

# TRAVELING COMPANIONS



## **Traveling Companions:** *Common Illnesses & Remedies* *for those on the road*

While traveling, we are exposed to all the illnesses and problems that trouble us when residing in our own communities, but *also by everyone else's*. Add in the stress, changes in environment, and unpredictability of travel and a host of common conditions--and discomforts can plague and interrupt our journeys & projects.

Because the professionalized capitalist healthcare system favors maximization of profit over providing viable care for all people's needs, many of us do not commonly find access to anything but emergency room care. While this institutional medical system can be good for treating some diseases and injuries, we ourselves can deal with much of what we encounter without a visit to the emergency room (and a huge bill).

The information included here is founded in a combination of ethnobotany, western herbalism, American folk and allopathic ("mainstream") medicine—as well as a few anecdotal experiences. We aim to validate everyone's experience, while at the same time encouraging a cautious approach towards mutual aid & education.

Throughout we include guiding questions, treatments, & preventative measures to help us assess and care for ourselves and friends on our way—as well as lists of RED FLAGS that signal a need for more advanced care from experienced complementary, & allopathic medical providers.

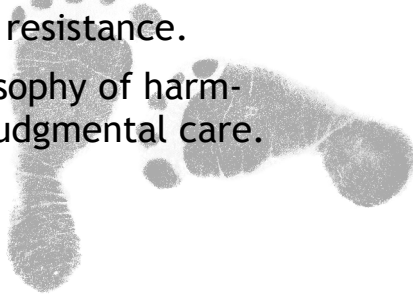
Though Clean Kids Get Sick,  
and Dirty Kids Have More Fun...  
Dirty Kids Get Sick Too  
(...and everyone deserves good self-care!)

The Rosehip Medic Collective is a group of volunteer Medics active in Portland Oregon. To contact us regarding trainings, requesting medics at your action, or donations, please visit our website:

<http://www.rosehipmedics.org>

## **Statement of Values**

- We support all people's rights to understand, access, & direct their own health and wellness.
- We envision a world free of all oppression and seek solidarity with those struggling towards personal and collective liberation.
- We believe that the personal is political and that self-care & mutual aid are necessary to sustain resistance.
- We embrace a philosophy of harm-reduction and non-judgmental care.



# BELLIES

Most of us know a fair bit about how to prevent food-borne illnesses. We wash our hands before eating or preparing food, and after using the restroom. We avoid foods that smell rotten or have hairs of growing mold. We avoid eating, sleeping, or spending lots of time in bad-smelling spaces and those known to be contaminated with chemicals, disease, or human waste. However, some of us—at home or on the road—may occasionally cut corners. Some of us may scavenge questionable food or clothes without cleaning them adequately or eat the same batch of beans 3 days straight. Here are some QUESTIONS for consideration before eating:

- Is the food adequately cleaned & cooked for its type & anything it might have contacted (esp. eggs & other animal products—or dumpster juice) present?
- How old are the ingredients/prepared dishes & how/where have they been stored? What has been done to them already? Are there signs that they may have deteriorated (bulging, off-smells, visible mold, &c.)
- In the case of preserved/fermented foods:
  - Is the appearance uniform? Is the seal broken?
  - Does the food smell/taste/look normal for this sort of food?
- Are the utensils, dishes, & surfaces washed/clean? (If not, what might be on them?)
- Have I (& everyone else touching the food) washed my hands adequately? Has anyone

recently been ill or touched body substances (poop, blood, vomit, urine,...)?

- Is my water sourced properly and adequately filtered/sterilized to eliminate *giardia*, *cryptosporidium*, & any other organisms or chemical contaminants in the area?

### Active Precautions

- Practice good sanitation (clean your hands, feet, & other parts frequently)
- Treat your body well (follow your personal routine)
- Take Immune Boosters: Echinacea\*, balsam root, astragalus, *ganoderma* mushrooms, garlic;
- Eat live (non-alcoholic)-fermented foods/beverages



## **Indigestion / Heartburn (acid pain) / Bloating + Gas**

Many people when switching up their diet and daily routine will experience some digestive distress, alone or with other symptoms. Sometimes this can hurt a lot and be really uncomfortable! Common causes include eating foods your body cannot digest easily (or which contain lots of some bacteria), eating too quickly (or too much), and eating immediately before physical activity and stress.

