



## Learn to use tinctures at home Course booklet

**This is a sample course booklet  
to give you a snapshot of what  
the course includes.**

# Welcome

Hello and welcome to the course on Learn to use tinctures at home,

This is an introductory level course for home use.

## Safety

### Herbs and medications

Herbs are often seen as 'safe' because they are natural but that is not the case, and when someone is taking medications they can interact with herbs (as well as a wide range of supplements and vitamins).

If you are taking any medication I do not recommend you take any herbs internally without first consulting a medical herbalist to check for interactions.

## **Herbs and particular medical conditions**

In these courses we will only be looking at self limiting conditions, things that you would generally not seek medical attention for. e.g. coughs and colds.

It is important to seek medical attention when appropriate, either through a local doctor or local medical herbalist.

## **Herbs and pregnancy**

While there are some herbs that are beneficial in pregnancy (and breast feeding) they must be strictly controlled and for that reason I recommend anyone who's pregnant (or breast feeding) to see a medical herbalist for advice before taking any herbs (internally) at any stage of pregnancy (or breast feeding).

External preparations can be used for pregnant women but if you are ever in doubt check with a local medical herbalist.

## Why use tinctures?

Tinctures are very popular in the West because of their ease of use. They are particularly popular in the UK in comparison to the USA because the cost of alcohol is low, therefore tinctures can be made relatively inexpensively (either by professional companies or by individuals at home).

### Why use tinctures?

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## When should you not use tinctures?

### When should you not use tinctures?

1. If someone is allergic to alcohol.
2. If someone cannot have alcohol for other reasons.

3. If someone is pregnant or breast feeding.

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## Making tinctures

### Using fresh plants in tincture making



The term 'fresh' tincture is usually used with fresh plant material is used, without any drying happening.

For example if you have a peppermint plant and you decide you want to make it into a tincture then can add that fresh plant material to alcohol, thereby making a fresh tincture.

Fresh tinctures are often preferred as it is felt that the true 'essence' of the plant can be captured when using this method.

Chemically it also has the added benefit of capturing biochemicals within the plant that are destroyed by the drying process. The main biochemical that you may be aware of is the essential oil.

Any plant that has a smell contains a certain amount of essential oil. That essential oil will often be responsible for many of the actions of the plant and therefore its uses. E.g. as an antibacterial herb.

**The down side to fresh plant tinctures**

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**Tincture making with dried plants**

A tincture made with a dried plant is often more stable, they are less prone to mould and last a lot longer on the shelf.



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## The double extraction method

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The double extraction method

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## Home percolation

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## The folk method

You may read about the 'folk method' of tincture making. This cute phrase usually means that there are no calculations involved. You have a jar, you have your herb, you put it in and then cover the plant material with the vodka or brandy. You're not calculating how much is needed or how low the percentage of alcohol has now fallen.



This is a great method and there is nothing wrong with using this method at home. It will mean however that with very fresh plant material that contains a lot of water you may get mould growth.

### **Which type of alcohol is best for tincture making?**

My usual answer to this question is "the exact type you have in the cupboard!". So really it doesn't matter but people have personal preference in regards to taste and if you can use the highest percentage alcohol you have then that's also good.

If all you have is rum (I can attest to this) then make your tincture out of rum!

Usually people tend to go for vodka or brandy because it has less of a taste once made into a tincture.

## Herbs that are easy to tincture

### Herbs that are easy to tincture

Some herbs are a lot easier to tincture than others, this is often due to their chemistry and how they react to alcohol.

Here are some examples of herbs that are easy to tincture and great ones to start with.

### Hawthorn

The leaves in spring, the flowers in late spring/early summer and the berries in late summer early autumn. For the best tincture first make a tincture with the early leaves, then set aside. Then gather the flowers and use your tincture as the alcohol to make that tincture, and then do the same again with the berries. This makes a triple infused tincture that is very potent.



Hawthorn is great for boosting circulation and regulates blood pressure and heart function.

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# **Herbs that are a challenge to tincture**

### **Herbs that are a challenge to tincture**

As I've said before, herbs with a high water content can be tricky to tincture, here are my tips for the trickier herbs.

#### **Fresh lemon balm**

If you can I would advise using the plant fresh as a tea if you're growing it yourself, it's a much easier way to use the plant! But if you are



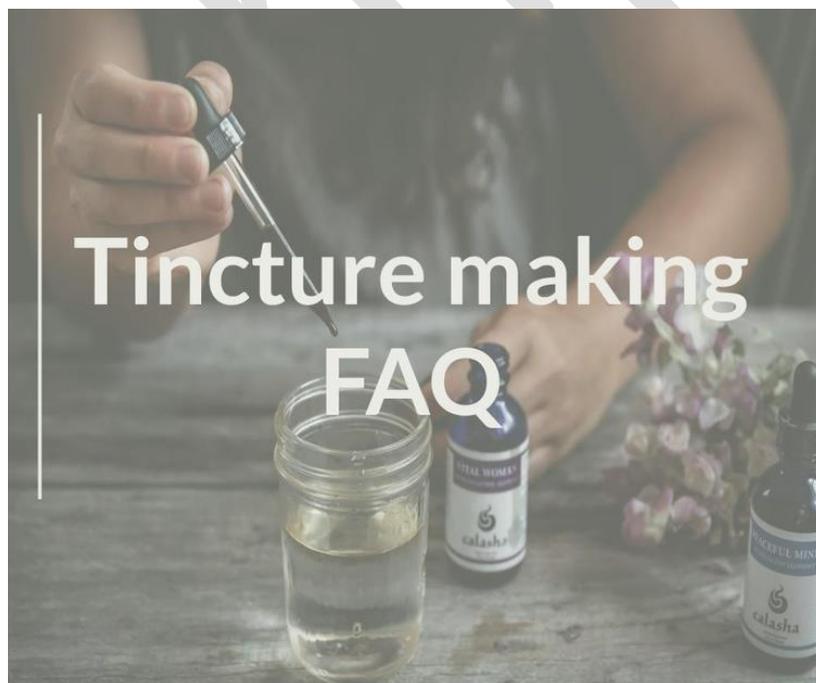
determined to tincture it then you will need 80% proof alcohol which isn't easy to get hold of. A way around this is to partially dry the lemon balm leaves and then tincture them. This gets you the best of both worlds, you get less water in the mix to cause mould but you get more of the medicinal qualities that are lost on full drying.

