COMFREY
NATURE’S FIRST AID REMEDY
By Dr. Holly Lucille, ND, RN

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Ease ACHY JOINTS
YOUR DIY First Aid Kit

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Traumaplant® Comfrey Cream

Brings the rich goodness of this amazing botanical to smooth out life’s bumpy road. It is the perfect comfrey cream for your entire family. Simply apply liberally, and let the amazing power of Trauma Comfrey do the rest!

- Free of liver toxic Pyrrolizidine Alkaloids (PAs)
- Millions sold worldwide, finally available in the U.S.
- Non-staining, non-greasy, comfrey cream
- Safe for children ages 4 and up
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- One tube does it all!

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Back in the days before over-the-counter antiseptics and pain relievers, there was comfrey. A staple on the battlefields of the Roman Empire and the “go-to” remedy throughout Europe during the Middle Ages, comfrey has a rich history of healing. This common herb has also played an important role in Traditional Chinese Medicine for the last 2,000 years where it was relied upon to treat respiratory and stomach problems, wounds, broken bones, arthritis, and all manner of skin and muscle ailments. In fact, comfrey’s reputation for relieving bone, joint, and muscle complaints has earned it the nicknames “knitback” and “boneset” because of its ability to essentially put you back together.

I often advise that patients who come to me with joint and muscle problems try comfrey. Available as a cream designed for external use, it not only relieves pain, it helps to extinguish inflammation and spark cellular repair. It works so well that I use it myself. As a physician, as well as a Crossfit coach and avid athlete, I make sure to carry comfrey with me wherever I go. It’s in my backpack, my gym bag, and even in my purse. I never leave home without it—and neither should you!

Dr. Holly

Dr. Holly Lucille, ND, RN
Talk to any herbalist about comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) and the word “miracle” will inevitably be mentioned. Rich in traditional healing lore, this remarkable herb is also the subject of numerous clinical trials documenting its uncanny ability to quickly mend muscle aches, alleviate joint pain, boost bone healing, and speed wound repair.

Comfrey has been around almost as long as the Earth itself. Indigenous to Europe, this perennial herb with hairy looking leaves and stems produces delicate bell-shaped flowers in cream, pink, or purple, depending on the specific variety of the plant. Comfrey’s first reported medicinal use dates back to 400 BC. Since the word comfrey is Latin in origin and means “to grow together,” it’s little wonder that Greek physicians relied on the herb to treat wounds, inflammation, gout, ulcers, gangrene, burns, sprains, and fractures.

The secret behind comfrey’s effectiveness—and the reason I rely on it both personally and in my clinical practice—lies in three active phytochemicals found in the herb. The first, and potentially most important, is allantoin. Found in both the umbilical cord and breast milk, this naturally soothing anti-irritant compound promotes cell replication and increases the water content of the extracellular matrix that provides structural support to cells, making it an important protector of the skin’s underlying connective tissue. These unique properties are what give allantoin the ability to promote the healing of wounds, burns, and scars. It’s also reported to promote the growth of bone and cartilage. Allantoin has proven so beneficial to skin health that many cosmetic manufacturers use a synthetic version of it in their formulas as a humectant and emollient that can soften skin and increase its smoothness.

Another key pharmacologically-active constituent in comfrey is rosemarinic acid. A formidable polyphenol, rosemarinic acid boasts anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties. Rosmarinic acid’s antioxidant activity is stronger than that of vitamin E, giving it the power to neutralize free radicals that can damage cells. Free radicals are molecules that are missing one electron—normal molecules have two electrons. To complete themselves, these unbalanced molecules steal
a replacement electron from another nearby molecule—which creates another free radical, which steals an electron from one of its neighbors, and so on and so on. The DNA within cells is particularly vulnerable to free radical damage. Because rosmarinic acid defends against these misbehaving molecules, preliminary research suggests that it can prevent cellular damage within the skin.

The third beneficial compound in comfrey is choline—a water-soluble essential nutrient that boosts blood flow and speeds the healing of injured blood vessels and nerve endings. Preliminary research suggests that when choline is applied topically, it helps to regenerate injured nerves. It has also been found to soothe inflamed and painful tissue. Along with choline’s anti-inflammatory properties, some studies have found that this vital nutrient also enhances blood flow to further speed healing.

Comfrey also contains tannins, which give the herb astringent properties; chlorophyll, the detoxifying compound in green leaves that inhibits the growth of bacteria when applied topically; and mucilage, a gummy substance that soothes inflamed joints and tissues. These phytochemicals, along with the three described above, are what make comfrey such an effective healer.

