's especially important to use good-quality nail scissors if your nails are cracked. Zizzili and Equinox make special toenail clippers for thick toenails. Whether you use a compound lever clipper or plier nail scissors, look for high-carbon stainless steel blades, which will remain sharp longer. If clippers or scissors become dull, they can crush your nails instead of cutting them. This scenario is no different from biting your nails!

### For a safe at-home manicure:

1. Start by washing your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water.
2. Scrub under the fingernails of each hand with a clean, wet, and soapy nail brush. Pat your hands dry with a towel.
3. Trim your nails. Avoid cutting your entire nail in one horizontal clip. Instead, make small clips across the nail tip. Then clip the left corner, followed by the right corner. A magnifying mirror may help you see the shape of your newly clipped nails.
4. Smooth and shape the edges of your nails using a fine-grit emery board or glass file. (The higher the grit number, the gentler the file.) File each side of the nail moving in *one* direction only—not back and forth.
5. Remove any leftover dirt or debris from the shortened nail tip with an orangewood stick manicure tool or a spoon-shaped nail cleaner tool.
6. Wash and towel-dry your hands.
7. Apply two coats of clear base.
8. Nail polish is optional. If you do use polish, choose clear or nude shades.
9. For a shiny finish that will seal your nails, consider using a mixture of jojoba oil, rice oil, vitamin E, and sweet almond oil. Finish by moisturizing your hands.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- It's time to stop biting your nails! We all need to be concerned about germs, so cut your nails; don't shorten them by biting them.
- Chipped nail polish may harbor more germs than no polish.
- Artificial fingernails and nail extensions may harbor high concentrations of bacteria. Gram-negative pathogens can live under artificial fingernails even when using alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- The skin underneath the rings on your fingers contains more germs than anywhere else on your hands.
- Use of petroleum-derived hand lotions or creams may adversely affect the integrity of vinyl, latex, or nitrile exam gloves.

# Soothing Nail and Cuticle Oil

Treat your nails to this warm, relaxing oil bath at least twice a week. Almond oil is a good base moisturizer for brittle or split nails. You can add the essential oils of sage, chamomile, lavender, or vanilla-like benzoin as helpful agents against any fungal infections or bacteria that might be hiding around the cuticles and under the nails. An essential oil is a concentrated plant extract that retains the natural smell of the source. These oils also add a bit of aromatherapy to enhance your mood. A small amount goes a long way!

- 4 tablespoons (60 ml) pure sweet almond oil
- 20–25 drops of your choice of essential oil of sage, chamomile, lavender, or benzoin
- 1 vitamin E capsule (400 IU; d-alpha-tocopherol is the most biologically active form)

**Caution:** Lavender essential oil is not recommended for those in the first trimester of pregnancy or for those who have very low blood pressure.

## TO MAKE

1. Pour the almond oil into a small bottle and add the essential oils of your choice.
2. Pierce a vitamin E capsule and squeeze it into the oil mixture. Shake thoroughly.
3. Label the bottle with the contents and the date.

## TO USE

1. When you are ready to use the blended oil, warm the bottle by setting it in a bowl of hot water for a few minutes.
2. Soak your nails in a small bowl with the blended oil for about 10 minutes.
3. Sleep with cotton gloves on or wrap your hands in plastic wrap covered with a towel for at least 30 minutes for extra benefit.

## ALMOND JOY

No, not the candy! This is the real McCoy. Eat six raw almonds every day to relieve brittle, splitting fingernails. Linoleic acid, an essential fatty acid (EFA), is one of the important constituents of almonds. Among other benefits, EFAs help lubricate the body's cells, which can help soften brittle fingernails.

# Pineapple-Yogurt Nail Soak

Pineapple contains two helpful ingredients: bromelain, an enzyme that can reduce inflammation and pain, and alpha hydroxy acids, which peel off dead skin cells. Yogurt is a nourishing natural healer. Make a fresh batch of this soak each time you do a manicure.

- |   |                                       |   |   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| ½ | teaspoon (2.5 ml) apple cider vinegar | 2 | tablespoons (30 ml) pineapple juice, fresh or canned        |
| 1 | teaspoon (5 ml) olive oil             | 2 | tablespoons (30 ml) plain organic yogurt, regular or nonfat |

## TO MAKE

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1. Measure each ingredient and add to a small bowl.
2. Whip the mixture with a fork until blended and creamy.