Lemon balm is a fantastic antiviral and is used for cold sores applied directly either as an oil or tincture. (Or you could make it into a cream). It's also a mild sedative and a relaxing herb for people with anxiety.

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## **Tincture making FAQ**



## **"My tincture is cloudy after straining."**

Tinctures can still be cloudy after you have strained it. Especially if you are using a sieve to strain your tincture. There will be small particles floating in the tincture. These are preserved by the alcohol and completely edible so it's not a problem but if you would prefer to strain it through a finer cloth then you can.

## **"My bottle fizzes when I open it."**

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## **"There are strange things floating in the tincture."**

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## **"There's sediment even after I've strained it."**

Some amount of sediment is natural in a tincture as it's an organic product and that does come with 'bits'. If it really bothers you you can strain the top of the tincture into a clean bottle. But you will always find some

sediment with certain plants, it's a natural process in your tincture bottle. Just give it a shake before using it.

**"My tincture has separated."**

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## **Storage and preservation**



**"Can a tincture really last for 10 years?"**

If made well, then yes it can, especially if it's a dried plant tincture.

I have tinctures that are older than 10 years and they are still 'in use' and potent.

"Do I need to store my tinctures in glass?"

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## **Non alcohol based extraction**

### **Non alcohol based remedies**

Don't worry if you can't have alcohol, there are lots of recipes that you can make that don't contain alcohol but are made and used in very similar ways to tinctures.

#### **A glycerite**

A glycerite is an extraction of a herb using vegetable glycerine instead of alcohol. It's an alternative to tinctures for people who cannot use them.

Here's a [video](#) all about them.

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# Ways to use tinctures

## How do I know which herbs to take?



That's really outside of the scope of this course but usually people have found out from personal recommendations, from other practitioners or from herbal books e.g. The Encyclopedia and Herbal Medicine by Andrew Chevallier or The Holistic herbal by David Hoffmann.

## How much tincture should I take?

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## Using tinctures as simples

A '**simple**' means using only one herb for a particular problem, e.g. chamomile for an upset stomach.

Single tinctures can be very effective and when you are beginning with your herbal journey this is how I would recommend that you start taking tinctures.

You'll have seen simple remedies throughout this course but here are some additional ones:

**Headaches:** Peppermint, Chamomile, Rosemary or Feverfew

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### Can you combine tinctures?

You can if you want to take one herb for a particular ailment that you have. As you will have learnt in my Introduction to Herbal Medicine course or my Year Long Herbal Medicine course, herbs have many uses and actions.

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### Using tinctures in cream making Creams

Tinctures can be added to base creams, whipped into balms or used as an ingredient in a cream using the 'Ireland method'.



### Using tinctures in liniments

### Using tinctures in gels

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## Gels

Another really easy and effective way to apply tinctures to the skin is by using a gel. Aloe vera gel being the most commonly available gel.

Whether you're making your own with the fresh plant or using a bought version all you need to do is add the tincture slowly and combine together in a bowl and then add to a jar and label it.

Gels with tinctures will last approximately 6 months.

**An example gel recipe:** bite and sting gel - aloe vera gel (50g), 10ml of plantain tincture, 5 drops of peppermint essential oil.

Here's a [video for making an aftersun gel](#).

**Using tinctures as the base of sprays**

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## Using tinctures as the base of a mouthwash

Tinctures can also be used as the base of mouthwashes.

As we know many herbs have fantastic antibacterial properties and it's those herbs that are great in mouth washes. E.g. mints, thyme, rosemary, bay, fennel seed, caraway seed, hogweed seed, chamomile and calendula.

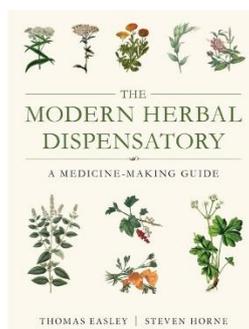


## Books and resources on home pharmacy

### Home pharmacy books

If you like to work from a book, here are two of my all time favourites for home medicine making.

### The Herbal Medicine Maker's Handbook by James Green



**The modern herbal dispensatory by Thomas Easley and Steven Horne**

## **Where to buy tinctures**

You can buy tinctures from the usual herbal suppliers that I usually recommend, e.g. Baldwins. They can be quite expensive but you may not be able to make all of your own tinctures and sometimes if the materials are expensive they are cheaper bought from a supplier.

## **What next?**

### **Other courses you may enjoy**

If you've enjoyed this course I have lots more. You can take a look [here](#).