Creating a Safe Comfrey

Although comfrey is brimming with beneficial compounds that can fortify bones, support muscles, and heal the skin, it also contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PAs). Alkaloids, some of which are toxic, are plant substances that contain nitrogen and can have high pharmacological activities. PAs, in particular, are alkaloid compounds that have been shown to damage the liver.

While comfrey leaves contain some PAs, the highest concentration is found in the root of the comfrey plant—up to 16 times more than in the leaves. And some forms of comfrey, specifically varieties known as Russian comfrey or prickly comfrey, have higher PA levels than common comfrey.

Research suggests that consuming either low amounts of comfrey over a long period of time or large amounts in the short term causes a blockage of the small veins in the liver that can lead to cirrhosis and eventually liver failure—a condition technically known as hepatic-occlusive disease. If this occurs, a liver transplant may be required. The oral use of comfrey for as brief a time as five to seven days in a child and 19 to 45 days in adults has resulted in severe liver disease and death. Typically, the studies conducted on the toxicity of pyrrolizidine alkaloids suggest that taking comfrey orally poses the most risk, however the alkaloids can also be absorbed through the skin.
Some research conducted on animals also signals that the PAs in comfrey may be carcinogenic. One study by the National Center for Toxicological Research found that chronic exposure to PAs in laboratory animals induces cancer of the liver. However, many of these studies use excessively high concentrations of PA.

Although much of the research on the toxicity of the PAs in comfrey is preliminary and non-specific, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration decided to err on the side of caution. In 2001 they banned the sale of oral comfrey supplements. The United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and Germany have also restricted the sale of oral products containing comfrey.

**Cultivating a Better Comfrey**

With all of the benefits comfrey offers, it would make sense to search out a variety of comfrey that is free from PAs and therefore safe to use. Fortunately, a new PA-free cultivar with unique healing qualities when used topically is being grown in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps. Nestled amongst the rolling hills on land that belongs to a Benedictine monastery, this unique variety of comfrey—which has been classified as *Trauma Comfrey* (*Symphytum x uplandicum NYMAN*) by the European Plant Variety Office—is not genetically modified and is organically grown without pesticides, herbicides, or chemical fertilizers. It is harvested by hand using scythes instead of machines. The freshly-gathered leaves, stems, and flowers are then processed by a laboratory south of Munich that specializes in pure herbal preparations. The lab also conducts extensive quality control to ensure that the finished comfrey product is free from all PAs.

Trauma comfrey is now available as a safe and effective topical cream. Only the blossoms, stems, and leaves are used in its production—never the root. This uniquely safe cultivar’s lack of toxicity has led to its approved use in the U.S. It is so safe that it has also been approved for use in Germany for children over the age of four and in Switzerland for children as young as two years old. Because it’s such an effective and convenient remedy for life’s ailments—both large and small—it’s essential for every medicine cabinet and first aid kit.

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**Fun Facts**

- Comfrey was used by such notable Greek physicians as Herodotus, Nicander, Galen, and Dioscorides to stop bleeding, treat bronchial problems, heal wounds, and mend broken bones.
- During ancient times, comfrey baths were popular before marriage to repair the hymen and restore virginity.
- During the Irish potato famine of the 1840s, an Englishman named Henry Doubleday became convinced that the world could be saved from hunger and suffering by using comfrey. He established a charitable organization to research the cultivation and use of the plant that exists to this day and continues to publish pamphlets and books on its usage.
- Comfrey tablets were standard issue in the first aid packs given to soldiers during World War II.
Wether you’re an avid athlete, a weekend warrior, or just trying to get some repairs done around the house, it’s likely that you’ll eventually suffer from a muscle strain, wrist or ankle sprain, or a wrenched back. While a fall or car accident can cause you to suddenly move in ways your body isn’t meant to move, many of these injuries are caused by overuse. This is especially true for athletes and fitness buffs that continually try to improve their performance by challenging themselves with more complex moves or heavier weights. Trying to push past your physical limits on a routine basis can result in chronically-pulled hamstrings, iliotibial band—a group of tough fibers that runs down the outside or your thigh— injury, or ongoing shoulder or back problems.