## TO USE

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1. Dip fingers in the bowl and relax, allowing each hand to sit in the mixture for 5 minutes.
2. Massage both hands and fingers with the mixture. Leave on skin for a few more minutes.
3. Rinse fingers in warm water and pat dry.

(This recipe is shared by Patricia Rivers-Sergienko, a natural nail care professional.)

# Recipes for Silky Smooth Hands

Tired of dry skin on your hands? For smooth, soft hands, nothing beats the luxurious treatments on pages 8–10. If your hands are especially rough and callused, get in the habit of using petroleum-free protective hand creams, which help the skin retain moisture by adding to the

natural, water-resistant barrier between you and the environment. Soaps and detergents constantly erode this barrier. When applied to slightly damp skin, emollient creams, lotions, and ointments slow evaporation and hold on to vital moisture.

## Lemonade Hands

Here's a simple recipe that will immediately improve the smoothness of your skin. In the countryside of Chile, people use real sugarcane mixed with lemon juice to produce a mild dry skin exfoliant. I recommend finishing this treatment with a few drops of avocado oil, which has therapeutic value because it contains the vitamins A, D, and E, is easily absorbed, and helps heal the skin. You're going to love your hands after this treatment!

1    tablespoon (14 g) granulated sugar

1    teaspoon (5 ml) fresh lemon juice

A few drops of unrefined avocado oil

**Note:** Store avocado oil in refrigerator.

### TO MAKE

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- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Thoroughly wash your hands and pat (do not rub) them dry.</li><li>2. Have ready the squeezed juice from one lemon or 1 teaspoon commercially prepared pure lemon juice.</li></ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. Pour about 1 tablespoon of granulated sugar in the palm of one hand.</li><li>4. Sparingly, add enough lemon juice to the sugar to make a gritty paste.</li></ol> |
|--|---|

### TO USE

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- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Rub your hands together in a rotary motion, either clockwise or counterclockwise. At first, the paste will feel gritty.</li><li>2. Continue rubbing gently. Work the gritty paste up and over each finger, nail, and cuticle, and over the back of each hand. The heat of your hands will melt the sugar. The final coating is a shiny glaze. (If you suffer from cold hands, it will take a bit longer. If you can, step outside to warm sunshine.)</li><li>3. Leave the glaze on your hands for 5 minutes. Relax!</li></ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. Rinse with warm water. Pat your hands totally dry with a soft paper towel.</li><li>5. Apply a drop of avocado oil to one hand, then to the other. Gently massage the oil over the palms and backs of your hands, around your cuticles, and over your nails. The result will be silky, smooth hands!</li></ol> |
|--|--|

# Quick and Easy Hand Smoothing Lotion

Here's a cooling alternative remedy to soothe bothered skin.

- |   |                               |   |  |
|---|-------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | tablespoon (15 ml) glycerin   | 1 | tablespoon (15 ml) non-distilled witch hazel extract |
| 1 | tablespoon (15 ml) rose water | 3 | tablespoons (45 ml) honey                            |

## TO MAKE

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1. Blend and shake well.
2. Store in the refrigerator in a small covered glass jar.

## TO USE

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Pour a small amount into the palm of your hand and gently massage into your hands and fingers.

# Bee's Gift Honey Ointment

MAKES ABOUT SIX 2-OUNCE (60 ML) JARS OR TINS

This easy-to-make moisturizing ointment will heal and rehydrate hands and arms. Honey is antibacterial and works as a humectant, meaning that it pulls moisture to the skin. It's also wonderful to smooth on nicks, bruises, and minor burns to encourage healing.

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| 1   | ounce (30 g) beeswax                      | Up to 60 drops (3 ml) essential oils of<br>rose geranium, lavender, or bergamot (optional) |
| 1   | cup (250 ml) olive, almond, or jojoba oil |  |
| 1/3 | cup (75 ml) honey                         |  |

## TO MAKE

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- |    |   |    |  |
|----|---|----|--|
| 1. | Melt the beeswax in the top part of a double boiler. Stir periodically to facilitate melting. This process should take approximately 10 minutes. (Stay nearby.) | 3. | Remove from the heat and let cool slightly. Add honey and stir until incorporated. If desired, add essential oils now.             |
| 2. | Carefully add the oil to the melted beeswax. Stir until thoroughly blended.   | 4. | Pour into small jars. Wait until the mixture reaches room temperature to cap, label, and date. Store the jars at room temperature. |

## TO USE

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Smooth ointment on hands craving moisturizer.

