

# The natural medicine cabinet in your kitchen



*You may not think of your kitchen as a convenient pharmacy, but parents used common kitchen items successfully to treat various maladies long before CVS and Walgreens were invented.*

**Crisco**— May not be healthy to eat, but smeared on skin, it's an old fashioned but effective treatment for eczema or [dry skin](#).

**Oatmeal**— Crush and put into the end of a hosiery sock. Float the sock in the bathtub for a natural way to moisturize skin.

**Olive Oil**—

- Put a couple drops into the ear three times a day

to loosen ear wax (don't put in if your child has a hole in their ear drum eg. myringotomy tubes).

- For cradle cap, rub into your baby's scalp and use your fingernail or a soft brush to loosen the greasy flakes.
- Also use to kill [lice](#). Work the oil through the scalp, tuck hair into a shower cap and wash off in the morning. Although studies are unclear on how well this method works on lice, it certainly is worth a try.

**White vinegar**-If [swimmer's ear](#) is suspected, mix rubbing alcohol one to one with vinegar and drop a couple drops in the ear to stop the swimmer's ear from progressing (don't put in if your child has a hole in their ear drum eg. myringotomy tubes).

**Ginger**– Boil ginger to make a tea to take the edge off nausea

**Honey**– Shown to soothe coughs-give a teaspoon of dark (buckwheat, for example) honey three times a day. However, NEVER give honey to a child who is younger than one year of age because it may cause infant botulism

**Lemon**– An old singer's trick–combine lemon juice with honey in tea to alleviate hoarseness

**Salt**– Mixed into lukewarm water, gargling with salt water will help ease sore throat pain

**Baking soda:**

- Mix with water to make a paste to help soothe itchy skin, from maladies such as [poison ivy](#).
- Can also be mixed with water to make toothpaste if you run out of your usual minty whitener.
- Another use of baking soda: one part baking soda with 4 parts corn starch makes a natural underarm deodorant.

**Sugar:** Mix sugar into weak tea (or your ginger tea from above) and give small amounts frequently to soothe your **older** child's

nausea and help rehydrate after vomiting.

**Ice:** Ice not only decreases swelling when applied to injuries, it can also be used to combat the itch of bug bites and poison ivy.

**Kitchen sink:** This is an excellent place to wash any cut, scrape, or bleeding wound under running water with soap. Immediately after a burn, rinse the burned skin under cold water for several minutes to limit the extent of the heat injury. Contrary to popular lore, DO NOT put butter on a burn. You may, however, put butter on your toast. In small amounts.

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# Dry, chapped hands: home remedies



Raw hands- recognize your kid?

I wash my hands about sixty times a day, maybe more. This frequent washing, in combination with cold Pennsylvania air, leads to chapped hands. Here are the hands of a patient. Do your children's hands look like these?

**To prevent dry hands:**

- Don't stop washing your hands, but do use a moisturizer afterwards.
- Whenever possible, use water and soap rather than hand sanitizers. Hand sanitizers are at minimum 60% alcohol- very drying. Be sure to fully dry hands after washing.
- Wear gloves or mittens as much as possible outside even if the temperature is above freezing. Remember chemistry class- cold air holds less moisture than warm air and therefore is unkind to skin. Gloves will prevent some moisture loss.
- Before exposure to any possible irritants such as the chlorine in a swimming pool, protect the hands by layering heavy lotion (Eucerin cream) or petroleum based product (i.e. Vaseline or Aquaphor) over the skin.

## **To rescue dry hands:**

- Prior to bedtime, smother hands in 1% hydrocortisone ointment. Avoid the cream formulation. Creams tend to sting if there are any open cracks. Take old socks, cut out thumb holes and have your child sleep at night with the sock on his hands. Repeat nightly for up to a week. Alternatively, for mildly chapped hands, use a petroleum oil based product such as Vaseline or Aquaphor in place of the hydrocortisone.
- If your child has underlying eczema, prevent your child from scratching his hands. An antihistamine such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) or cetirizine (Zyrtec) will take the edge off the itch. Keep his nails trimmed to avoid further damage from scratching.
- For extremely raw hands, your child's doctor may prescribe a stronger cream and if there are signs of a bacterial skin infection, your child's doctor may prescribe an antibiotic.

Happy moisturizing. Remember how much fun it was to smear glue on your hands and then peel off the dried glue? It's not so fun when your skin really is peeling.

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