Typically, there isn’t much that your doctor can do for these types of injury besides advising you to take an over-the-counter pain reliever and, depending on the injury, handing you a brace or a pair of crutches, or showing you how to tape up the injured limb. With this approach, it can take weeks or months to heal. A cream made with Trauma Comfrey, on the other hand, can relieve pain as well and as quickly as a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug like aspirin or ibuprofen. Plus, it speeds the healing process.
Back Attack

Back pain can strike without warning, triggering a dull ache or a shooting pain that can last for a few days or persist for months. Maybe you lifted something heavy or you sat at your desk too long. Or maybe it occurred seemingly for no reason at all. Whatever the cause, back pain can make life miserable. But muscle strains and pulls aren’t limited to your back. Shoulders, hamstrings, quads, and calves can all fall victim to a painful strain. Yet, no matter where your muscle strain occurs, I’ve found that simply applying a Trauma Comfrey cream several times a day can enhance healing and get you back to your active lifestyle.

This was shown during a five-day double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomized clinical trial conducted in Germany. A total of 120 patients suffering from either upper or lower back pain were told to use either a comfrey cream or a placebo three times per day. On the fourth day, the patients performed standard movement exercises to assess the intensity of the pain. The researchers were surprised to find that those using the comfrey cream had an average drop in pain of more than 95 percent compared to just 37 percent in the group using the placebo cream. Pain while at rest was also considerably less in those using the comfrey. This study was the first to show that a comfrey cream not only effectively lessened pain, both at rest and during activity, but it did so quickly—often in as little as an hour after application.

Another double-blind, placebo-controlled study involved 215 people who experienced back pain whenever they moved (walking, bending, etc.). When compared to a placebo cream, the participants using a cream containing Trauma Comfrey realized significantly better pain relief and less inflammation. The researchers also noted that the onset of their pain relief was substantially faster than in those using an NSAID. Plus, the comfrey cream was well tolerated in all of the participants.
Relieving the Pain of a Sprain

It happens in the blink of an eye. You step in a hole or you simply move the wrong way and suddenly you feel—and sometimes hear—your ankle “pop.” Within hours, it’s swollen, painful, weak, and possibly bruised. While icing and elevating the affected ankle can help keep inflammation to a minimum, applying a Trauma Comfrey cream several times a day can reduce the pain and speed healing.

Several studies have shown just how helpful a comfrey cream can be if you have suffered a sprain. Compared to a placebo cream, a number of studies show that applying a comfrey cream to a sprain reduces pain and swelling faster and more effectively than the dummy treatment. It also increases mobility, allowing users to get back on their feet within days instead of weeks. In one study of 203 people with an acute ankle sprain, participants were divided into two groups: one using a cream containing a high concentration of comfrey, and another using a placebo cream. While both treatments helped, those using the comfrey cream reported less pain and swelling, as well as better mobility than the placebo cream group.

How does comfrey cream stack up against a pharmaceutical topically-applied pain reliever? To find out, Italian researchers recruited 164 adults with sprained ankles. Half were given a comfrey cream and the other half were given a diclofenac gel—a topical NSAID used by many doctors to ease the pain of sprains, strains, and osteoarthritis flare-ups. Pain at rest and upon movement was assessed, along with tenderness, swelling, and range of motion in both groups at the beginning and the end of the trial. While both treatments were extremely safe and well tolerated, the comfrey cream outperformed the drug gel, providing more relief in less time. Taken together, these findings suggest that keeping a tube of comfrey cream on hand can help you manage those inevitable strains and sprains that can instantly put you on the sidelines when you least expect it.

The New ‘RICE’

Doctors have long told patients with sprains and strains to immediately treat their injury using a simple four-step process known as RICE that includes taping the injury to create compression. Here’s my version of RICE, which may actually speed the healing process even more:

R
Rest the injured area.

I
Ice the injury as soon as possible for 20 minutes every hour.

C
Comfrey cream should be applied after icing, and continued three times per day until the injury has healed.

E
Elevate the injured area above the heart to limit swelling.
Chapter Three
Healing the Skin You’re In

The occasional strain or sprain is one thing. After all, even though these injuries are painful and inconvenient, with the proper care they will get better without any lasting complications. Open wounds, however, are subject to infection if not properly treated. Even something as simple as a paper cut can become infected under the right conditions.

An open wound, by definition, is any tear or break in the skin that leaves the underlying tissue exposed to the outside environment and vulnerable to bleeding and infections. There are basically five different types of open wounds:

**ABRASION.** An abrasion or scrape is caused by rubbing the skin against a hard, rough surface like rock or concrete. Normally, this type of wound doesn’t result in bleeding but an abrasion can be painful. Although this is typically a minor injury, it’s important to make sure the skin is cleaned to guard against infection.