(Beekeepers Stephen and Deb Pouech of Herbs 'n' Honey in Stafford Springs, Connecticut, share this recipe with us.)



# Special Wash for Chapped Hands

This is a gentle cleanser that should not be irritating to the skin. If you repeat this regimen day and night several times a week, your chapped hands will become a thing of the past. (The cornmeal accomplishes by a gentle abrasive action what a harsh soap does by chemical action—without drawing all the moisture away from the important lower layers of the skin.)

- 1 small cucumber, peeled and seeded
- ½ tablespoon (8 ml) honey
- 1 tablespoon (15 g) cornmeal
- Small amount of mild liquid hand soap

- Warm water (just enough to make a paste)
- Plastic wrap or plastic bags
- Hand towel

## TO MAKE

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- 1. Peel the cucumber and remove the seeds; blend or juice the vegetable for a few seconds.
- 2. Mix the cucumber with the honey, and set aside in a small bowl.
- 3. Make a paste by mixing the cornmeal with a bit of liquid hand soap and warm water.

## TO USE

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- 1. Wash your hands thoroughly with the cornmeal paste. Then rinse hands well in clean, warm (not hot) water. This helps to remove flaking skin cells and any soluble environmental pollutants.
- 2. While your hands are damp, apply the cucumber juice and honey mixture. Have someone help you wrap your hands in plastic wrap or insert them in large, clear, plastic bags. Cover with a towel, then relax as long as possible.
- 3. Rinse and dry hands. Apply moisture cream or a few drops of avocado oil. If you've done this at night, wear loose-fitting cotton gloves to bed. (Wash the gloves regularly.)
- 4. Repeat this cornmeal wash daily (and repeat as often as you can for badly chapped hands). In cold weather, substitute a cold-water rinse in the morning to acclimate the hands to cooler conditions. Dry your hands well and smooth on moisturizing cream.

# Calendula Oil

*Calendula officinalis*, also known as pot marigold, is a sun-loving Mediterranean plant with yellow and deep orange flowerheads. It contains both beta-carotene and vitamin C, and is used in many skin-soothing preparations, including oils, tinctures, creams, ointments, and even talc. This oil is good for skin of all ages and is particularly useful for chapped or cracked hands. If you are allergic to chamomile or echinacea species (Asteraceae family) use this oil with caution.

- 1 cup (225 g) dried organic calendula flowers (*Calendula officinalis*)
- 2 cups (500 ml) cold-pressed oil (olive, sweet almond, apricot, sesame, sunflower, or walnut)

Cheesecloth  
Paper coffee filters

**Note:** You can also make this oil with fresh calendula flowers. In this case, fill the jar with loosely packed flowers and steep in oil for only about 3 to 4 weeks. Pour the mixture through two paper coffee filters to strain out the flowers, then let the oil sit for another 24 hours. Pour the oil through a coffee filter one more time or remove with a poultry baster any sludge or particulates that may have settled to the bottom of the container.

## TO MAKE

1. Fill a clean glass jar to within an inch of the top with the dried calendula flowers. Then gently pack down the flowers with a spoon.
2. Slowly pour most of the oil into the jar, making sure that it completely covers the flowers. Stir gently with a non-metal utensil (I use a wooden chopstick) to remove any air bubbles. Top off with the remaining oil and seal the jar with a lid or a double layer of cheesecloth secured with a rubber band.
3. Place the jar in a paper bag and set on a warm, sunny windowsill for 5 to 6 weeks. Turn the jar weekly and inspect for moisture. If there is moisture, open the jar, carefully wipe it off with a clean towel, and reseal.
4. When the oil is a beautiful golden color, it is ready. Strain through a cheesecloth to remove the flowers. Then strain again through a paper coffee filter to remove any smaller debris.
5. Pour the oil into clean jars, then seal, label, and date. Store in a cool, dark place and use within one year.

## HISTORY OF THE HANDSHAKE

Now that we're all aware of what we touch—and transmit—with our hands, shaking hands has become taboo. But where did the custom of the handshake even come from?