### **QUESTIONS:**

- Does one part of my stomach hurt/feel worse than others?
- How long have I been feeling this way?
- Does movement help ease/increase my discomfort (or release pressure)?
- What other symptoms am I feeling?

**PREVENTION:** bitter tinctures and teas (yarrow, gentian, skullcap) are good digestive aids & can stimulate appetite

**TREATMENT:** A tea of cardamom, fennel, and cinnamon is especially good for bloating & gas. A mint family tea (peppermint, spearmint, lemon balm) makes a good treatment and preventative. Kitchen herbs such as rosemary, oregano, thyme, marjoram are also helpful.

**Constipation:** Commonly caused by inadequate hydration and changes in diet, habits (eg. eliminating coffee, cigarettes), & medications. People may also experience constipation from hormonal changes, such as during menstruation or pregnancy, or simply due to new or stressful surroundings. Often

accompanied by gas, bloating, & abdominal discomfort.

#### QUESTIONS:

- How many times this week have I had a bowel movement (pooped)? How normal is this for me?
- Was it uncomfortable or painful? How much & how hard/soft?
- Is there a place I feel comfortable voiding myself?
- What else is different in my routine that might be related?
- What have I (not) been eating?

**TREATMENT:** Hydrate!! Drink tea or 1 dropperful of tincture from yellow dock and/or dandelion 3 times a day. For stronger effect, add a little cáscara sagrada to your tea of either or both, and drink before bed.

**Diarrhea + Loose Stools:** Frequent loose or liquid bowel movements. Another common response of the body to changes in diet, hydration, and routine, diarrhea & loose stools can also frequently result from food (and other) poisoning, parasites, viral and bacterial infections. Usually self-limiting, diarrhea can become serious if it continues or you are unable to take in water effectively

#### QUESTIONS:

- How many bowel movements have I had today?
- How long has this been occurring?
- Do I experience cramping or discomfort before pooping?
- How does my poop look? Is it watery? Well-digested? Anything funny-looking?

- Are there any other associated symptoms I'm feeling?
- Did I eat/drink anything unusual recently (4-24 hrs)?
- Is anyone else suffering the same symptoms?

**TREATMENT:** Take one dropperful of blackberry root or red raspberry leaf tincture or tea. Black tea will also work, but **HYDRATE!** To recover, drink tea of yarrow and oregon-grape root.\*

\*\*\*In addition, it is important to replace lost electrolytes, nutrients (modified B.R.A.T. or more regular diet), probiotics (yogurt, miso, kombucha, etc.) and lubrication—cold infusion of cheeseweed (mallow family), licorice root tea (not for pregnant folks or those with kidney problems), or slippery elm bark.

*Electrolyte Recipe:* 3 T sugar, 1 tsp salt, 1 tsp baking soda, ¼ tsp 'lite' salt, + 1 qt water

#### **ABDOMINAL RED FLAGS:**

- Blood (bright/dark red, tarry, "coffee grounds") in vomit, urine, feces
- Persistent pain (>12-24 hrs) despite treatment efforts, esp. constant
- Localized acute pain/tenderness, esp. with movement
- Persistent appetite loss, vomiting, or diarrhea (>24-72 hrs)—drink fluids!!
- Fever > 102° F
- Signs of Pregnancy
- Unexplained change in body weight of > 5 % in a month
- Symptoms persist for 1-2 weeks without resolution



**Nausea/Vomiting:** much like diarrhea (except out the other end), vomiting is often a great way for the body to rid itself of problematic substances. Nausea is also a normal response to many other troubles the body encounters, but sometimes may be undesirable depending on situation and cause of distress.

**QUESTIONS:**

- What other symptoms am I experiencing?
- Have I already thrown up? How many times? Did it make me feel better/worse?
- What have I eaten recently (in the last 4-24 hrs)?
- Are others reacting similar to how I am?

**TREATMENT:** 10 drops angelica tincture, clove + ginger tea; tea or one dropperful of tincture from the mint family (lemon balm, spearmint, peppermint). Some of these, especially ginger & mint, are excellent preventatives and treatments for the nausea associated with motion sickness & vertigo.