**INCISION.** An incision is a cut caused by a knife, broken glass, a razor blade, or some other sharp object. This type of wound generally has straight edges and can bleed rapidly and heavily. Seek immediate medical attention if the cut is deep since muscles, tendons, and nerves may be damaged. An incision may also be a result of a surgical procedure. In this case, the wound is closed with stitches, staples, or surgical glue.

**LACERATION.** This type of wound is jagged and irregular, caused by the tearing of soft tissue. Depending on the location of the laceration and the depth of the wound, it

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**SPECIAL CASES: Diabetic Wounds and Bed Sores**

Not every type of wound is the result of a traumatic injury. For those with diabetes, any type of wound can be serious. Because some diabetics, especially those with uncontrolled blood sugar, can suffer from numbness in the hands and feet—a condition known as peripheral neuropathy—a cut or burn may go unnoticed until it has become infected. Skin ulcers, ingrown toenails, or even blisters can also lead to the breakdown of skin and surrounding tissue, increasing the risk of bacterial infections.

Bedsores—also known as pressure sores—are skin ulcers caused by prolonged pressure on different areas of the body. They are especially common among those confined to their bed or a wheelchair for extended periods of time. Because the skin in those who are elderly is thinner and more fragile, seniors are at particular risk. Bedsores begin as a reddened area, often on the buttocks, hips, shoulders, or elbows. As time goes by, a blister forms which bursts and creates an open wound. Without proper care, bedsores can quickly become infected.

While little research has been conducted on Trauma Comfrey’s effectiveness in treating diabetic wounds and bedsores, natural healers have long used comfrey to treat these types of wounds. Its benefit may be due, in part, to its anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antiseptic properties. Another benefit of using a PA-free comfrey cream is its ability to moisturize and condition fragile or compromised skin. This helps to create healthier skin that can better withstand insult and injury.
can bleed rapidly and extensively. This type of wound can be the result of an automobile accident or a mishap with household, garden, or workplace tools or machinery.

**PUNCTURE.** A puncture wound occurs when the skin is pierced, causing a hole in the tissues. It can be minor, caused by such things as a pinprick. But more serious puncture wounds can be caused by objects like nails, ice picks, scissors, or other sharp objects. These types of puncture wounds warrant medical attention because of the possibility of tetanus. Snake and insect bites can also cause puncture wounds. If a snake or insect is poisonous, it’s wise to seek immediate medical attention.

**AVULSION.** This is a forcible tearing of the skin. It can be the result of a dog bite, an explosion, a gunshot, or a natural disaster. This type of wound is often accompanied by heavy, rapid bleeding and can be life-threatening. Immediate medical care is essential.

Everyday cuts and scrapes can easily be tended to at home. More serious wounds may need a doctor’s care. In all cases, it’s important to stop the bleeding and ensure that the wound is cleaned well with water to remove any dirt, debris, or bacteria. Once the immediate crisis has passed, your body will begin the healing process. That’s the time when comfrey cream can help.

In a recent, well-designed trial of 278 patients with fresh abrasions—a quarter of whom were children—two different concentrations of comfrey cream were evaluated. The higher-concentration cream contained 10 times more comfrey than the lower-concentration cream. After fewer than two days of treatment, the wounds in those using the higher-dose comfrey cream were 50 percent smaller than those in the lower-dose group. Findings like these are the reason I only use high dose Trauma Comfrey cream for my patients.

An earlier study found that, compared to a placebo, an ointment containing comfrey also put healing on the fast-track among 10 patients with puncture wounds. In fact, the wounds treated with the Trauma Comfrey cream had completely healed within just three-and-a-half days—about two days sooner than the wounds treated with the placebo.

This isn’t news to herbalists who have always relied on comfrey to treat wounds of all kinds. In addition, like many naturopaths and herbalists, I also recommend a comfrey cream containing Trauma Comfrey to my patients with stubborn eczema, psoriasis, and even acne. And many of these patients report good results, likely due to comfrey’s antiseptic, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory properties.
Chapter Four

Keep Your Joints Jumpin’

Stiff, painful joints are the hallmarks of osteoarthritis (OA), one of the most prevalent chronic health problems in America today. Currently, OA affects more than 20 million people in the United States. And the numbers are rising. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, that number is expected to rise 20 percent, or 60 million people, as baby boomers come into their golden years.

