

Herbal aftercare for injuries & chemical weapons exposure

If you've recently been exposed to tear gas, have endured a chemical injury, are experiencing numbness in your hands after being handcuffed, feeling low-immunity, or experiencing emotional or physical trauma incurred by police brutality, these suggestions are for you. This info has been adapted from The Black Cross Health Collective's 'An Activist's Guide to First Aid'. The amendments come from extensive herbal training and from experience as street medics and health care practitioners. Endangered or at-risk plants are also taken into account, recommending effective medicines that are easy to get or that grow abundantly in the Bay Area. Plus there are indigenous peoples who are still tending plant stands in the wild so it's best to leave them be. A list of sources and where to go for further info is listed below.



Anyone who got hurt at the action on January 28, 2012 or in jail needs to document their injury promptly and well, and work with National Lawyers Guild to get the correct follow-up.

<http://www.midnightspecial.net/files/shootingthewounded-activist.pdf>

Pepper spray and tear gas exposure:

Over-exposure to “incapacitating agents” such as tear gas and/or pepper spray may potentially lead to lingering health problems. These agents may damage the protective lining of the lungs, which can make us more susceptible to lung infections and diseases. Additionally, the toxins from the chemical weapons can stick around in our bodies, taxing our liver and our general immune system. There are many steps you can take to help decrease your risks from exposure to these toxins. Some of these steps need to be taken as soon as possible following exposure. Others should be done regularly over the weeks after exposure.

Try not to bring contaminated clothing indoors unless it is wrapped up in a plastic bag as it will continue as a residue on your skin and clothes. As soon as you can, wash your hair thoroughly and wash all contaminated clothing in a strong detergent.

It is important to help your body to eliminate the toxins as quickly and effectively as possible, in order to minimize long term effects. The following is a list of things you can do to help detoxify and support your immune system following chemical weapons exposure:

Water:

Try to drink at least 2 liters a day. Squeeze some lemon in the water for added benefit.

Liver support:

Use bitter, liver tonic herbs for about two weeks following exposure. These are excellent liver detoxifiers and will help your body heal. You can buy them at herbal or health food stores.

- **Milk Thistle seeds** (*Silybum marianum*) capsules for immediate detox. Tincture is good too. For long term use it's great having a pepper grinder and grinding a teaspoon of the seeds over your meals.
- **Burdock root** (*Arctium lappa*): tincture (one dropperful 2-3 times a day) or purchase the dry root in bulk. If you have the bulk dried root, you can put a few handfuls in your crock-pot (or if you don't have one, in a pot of water). After bringing to a boil let simmer for 4 - 8 hours. You can drink it hot or cold and lasts in the fridge 3 days.

- Fresh burdock root (gobo) is good in sushi rolls or miso soup, too
- **Dandelion root** (*Taraxacum officinale*) can be used as tea, 1- 4 cups a day, or as a tincture a dropperful 2-3 times a day. You can add 1/4 part of the dried dandelion root to the burdock in the crockpot or on the stovetop.
- You can also powder the herbs in a coffee grinder, place them in capsules and use 4 capsules 1-3 times a day. Milk Thistle can often be purchased pre-encapsulated.

Diet & lifestyle suggestions:

Your liver must work overtime to filter out the toxins. Avoiding alcohol, cigarettes, caffeine, fried or high fat foods will make its job easier. Getting regular sleep is also important— your liver continues to work while you sleep. Drink an 8oz glass of water before bed.

Lung support:

These mucilaginous herbs all soothe and coat mucous membranes. The following three are especially important if you have a dry cough, the fourth one for a wet cough.

- **Mullein:** A tea or tincture of Mullein leaf (*Verbascum thapsus*) is excellent lung support. This should especially be used if you are asthmatic or have a cough. You can take a dropperful, every four hours or so, immediately following exposure. After a day, decrease this to 1/2 a dropperful three- four times a day.
- Again, wildcrafting/wildharvesting is not advised due to many plants being endangered or at-risk and out of respect to the indigenous peoples who are tending plant stands in nature. That said, mullein is not native in the Bay Area and it is abundant. You can likely find it in a back yard or community gardens. Try sitting with the plant and ask it if you can have some for medicine. Take only a couple leaves off of a plant and at least 50 feet from any road and not right against a house due to the possibility of lead paint. Please take only what you will actually use!
- **Licorice:** Chewing on the root of a licorice plant (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) is also very helpful for your lungs and adrenal support. Licorice is contraindicated if you have high blood pressure.
- **Marshmallow:** Capsules or a cold tea of Marshmallow root powder (*Althea officinalis*). For tea: place 2 Tablespoons of powder in cold water and soak overnight in a jar. Note: it will be slimy! That's its medicine. The slime is soothing for dry coughs and irritated throat and mucus membranes. Marshmallow requires cold water to release its medicine, not hot. Drink _ - 1 cup 3x daily. Store in the refrigerator. Can last up to three days.
- **Elecampane** for a wet cough and to bring up old hard mucus.*** It's great for pulling out toxic chemical weapons that may be stuck down in your lungs. Take note that this herb is warming and drying so if you already have a dry cough, taking this herb can make it worse. Elecampane is also easy to grow. For that reason it's better to use it instead of similar-acting herbs which are now endangered. 4-20 drops 2-4 times daily or 3 cups of tea 2x daily.