Concentrating on a (relatively) fixed point in your vision (the horizon; NOT this zine) and/or distracting yourself with conversation (even with yourself) can also help.

## SKIN

Our largest and most exposed organ, our skin is frequently damaged and abused, but also possesses fantastic regenerative properties.

**Acne/Detox:** Beyond cuts, scrapes, & bruising, some of the most common nuisances we experience are pimples, acne, & various itchy rashes. While these may be symptoms of a number of illnesses, they commonly offer us an external picture of how our bodies are doing internally—as our skin shoulders a significant chunk of the burden of purifying blood. Therefore, outbreaks of angry red lumps may serve as (not-so) gentle reminders to take better care of ourselves & detoxify as much as possible or is practical.

#### PREVENTION / TREATMENT:

- To reduce the strain on the liver, try reducing intake/exposure to alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, food additives, excessive fats, sugars, and other toxins (like carbon monoxide or city air)
- Drink lots of water (2+ liters/day), eat bright vegetables/fruits, & get regular sleep
- Take liver-support herbs—like yellow dock, burdock, red clover, milk thistle, and/or dandelion root—as teas or in tincture form (1 dropperful) 3 times/day
- Cleanse closed pimples with lavender + clove essential oils. Teas + salves of echinacea, yellow dock, burdock leaf, chamomile, and/or calendula promote clean healing.

#### **SKIN/SYSTEMIC RED FLAGS:**

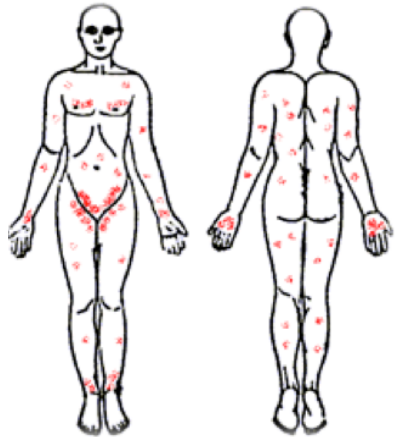
- Pale, cool, bluish or clammy skin
- Disorientation, fever, loss or change of sensation
- Allergic reaction (eg. hives) that leads to difficulty breathing
- extensive fluid-filled blistering; burns that surround a body part
- expanding redness, itchiness, soreness, hotness, streaks, & other signs of infection
- growth/injury site refuses to heal or respond to treatment,  
*see also Crawlie/Growie Red Flags*

## Scabies and other Creepy Crawlies:

Scabies are mites that burrow under the skin, specifically in warm areas of the body (armpits, groin, behind knees, between fingers and toes). Scabies are contagious, can take 4-6 weeks to show symptoms, and can look like other rashes such as eczema or hives. The good news is that scabies are *treatable*—and—after you’ve had them once you’ll show symptoms of future infection within a week and can act as an early-warning for the people around you.

Some identifying marks of a scabies rash include little red bumps with irritated skin around them. The “classic” marks form in lines, but this is not always the case. The worst rashes will be where skin touches skin or skin often touches clothes. Scabies itch worse when you’re warm; oftentimes that’s at night when you get under covers (or sleeping bag)

The DIY Ink test:



*Author’s note: I’ve had scabies before and tried this test roughly a million times during a week of itchy insomnia; it never once worked for myself or the other infected person I was cohabitating with. Your mileage may vary:*

Wikipedia and a bunch of folks I talked with when I had scabies say “The suspicious area can be rubbed with ink from a fountain pen, the surface is then wiped off with an alcohol pad; if the person is infected with scabies, the characteristic zigzag or ‘S’ pattern of the burrow across the skin will appear.”

## Creepy-Crawlies: Stigmas & Phobias:

Parasitic illnesses often have significant stigmas or icky feelings attached to them. While it may not be possible to escape this, it is *REALLY* important to be honest with yourself (denial is easy—that's why do it) and anyone you may have exposed.

Get the support you need to do this. Send emails or enlist a friend to help if you don't want to do it face to face; just get it done! Parasites can go around and around in a community until everyone treats themselves together. If someone tells you that you've been exposed to lice or scabies, **thank them** for warning you before you get itchy.