OA is a degenerative disease that affects the joints. Joints are places in the body where bones come together to allow coordinated movement. There are 206 bones in the human skeleton and the vast majority of them come together in joints, where a cavity filled with fluid separates the bones from each other. Cartilage—spongy tissue on the end of each bone—cushions the connection and help keeps everything moving smoothly. In OA, however, cartilage begins to break down, causing bone to rub against bone. The result is inflammation, pain, and stiffness.

Conventional medicine typically relies on NSAIDs, both over-the-counter and prescription. Yet, all of these drugs carry a range of side effects including gastric bleeding and a greater risk of heart attack and stroke. The good news is that topically-applied comfrey can safely relieve the pain and inflammation of OA and increase mobility. What’s more, I’ve found that many of my patients get even better results when they pair a Trauma Comfrey cream with a highly bioavailable form of curcumin—the anti-inflammatory compound in the curry spice turmeric shown to significantly reduce pain and inflammation. To learn more, I recommend reading *Curcumin, The 21st Century Cure* by Jan McBarron, MD.

While OA can strike any joint in the body, knees, hips, and hands are the areas that are most frequently affected. Of those, the knees seem especially vulnerable. This is why most studies focus on ways to relieve the pain created by OA of the knee. During one of these studies involving 220 patients, the efficacy of a comfrey cream was tested against an identical-looking placebo product. The participants were divided into either a treatment group or a control group, without knowing which was which. They were told to apply the cream three times a day for 21 days. At the end of the study,
each participant was assessed using the VAS sum score of pain at rest and pain on movement. Improvement was also measured using the Western Ontario and McMaster Universities Osteoarthritis Index (WOMAC) score. Both tests showed that those in the comfrey group had significant improvement in pain, inflammation, stiffness, mobility, and quality of life compared to those in the placebo group. Plus, the comfrey cream was free of adverse reactions among its users.

Another trial investigated a proprietary comfrey cream compared to a placebo using VAS and the Knee Injury and Osteoarthritis Outcome Score (KOOS) at the beginning of the study and then every two weeks for a total of 12 weeks. While neither cream had any impact on the breakdown of cartilage, the comfrey cream offered marked pain relief, especially in those with mild-to-moderate OA.

Unfortunately, all of the studies on OA done to date have been relatively short, averaging just three weeks. Long-term studies may well discover that the anti-inflammatory properties in comfrey retard inflammation and the subsequent damage that can make OA such a life-altering condition.

Creating a Natural First Aid Kit
Whether at home or on the go, having a natural first aid kit within reach can help you handle all of life’s little emergencies. A small backpack or tackle box makes a handy container to corral all of your healing essentials.

- Comfrey cream containing PA-free Trauma Comfrey
- Superglue – great for minor-to-moderate skin cuts. Superglue holds skin together as it heals.
- Antiseptic wipe packets
- Instant cold compresses
- Unbreakable thermometer
- Space blanket
- Non-latex disposable gloves
- Absorbent compress dressings
- Adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- Adhesive cloth tape
- Butterfly bandages
- Finger cots
- Roller bandages in 3- and 4-inch widths
- Sterile gauze pads
- Triangular bandages
- Scissors
- Tweezers

Finding the Right Formula
Whatever your ailment—OA, wound care, or muscle pain—make sure you choose a comfrey preparation that is not only free from toxic PAs but one that’s also formulated for maximum absorption. Some comfrey ointments are made with a base of olive oil, beeswax, or petrolatum. These products simply sit on the surface of the skin. To get the full benefit of comfrey’s healing powers, opt for a cream designed to penetrate into the deeper layers of the skin where the herb’s phytochemicals can directly impact your joints, muscles, and tissues. Look for a Trauma Comfrey cream that includes choline, rosmarinic acid, and allantoin from the blossoms, stems, and leaves of the plant (not the root).
References


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My patients are looking for relief from pain, so I recommend Curamin. I feel better knowing they are getting results without the side effects.”
—Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, MD

Experience Safe and Effective Pain Relief

"My patients are looking for relief from pain, so I recommend Curamin. I feel better knowing they are getting results without the side effects."†

—Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, MD**

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† Occasional muscle pain due to exercise and overuse
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All ingredients established in human studies for safety and effectiveness. Does not interfere with stomach, liver or kidney function.

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Imagine a comfrey cream with a pleasing, natural scent that absorbs quickly, and never leaves a stain... Sound too good to be true? It isn’t.

Traumaplant® Comfrey Cream
From Freshly Harvested Blossoms, Stems and Leaves of Trauma Comfrey Free of Liver Toxic Pyrrolizidine Alkaloids (PAs)

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ONE TUBE DOES IT ALL

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