High fiber diet:

- Whole grains or psyllium husk can help clean you out your colon. Always take psyllium with at least two cups of water. Discontinue if irritation or gas occurs. Psyllium is not recommended for long-term use.
- You may also consider adding the following to your diet: Miso soup, seaweeds, organic cilantro and shiitake mushrooms to help your body heal.

Epsom salt scrub:

A hot shower, (remember, this isn't for immediate aftercare - that requires a cold shower) followed by a thorough scrubbing with epsom salts which are then left on the skin for 10-15 minutes before a thorough follow-up wash can help draw toxins from the body. Be sure

to accompany this with much water consumption. You can also take a bath in Epsom salts and sea salts. Soak for only 10 minutes. Toxins your body has eliminated during the soak will be reabsorbed after 10 minutes.*

Treatment for stress, anxiety, trauma, & insomnia related to traumatic events:

The physical and emotional effects of intense emergency situations may stick around in our bodies long after the actual events have ended. In the hours, days and weeks following, it is important to remember that longer lasting effects can exist. This can show up as disturbed sleep, nightmares, anxiety, fear or depression. Again, getting rest cannot be overstated. Give yourself a place to cry or get angry or 'shake out' your trauma/fear/ anger. The Safer Spaces Committee has offered counseling. Their contact info is below. If you notice increased sensitivity to chemicals, a shift in menstrual cycles that does not balance, and symptoms of trauma that persist, see a qualified herbalist.

Herbs have an important role not only in supporting recovery from trauma but in bringing our bodies back into a state of balance.

- **Nettles** are the perfect all around support plants. Their high mineral content and mild cleansing action supports many body functions. Drinking lots of nettle tea will boost your immune system, calm you down and support your body in returning to its regular, strong self. Use the medicinal tea method described above.
- **Skullcap** revitalizes a burned out nervous system, relaxes body from nervous tension, takes the edge off of emotions, for people who react to everything, for nerve pain and inflammation; In small doses it's for shock and trauma, especially if you are going right to anger. It helps quiet emotions to allow you to sleep, but is not sedating. If you are jumpy that means that your nerves are over firing. Skullcap is great for exhausted nerves from long term depression. 5-25 drops, 2-3 times/day. 3-4 cups of hot tea. Skullcap is most effective fresh.
- **Lemon Balm** for moving trauma out of the body--it's also quite abundant in gardens around the Bay Area. It is specific for healing sexual traumas. It elevates the mood, helps the digestive tract, takes away body tension, strengthens and tonifies nervous system, and can be helpful for panic attacks that are fear/terror based. .5- 20 drops of tincture 2 – 5 x day or 2 – 3 cups of tea a day. Fresh is best! ***
- **Chamomile** is soothing to the nerves and digestion. It's great for anxiety, depression, and is a nervous system tonic. Make a medicinal tea (see directions below).
- **Whole milky oats** in tea or tincture helps sooth and nourish the nervous system. Also is a tonic for adrenals. Fresh extract or dried tea are both great.
- "**Anxiety Release**": An inexpensive (\$9 for 10ml) and proven very effective blend for post-action trauma. A "Wyndmere Naturals" essential oil blend. Ingredients: Pure essential oils of Citrus sinensis (Orange), Lavandula vera (Lavender), Salvia sclarea (Clary Sage), Pelargonium graveolens (Geranium), Vetiveria zizanoides (Vetiver), Anthemis nobilis (Chamomile Roman)

Flower essences work well in stressful situations as well as long after a traumatic event. (Scarlet Sage in San Francisco, Rainbow Grocery, and on-line sources Alaskan Flower Essences or Desert Alchemy are great flower essences companies).

- **Five-Flower Formula by Flower Essence Society or Rescue Remedy** for overall recovery from shock & trauma, especially for immediate use.
- **Coral bean** tones post traumatic stress disorder.
- **Red Clover** for self-aware behavior, calm & steady presence, especially in emergency situations. (good for mass hysteria & anxiety, if one is easily influenced by panic or other forms of group thought.)
- **Indian Pink** for remaining centered & focused, even under stress; managing and coordinating diverse forms of activity. Good if you have an inability to stay centered during intense activity.

- **Oregon Grape** when one is feeling paranoid or self protective; unfair projection or expectation of hostility from others. Helps with an ability to trust & loving inclusion of others.
- **Arnica** for maintaining connection with Higher Self during trauma or for healing past shock or trauma.
- **Gold Alaska Essence** for personal power; PTSD, holding back.
- **Borage** for courage.