That said, a few nights of discomfort can convince you have a parasite when you really don't. If at all possible think about this after a night of good sleep and with the knowledge that you **CAN** deal with this. Use herbs or over-the-counter antihistamines if necessary to get to this point.

## QUESTIONS:

- Have I been exposed to scabies recently?
  - Exposure can take place skin to skin—usually through prolonged contact (hand shaking = low risk, sleeping next to someone = high risk)—or from materials a mite could hang out in (clothing, towels, bedding, & carpet.)
  - Any place with lots of people passing through is a higher risk.
- Where is the rash developing?
- What does it look like?
- How long have I had it? Is it getting worse or better?

## PREVENTION:

If you've been exposed to scabies but don't yet have a rash, consider starting some or all of the treatment as precautionary measures. If you feel the exposure was minimal consider taking baths with borax and/or neem oil once a day. If you feel you had a major exposure (a night spent in an infected bed for example) you should consider full treatment.

## TREATMENT:

Once you decide to start treatment, you have options!

-- There is a prescription drug called *permethrin* that treats scabies. If you go that route it's important that you take good care of your liver before, during & after the treatment, as it can be very hard on your system.

-- Herbs and how to use them: **Do NOT use neem if you are pregnant or trying to conceive!**

- Neem\* is a highly effective plant when fighting scabies. I recommend using the oil externally. To do this mix it with sesame or olive oil making sure you have between 25-50% neem in the final product. Thyme, tea tree\*\* and lavender essential oils will also help. Add 15 drops of any or all of them to an ounce of the mixture. Put this mixture all over yourself (excluding the face unless you have a rash there) every night for 7-14 days depending on how severe the infection got. The itching should stop after 3-5 days.
- Scabies are sensitive to **heat**: Taking hot baths, sitting in a sauna or getting some sun will help. Scrubbing the areas where scabies like to hang out is helpful. Adding a cup of borax to your bathwater will help as well.

### *Prevent re-infection:*

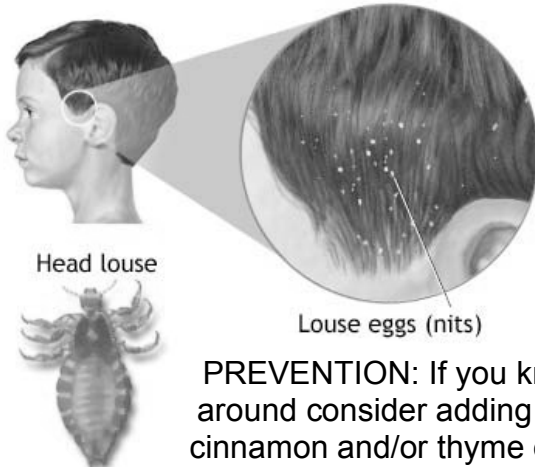
You have to clean everything you touched. Your bedding has to be laundered in hot water, preferably with a cup of borax added to each load. All clothing needs to be washed in hot water. Carpets need to be vacuumed. Uncovered furniture either has to be sprayed with pesticides or quarantined for 10-14 days while everyone in the house is treated. All of this should be done when you start treatment, once in the middle and again at the end.

\*Neem is a non-local tree; however, it's possible to get it from this continent & organically grown.

\*\*Tea tree is not local; it comes from Australia and is over-harvested for commercial use.

### **Lice and Pubic lice (aka Crabs):**

Lice and pubic lice are very small insects that like to live on the human body. They cause itching and emotional distress. They're highly contagious and have a lot of social stigma. While going through the treatment remember that emotional support is an important part of the treatment.



Head louse

Louse eggs (nits)

#### **SYMPTOMS:**

- Bugs in your hair!
- Itching.
- Finding eggs (a.k.a. "nits") attached to hair.

**PREVENTION:** If you know lice is going around consider adding lavender, cinnamon and/or thyme essential oil to your shampoo as a preventative measure.

