

## Thai poultices for topical application

An herbal poultice is a soft, moist mass of plant material, sometimes mixed with a bonding agent, which is applied to the body in order to treat disorders, or relieve soreness and inflammation. The paste is kept in place with a cloth or gauze, and removed and refreshed at regular intervals until the symptoms disappear.

Many Thai poultices and plasters use ingredients readily found in Thailand and other parts of SE Asia, but which may be extremely difficult to find outside of the region. For the purposes of our use, here are a few poultice recipes using materials that are easy to find in the West.

**Salt for infections and abscesses:** Salt plasters may be used for drawing out infections or abscesses. In the early stage of an infection or abscess on the body, clean the area well, apply the poultice, cover lightly, and keep in place for a number of hours. Note, this is not meant as a treatment for a serious infection or abscess. It is a remedy and pacifying agent for a newly-forming minor infection or abscess. Use thick grains of kosher salt, or break rock salt into smaller pieces. Mix with a few drops of water or rice vinegar, and as much overcooked rice or rice powder as necessary to form a paste.



**Clove oil for upper body skin tags:** Skin tags are small protrusions of skin that often appear with aging around the neck and face. Clove essential oil is a fragrant and effective way to remove them. Use a cotton swab soaked in clove oil to moisten the skin tag, and allow the oil to remain on your skin until it evaporates. Repeat 3 times a day until the tag falls off.

**Garlic for warts and skin tags:** Fresh garlic effectively treats a number of skin conditions including warts and skin tags, if you don't mind smelling like garlic! Crush a few garlic cloves in a mortar to make a paste. Add a teaspoon of rice flour and a few drops of water as needed. Apply this paste on the area you wish to treat. Cover it with a bandage and leave it on overnight. The next morning, wash the area with warm water. Repeat daily for a few days until the skin tag falls off.

**Ginger for inflammation:** Ginger is an effective anti-inflammatory, even when used in small quantities. Make a ginger poultice at home by mixing ginger powder with warm water. You can add a small amount of rice or tapioca flour to make the mixture more resilient. Use a wooden spoon to create a paste in a glass bowl, and add about 1/2 cup of extremely hot water, while stirring the mixture. Dip a washcloth in the bowl, and then apply the poultice directly to the area of the body that is inflamed, and massage the mixture into the skin. Re-soak the cloth in the ginger mixture and re-apply as needed.

**Herbal mix for foot fungus, athlete's foot, and warts:** First, soak the foot (or clean it thoroughly) with vinegar. Rice vinegar is commonly used in Thailand, but any vinegar will be fine. In a mortar (or food processor), pulverize and mash 3 parts of fresh turmeric (or powder) + 2 parts of galangal (if not available, you can try ginger) + 1 part of garlic. Add a few drops of vinegar if necessary to make a paste. Apply the paste to the affected area, and expose to as much natural sunlight as possible. Repeat the process several times a day, or until you see results.



## How To Make A Herbal Poultice

### With fresh materials:

Chop the herbs, roots and rhizomes into small pieces on a cutting board. Transfer them to a mortar and pestle, and crush everything together until it becomes a thin pulp. It doesn't need to be a smooth paste. What is most important is to break down the leaves and roots in order to release their medicinal properties. As you chop and mash, the materials release their natural juices and the mixture will become soft. You may also use a blender or food processor, though most people believe that doing it by hand releases a larger percentage of herbal medicine.

After your mixture is thoroughly prepared, if it is thick enough, you can apply it directly to your body. But if it is watery, you can thicken it with some overcooked rice, rice flour, or tapioca powder. Stir in a little bit of rice or powder until you obtain the desired consistency.

Spread the crushed herbal medicine onto the desired area of the skin. Apply a generous amount, and make sure that the poultice is applied evenly across the area. Wrap the area with a layer of gauze or muslin to hold the paste in place. You might even apply a layer of plastic wrap over the finished poultice. This helps to contain the juices, so that they don't run or stain your clothing or bedding.

Making a dried herb poultice is even less work than using fresh herbs, because there is less chopping and mashing involved. It's a tradeoff, though, because fresh herbs are usually stronger than dried and have a more complex make up. Dried herbs will still work well, though, and it's nice to know you can still make a poultice even when fresh herbs aren't available.

### Mixing fresh and dry materials

You may use a combination of fresh and dry ingredients for a poultice. Combine dry herbs and powders with just enough hot water to moisten them, and then add your prepared paste of fresh ingredients. Mix it all together to create a thick paste. Spread the paste evenly over the desired area. Wrap with gauze or muslin.

If you only have access to dry materials and powders, make your plaster using only dry ingredients.