The handshake, one of the world's oldest gestures, has been traced to the fifth century BCE, in ancient Greece. In that period, many unsavory folks carried concealed weapons in their hands. People started shaking hands on meeting and on parting, affirming that neither party was carrying anything intended to harm. Over time, this practice evolved into a polite greeting.

New alternatives to the handshake are popping up all the time as COVID continues to grip the globe. Some greetings include placing a hand over your heart, putting your palms together, and even the famous Vulcan salute that Dr. Spock popularized on *Star Trek*. We know you'll find a greeting that resonates for you.

# Care for Aging Fingers and Hands

The age of your skin is partially determined by its content of water-soluble collagen, a protein that gives skin its flexibility and capacity for absorbing moisture. The skin becomes thin and less pliable through the aging process as collagen molecules oxidize, form bonds, cross-link, and become stiffer and less able to swell or absorb moisture.

In addition, as we age, we are more likely to suffer from one kind of arthritis or another. Osteoarthritis in the hands most often affects the joint at the base of the thumb and the joints nearest the fingernails. The mildest form causes Heberden's nodes—knobby, bony enlargements of the top finger joints—over a period of years. More severe

forms can impede movement of the fingers, thumb, and hand. Any of the following treatments can be used to soothe pain and inflammation associated with arthritis.

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease that causes the lining and lubricating membrane of joints to become inflamed. The cells in this membrane divide and grow, bringing inflammatory cells and releasing enzymes into the joint space. The joint becomes swollen, puffy, and warm. An overabundance of fluid in the inflamed membrane causes body aches, fatigue, morning stiffness, restriction of joint movement, and, later, destruction of the bone. It can be painful and may affect other organs in the body.

## Caramel Cubes

MAKES ABOUT 16 CUBES

This is a wonderful, warming remedy to use for spot treatment of pain and inflammation caused by rheumatoid arthritis or osteoarthritis. Red pepper contains aspirin-like ingredients and triggers the body to release pain-relieving chemicals called endorphins. Use this recipe for finger and thumb joints, wrists, and elbows.

- 8 ounces (225 g) beeswax
- 1 cayenne pepper, dried, or 2 fresh cayenne peppers (*Capsicum annuum*)
- 60 drops (3 ml) St.-John's-wort oil (*Hypericum perforatum*) made from the yellow flowering tops of the plant (optional)
- Plastic ice cube tray(s)

Heavy-duty plastic freezer bags

Double boiler

Strips of toilet tissue

Pastry brush

Plastic wrap

**Caution:** Don't use St.-John's-wort if you are pregnant or on many medications.

### TO MAKE

1. In the top part of a double boiler, melt the beeswax, then add the cayenne pepper. Simmer slowly for 10 minutes, then remove the cayenne pepper.
2. Add the St.-John's-wort oil and stir to blend. Pour the mixture, while warm, into empty plastic ice cube trays.
3. Freeze cubes and transfer them to heavy-duty freezer bags. Date, label, and store in freezer until needed.

### TO USE

1. Melt 1 cube in a small, old stainless-steel pot.
2. Have strips of toilet tissue, pastry brush, and plastic wrap at hand. As the beeswax mixture melts, lay the tissue in the palm of your hand and paint the wax onto strips of the tissue. Quickly apply around a finger joint, around a wrist, or on an elbow. To retain the heat, wrap the entire joint in plastic wrap.
3. Allow the beeswax mixture to remain on the area for at least 20 minutes. Repeat at least three times a week to lessen the pain and stiffness of affected joints.

**Caution:** Fair-skinned folks may find that the skin under the wax turns very red. If this is the case, first coat the area with olive oil or almond oil. If it continues to irritate the skin, discontinue treatment.

(Herbalist Donna Wood Eaton of Cedar Spring Herb Farm, Cape Cod, Massachusetts, shares this recipe with us.)

# Pain-Relieving Tea

In 1835, the buds of the meadowsweet flower were the first discovered source of salicylic acid, the forerunner of aspirin. (If you are sensitive to aspirin, this herb may not be for you.) This tea is a mild sedative and osteoarthritis pain reliever and can work wonderfully to relieve the pain of achy joints. You can use one or all of these ingredients to create the tea that works for you.