**TREATMENT: Do NOT use neem oil if you are pregnant or trying to conceive**

--**Lice:** If you have dreadlocks this is a whole different ballgame. Otherwise, start by getting a special lice comb, shower cap, olive oil, lavender, cinnamon, and/or thyme essential oil, and neem oil. Use the lice comb very thoroughly, if possible get a friend to do it for you. Once done with that measure out enough olive oil to saturate your hair. For every

ounce you use add 15 drops of each essential oil you decide to use. If you have sensitive skin go light on cinnamon oil or don't use it at all. Saturate your hair and put on the shower cap over night. In the morning wash out the oil, comb with the lice comb again. Consider adding the essential oils to your shampoo and use the lice comb at least once daily for 5-10 days.

**--Pubic lice:** As a first step consider trimming or shaving your pubic and surrounding body hair. Use the same mixture of olive oil, neem oil and essential oils as with head lice. Use a lice comb on any remaining hair to get for 5-10 days.

*Prevent re-infection:*

Exact same as with scabies but lice will die off sooner than scabies will. Quarantine of furniture only has to last for 3 days.

**Ticks:**

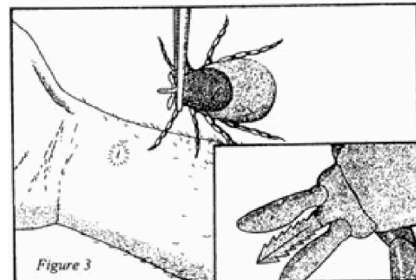
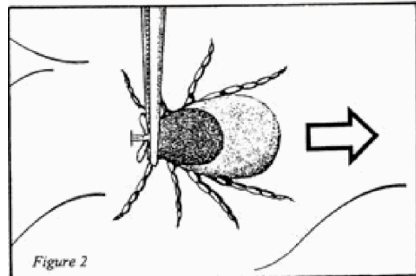
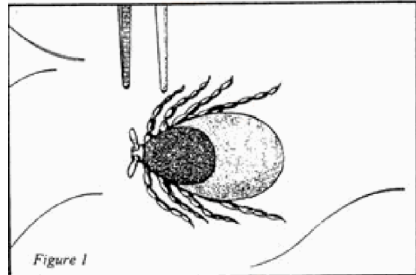
Another species of mite, these are larger than scabies & non-burrowing, so they are easier to remove. They are also much more likely to be found outdoors (esp. between April & October), in deep grass, brush, & wooded areas—*so be careful where you choose to sleep & hang out!*

While the tick's saliva can cause allergic reactions, the primary worry with tick bites is *infection*—as they are known to transmit a number of really nasty diseases—among them Lyme Disease, Babesiosis, Colorado Tick Fever, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, & others—most of which can cause rash, fever, & are potentially very serious.

*Note: Though carrier species are common on the West coast, tick-related diseases are far more common (as many as 1/10-1/6 bites) in the East and Mid-West.*

### PREVENTION:

- Tick-check your friends twice a day (& vice-versa) in tick country (~20% time, they will not be directly visible to the host)
- Light-colored clothing acts as a barrier & aids early detection
- Repellents: Many websites recommend Deet & permethrin—both very toxic. Dilute (20 drops) essential oils of *rose geranium* or *palmarosa* in a carrier oil (2 Tbsp) and apply to clothes and/or skin (unless you have a sensitivity)



### TREATMENT:

- Once found, a tick should be removed immediately grasping the head with tweezers & level with the skin. Pull *straight out* & clean the site with soap, water, & anti-microbials
- Dispose of the tick (in a labeled sealable container if concerned about disease transmission); do NOT crush it with exposed hands, which can expose you to infection.



- If you think there is a chance the tick has been on you for many hours & you are in a region where ticks are frequent carriers, you may want to visit the doctor & rule out one of the many fever & rash-associated diseases, some of which can be fatal.

## Fungi

Of the non-“fun” variety: Athlete’s foot, “jock itch” and ring worm are all different types of *tinea*, a family of fungus that grows on the human body.

-- *Ringworm* can appear anywhere on the body and often has a characteristic “ring” of raised red skin.



-- “*Jock itch*” is a similar red, flaky rash commonly found around the genitals and buttocks, but can also be on the inner thighs, or under any skin folds (under breasts, around the belly, etc). Both of these fungi need warm, wet conditions to thrive.

-- *Athlete’s foot* presents on the feet as dry and cracking skin, especially between the toes.