Additionally from the Black Cross website: "Other things you may want to try for stress, grief, anxiety or frayed nerves following a demo include: Rescue Remedy (a flower essence), yoga, meditation, and talking to friends about your experiences/thoughts at the demo. The flowers of Borage (*Borago officinalis*) can be taken as a tincture (one dropperful as needed) or tea to help get your emotional strength back. Lavender essential oil is especially helpful for panic attacks or grief. Keep a bottle handy to smell throughout the day."

Handcuff injuries: The sooner you are treated the better for your recovery. The numbness can be long term and become a serious problem if left untreated or undertreated. Get checked out by a medical or health professional who has dealt with this specific kind of injury before.

Elevation above the heart and ice is the most beneficial for immediate aftercare. Rest your injuries as much as possible.

St. John's Wort is great for handcuff injuries where you have numbness or pain. It helps with neuralgia, sciatica, nerve pain, helps repair myelin sheath damage. It acts as a tonic to nervous system and helps with anxiety. Use as a liniment or rubbing oil for carpal tunnel and tendonitis. St Johns wort is contraindicated with many pharmaceuticals so check with a trained professional or only use topically. You can take the tincture internally and as a liniment or oil externally. ***

Immune Support:

- **Bed rest**
- **Water:** stay hydrated!
- **Diet:** foods should be simple and warming: broths, soups, and teas. Avoid foods that weaken the immune system and cause mucus: sugar, (including orange and other fruit juices!), carbs, processed foods, dairy, and junk foods.
- **Vit C** several times a day.
- **Fire Cider** is cheap and easy to make: MASHH Clinic Fire Cider: 2 bulbs garlic, 6 in fresh ginger root, 6 in fresh horseradish root, 12 capsicum pods, 1 head parsley, 1 onion. Chop everything up or grate it, soak for 2 weeks in 1/2 gallon apple cider vinegar, shake daily. Strain, press, and add: juice 1 lemon, about 1/2 cup vegetable glycerine or raw honey if desired, 1-2 Tablespoons Vit C powder (ascorbic acid in the brewing section). Bottle in sterilized glass amber bottles, label and tell all viruses to take a hike!
- **Echinacea** tincture & tea is a well-known surface immune booster.
- **Elder flowers** are a nice remedy for feverish cold or flu.
- **Elderberry** prevents the influenza virus from replicating. 1tbsp four times a day for adults.
- **Lifestyle choices:** To promote a good immune system, you need a good overall lifestyle that includes your overall energy, good food, exercise, wilderness time, watching sunsets – herbs cannot take the place of a Zero Lifestyle spent in concrete and man-made boxes.
- **Hygiene:** It can't be underestimated: washing your hands is the single best way to avoid

the flu or a cold.

How to make medicinal teas:

Put 4 Tablespoons of dried herb in a quart mason jar, fill with boiling water, (place a spoon, knife or fork in there to conduct the heat and prevent the glass from shattering), then cap and let sit for 4-8 hours (less if the need is urgent). Strain and drink 2-4 cups a day, hot or cold. Store in the refrigerator.

Bay Area Resources:

Places to get herbs in the Bay: Scarlet Sage in SF, Berkeley Bowl, Rainbow Grocery in SF, and Llasa Kharnak (two locations in Berkeley).

Suitcase Apothecary OO/Decolonize Herbalists: We currently set up on Sundays at Oscar Grant/Frank Ogawa Plaza when possible. We are donation-based. You can contact suitcaseapothecary@gmail.com or call Claire Chuck Bohman at (415) 374-3736. For now you can find this document online at www.clairebohman.net

Safer Spaces: "Because of the cop violence used against our Move-In Day action, Safer Spaces is making ourselves available to folks on our Safer Spaces Dispatch/Hotline for the next couple days for various types of support." 510-502-9466

saferspaces@occupyoakland.org

<http://mindfuloccupation.org>

www.activist-trauma.net

www.trauma-pages.com/s/t-facts.php

www.generationfive.org

Acupuncture: Great for repairing trauma, help lungs/ eyes heal, rebalance menstruation and help the body ballance and detox. It can also help with anxiety and post traumatic stress easing. In the Bay, check out Sarana Community Acupuncture, the Berkeley Acupuncture Project, Oakland Acupuncture Project and more.
<http://www.oaklandacupunctureproject.com/>
<http://www.saranacommunityacupuncture.org> They all charge \$15-\$20 per appointment.**

Black Cross Health Collective has a lot of great resources:

<http://www.blackcrosscollective.org> This document was adapted from this handout:

<http://www.blackcrosscollective.org/page10.html>

Rosehip Medic Collective also has great resources for chemical weapons exposure and about street medics: <http://www.rosehipmedics.org/>

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Compiled by Dixie Pauline. Questions about this document: dixiepauline@gmail.com. There's different schools of thought regarding dosages. I've tended to go with the lower dosages as per my herbal training which has shown healing results. This document was made possible by Greta Montagne, MASHH Clinic Collective, M.Treloar, Karyn Sanders, Sarah Holmes, and Claire Chuck Bohman.

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