Dried meadowsweet flower buds  
(*Filipendula ulmaria*)

Dried wintergreen leaves  
(*Gaultheria procumbens*)

Dried German chamomile flowers  
(*Matricaria chamomilla*)

Lemon and/or honey (optional)

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## TO MAKE

Pour boiling water over 1 to 2 teaspoons (5 to 10 g) of the dried herbs and steep, covered, for 5 to 10 minutes in a teapot or cup with infuser. Strain (or enclose the herbs in a tea ball).

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## TO USE

Flavor with lemon and/or honey, if desired, and enjoy this tea.

# Green Rub

As we age, we lose cushioning tissue and are thus more susceptible to thickened or dry skin, commonly called calluses. If you use an assistive walking device such as a cane or walker, you may be especially prone to calluses on the palm. The constant pressure and friction on the inside of the hand results in the skin roughening and thickening. Blisters often precede calluses. This change in the outside surface of the skin can cause tenderness to the tissues beneath. This gentle rub softens calluses.

1–2    tablespoons (14–28 g) cornmeal

1    tablespoon (15 ml) fresh mashed avocado or  
avocado oil

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## TO MAKE

Mix both ingredients in a bowl until they form a meal-like mixture.

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## TO USE

1. Place the mixture in the palm of your hand. Rub both hands together and work the gritty and emollient meal into the calluses and up and around the fingers. Rinse and pat dry.
2. Repeat once or twice a week. Make a fresh batch each time.

# Paraffin Hand Bath

Paraffin is a waxy substance that holds in heat. The heat causes the pores to open and allows moisturizers and healing herbs to penetrate the skin. This hand bath may improve flexibility and movement in arthritic hands. After this treatment, your hands will feel soft, less stiff, and look great.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 4 ounces (115 g) or 1 block paraffin wax                                  | Pie plate or flat glass casserole pan   |
| 1 ounce (30 ml) olive, almond, or avocado oil                             | A few drops of St.-John's-wort or carrot seed oil (enough to coat your hands) |
| 20 drops (1 ml) essential oil of chamomile, lemon, or geranium (optional) | Quart-size (1 liter) zip-seal plastic bags                                    |
| Olive oil (enough to grease a pan)  | Hand towel  |

## TO MAKE

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1. Gently heat the paraffin, olive, almond, or avocado oil, and the essential oil in the top part of a double boiler until the paraffin has melted. (Never heat wax directly over an open flame or burner, and never leave wax unattended.)
2. Lightly grease a 10-inch (25 cm) pie plate or a glass casserole pan with olive oil (the oil coating will make it easier to clean the pan later). The vessel should be large enough to accommodate your hand.
3. Carefully pour the melted oil and paraffin mixture into the pie plate or casserole pan. When a thin skin forms on the surface of the wax, the temperature should be right for dipping the hands. Always test the wax mixture for temperature comfort with a drop of the wax on the inside of your wrist.

## TO USE

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1. While waiting for the mixture to cool, wash your hands and pat dry. Completely coat your fingers and hands with St.-John's-wort oil or carrot seed oil.
2. Dip each hand repeatedly into the slightly cooled melted paraffin mixture to build up the wax layers. Be sure to include the thumb. The heat and oil will penetrate the muscles and tendons and help relieve stiffness and pain, as well as hydrate the skin.
3. Put each hand into a zip-seal plastic bag. You may need someone to help you if you are doing both hands. Cover both hands with a towel and relax for 15 to 20 minutes.
4. When the time is up, keep your hand in the plastic bag as you peel away the paraffin to catch all the pieces of wax. Peel away the wax (one hand at a time) by grasping the hand covered with paraffin above the wrist and pulling down—the wax should come off in large pieces. (If you've coated both hands, you'll need help with this step!)
5. Massage and gently stretch your hands.

# Foot and Hand Baths

MAKES 2 QUARTS (ABOUT 2 LITERS)

A regular regimen, day and night, of foot and hand baths, with particular herbs to treat the pain and impaired mobility of numerous chronic diseases, was the treatment recommended by the popular French herbalist Maurice Mességué. If you would like to try his specific baths for osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis to comfort aching joints and stimulate circulation, be prepared to allow extra time for your hands and feet, twice a day, for at least eight days.