### PREVENTION:

#### -- **General Fungus**

- Avoid sharing dirty towels or clothing
- Change out of sweaty or damp clothes whenever possible
- Wash bedding or sleeping bags regularly, especially during and after treatment for a fungal infection.

## -- Athlete's Foot

- Keep your feet thoroughly dry, especially between your toes.
- Wear cotton socks. Be sure to wear a fresh pair each day.
- Avoid tight, closed-toe shoes. Moisture and heat cause the athlete's foot fungus to thrive.
- Don't go barefoot in indoor public places. Wear socks, slippers or flip flops.

- Wash socks in the hot water setting of the washing machine.
- When possible wear shoes that allow airflow
- Spray shoes with diluted lavender essential oil or a strong western red cedar tea weekly

## -- Jock itch (tinea cruris)

- Wear clean underwear made of breathable material like cotton.
- Wear loose fitting underwear or none at all when you sleep.
- Allow time to thoroughly dry after showers or swimming.

## TREATMENT:

- Western Redcedar (*Thuja plicata*) glycerin tincture, oil, or infusion applied to the affected 2-3 times a day for 5-7 days. The infusion can be made by

## CRAWLIE/GROWIE RED FLAGS

- No improvement of fungal/other infection within 1 week of treatment
- Fever, rash, flu-like symptoms with history of embedded tick
- Crusted or infected bite sites, sometimes from scratching
- Infestation or infection of immuno-compromised person

gathering 2-3 ounces of new growth branches and steeping them in a quart of water as a cold infusion overnight. Alternately, make a poultice of the inner bark can apply to the affected area daily.

- Lavender essential oil applied 2-3 times daily dilute 15-20 drops in 1/2 cup of water or ¼ cup apple cider vinegar and bathe the affected area
- Wash the affected area daily with mild soap
- Follow all prevention guidelines to prevent re-infection

Simple sock Poultice: 1) place finely chopped/powdered herbs in sock + tie off end; 2) pour enough hot water over sock to moisten & heat herbs; 3) knead poultice to release juices; 4) apply to site until cool; 5) repeat steps (2)-(4)



## Feet:

Tromping around the woods, cities, up and down highways or train yards, maintaining our feet is essential for obvious reasons. Keeping them *warm, dry, comfortable, & relatively clean* can be difficult during prolonged outings, but diligent foot care goes a long way avoiding problems that could delay or permanently injure you along your way.

## PREVENTION:

- Wear well-fitting, broken-in shoes/boots & comfortable socks
- Wash & air out your feet often
- Early detection is key for *hot spots* and growths
- In cold, wet areas, keep feet warm & dry—including while asleep

## TREATMENT:

Blisters form in places where rubbing (or burning) damages skin—most commonly due to the friction between shoe and foot. More painful & harder to treat the greater its extent and longer it goes untreated, the best way to deal with blistering is early detection and treatment.

- Where *hot spots* (painful, reddening) form, clean & dry the skin before applying mole skin or thin padding to reduce friction (duct tape also works).
  - When you have time to rest, wash & air out your foot; try a poultice of chickweed, plantain, or comfrey
- If fluid-filled blisters are already present, left to dry and rest they will go down & reabsorb independently.
- When rest time is not possible, ‘donut’ bandaging or sterilely lancing a blister at the edge (properly done) can allow for healthy recovery and greater short-term mobility.
- Clean the site, change dressings frequently & use St. John’s Wort, Thyme, Calendula, and/or lavender essential oil to help prevent infection & promote healing.



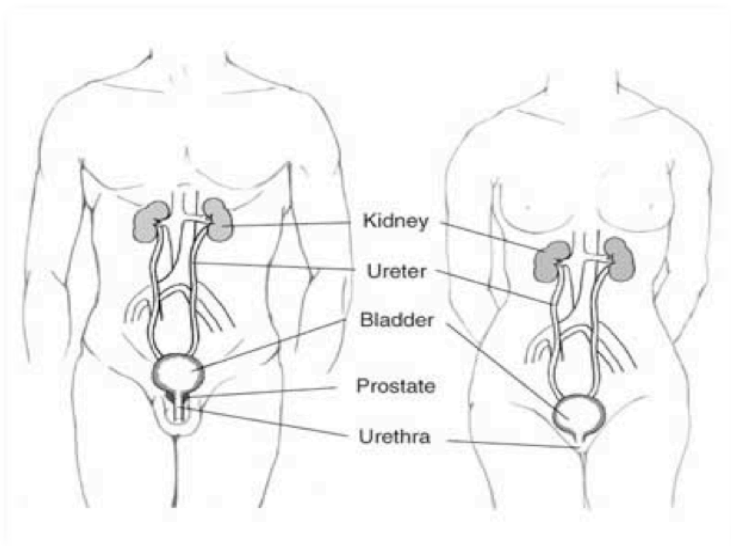
# BITS

## Urinary tract infections:

This is a bacterial infection caused by bacteria getting into the urinary tract and having time to multiply. Common causes are frequent, vigorous sexual activity involving the genitals, traveling without easy access to showers or toilets, chronic dehydration, and/or drinking lots of sugary liquids. Some people are more prone to UTI's than others and having one infection can make it easier to get more.

### QUESTIONS:

- Am I urinating (peeing) more than usual?
- Does it hurt right before, during or after urination?
- Do I have to urinate RIGHT AWAY when the urge comes?
- Do I feel the urge to urinate but can't?
- Does my urine look or smell different than usual? Is it cloudy?



#### PREVENTION:

Drink 8 Cups of water a day. Urinate regularly. Urinate before and after sex. Avoid sugar, alcohol, and caffeine.

#### TREATMENT:

Tea of cleavers, cranberries, uva-ursi, chickweed, and cheeseweed. Avoid sugar, alcohol, and caffeine. Add parsley to your food.

**Menstrual cramps:** Painful cramps are a common problem that is different in every individual. The pain may be mild or severe, dull or sharp, before and/or during menstruation, associated with other symptoms or stand alone.

#### QUESTIONS:

- When does the pain start? How long does it last?
- Are there other symptoms? What are they?
- Is this something I've felt before or new?
- Where in my menstrual cycle am I?

PREVENTION: Eat foods/herbs high in minerals, such as nettles, almonds, greens (except spinach and chard), horsetail, oatstraw, and raspberry leaf. Treat for constipation the week before. Avoid caffeine, fats, and dairy products. Support liver function the week before with tea or 1 dropper full of tincture 3 times per day of burdock, artichoke leaf, and/or dandelion. Stay warm during menstruation.

TREATMENT: Add turmeric and ginger to food. Take yarrow, raspberry leaf, crampbark (local variety is called high bush cranberry) as a tea or dropper full of tincture 3 times per day.

**Yeast infections:**

Yeast infections are an overgrowth of candidia and usually manifest in the mouth or genitals. In people with vaginas the symptoms are usually itching, unusual vaginal discharge (more of it and often white and lumpy). People with penises usually experience fewer symptoms and the common symptoms are red skin, itching or burning. Yeast infections are contagious and any sexual partners MUST treat themselves even if they don't have symptoms or else it can get passed back and forth!

Treatment: Tea of mullein leaf, raspberry leaf, and/or garden sage. Cold infusion of red cedar. Eat probiotics such as acidophilus. Garlic suppository. Put 3-5 drops of lavender essential oil on a tampon. Immune system function can be boosted with garlic, echinacea\*, or balsam root.

**FIGHT THE POWER.  
DO NO HARM**

# Resources

[www.digihitch.com/](http://www.digihitch.com/) Resource for hitchhikers & other travelers; advice & information

Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222

A Modern Herbal

[www.botanicalmedicine.org](http://www.botanicalmedicine.org)

United Plants Savers

[www.unitedplantsavers.org](http://www.unitedplantsavers.org)

Information on endangered and at-risk plants

Rosehip Medics Collective Website

[www.rosehipmedics.org](http://www.rosehipmedics.org)

Resource on Essential Oils + Uses

[www.essentialoils.co.za](http://www.essentialoils.co.za)

*Peterson Field Guides: Western Medicinal Plants and Herbs* by Steven Foster and Christopher Hobbs

*Medicinal Plants of the Pacific West* by Michael Moore

*Natural First Aid* by Brigitte Mars