- 2 quarts (about 2 liters) water
- 8 ounces (225 g) crushed or chopped herbs  
(choose from the lists on page 16)

Mességué's Vinegar (recipe below)

## TO MAKE

1. Boil the water for 5 minutes. Cool until just lukewarm.
2. Pour the water into an enamel or plastic container. Drop the crushed or chopped herbs into the water, cover, and allow to steep for 5 hours.
3. Pour the entire mixture into a clean bottle, then cap and refrigerate. This preparation can be stored, rewarmed, and simmered, but not reboiled or diluted. One mixture can be reused for eight days. Refrigerate between uses.

## TO USE

1. In the morning, heat the infusion as hot as your skin can stand and take a foot bath for 8 minutes. (Use the infusion in a container, rather than in your sink or tub, so that you can save the mixture to use again.) In the evening, reheat the preparation and take a hand bath for 8 minutes.
2. After a hand or foot bath, apply Mességué's Vinegar to stimulate circulation, then apply a moisturizing cream.

## MESSÉGUÉ'S VINEGAR

Place 4–6 ounces (115–170 g) of loosely packed organically grown red rose petals, lavender flowers, and mint leaves into a quart (liter) jar. Fill the jar to the top with white vinegar. Cover tightly, and steep for 15 days at room temperature in a dark place. Strain the liquid and drain out petals, then seal vinegar in a glass bottle. Label and date.

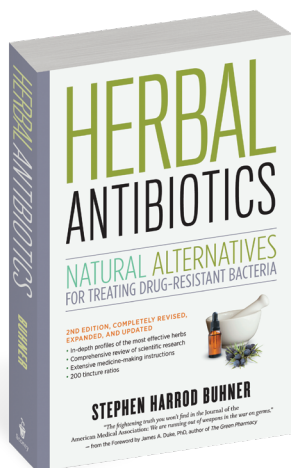
## BATH HERBS FOR TREATING OSTEOARTHRITIS

HERB	BOTANICAL/LATIN	PREPARATION/ PARTS USED	AMOUNT
Garlic*	<i>Allium sativum</i>	fresh bulb	1 large head, crushed
Nettle**	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	leaves and stems, semi-fresh (if possible)	2 handfuls, chopped
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	whole plant, semi-fresh	1 handful, chopped***
Greater Celandine	<i>Chelidonium majus</i>	leaves, semi-fresh	1 handful, chopped
Meadowsweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	flowers, chopped	1 handful
European Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	flowers and leaves	1 handful
*Do not use garlic if you have dermatitis.			
**Nettle contains rough, "stinging" hairs; get advice before harvesting.			
***Pick dandelion that hasn't been exposed to pets and garden toxins.			

## BATH HERBS FOR TREATING RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

HERB	BOTANICAL/LATIN	PREPARATION/ PARTS USED	AMOUNT
Greater Burdock	<i>Arctium lappa</i>	leaves	1 handful, chopped
Spring Heath	<i>Erica</i> spp.	flowers	1 handful
Roman Chamomile	<i>Chamaemelum nobile</i>	flowers	12, crushed
Greater Celandine	<i>Chelidonium majus</i>	leaves and stems, semi-fresh (if possible)	1 handful, chopped
Couch Grass	<i>Agropyron repens</i>	roots	1 handful, grated
Common Broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	flowers	1 handful
Lavender	<i>Lavandula</i> spp.	flowers	1 handful
Onion	<i>Allium cepa</i>	fresh bulb	1 large, grated

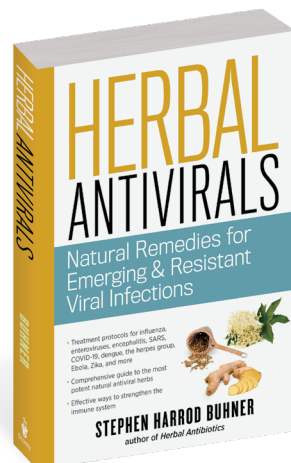
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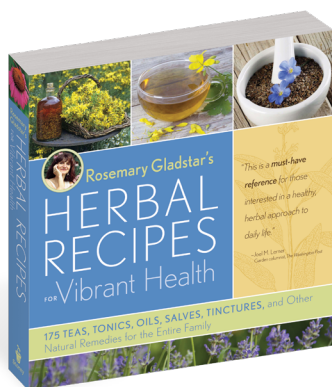
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## COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS?

Norma has generously offered to answer any questions you may have. Please contact her directly at [herbsdottir101@gmail.com](mailto:herbsdottir101@gmail.com) or visit her online at [herbsdottir.com](http://herbsdottir.com).