



# Herbal Medicine for Children with Developmental Delays

by Laura I. Mezei, MHA

Today is an exciting and hopeful time for children with developmental delays. Parents and health care practitioners are getting an increasingly clear picture of what goes wrong biologically in autism and related disorders. The world of herbs abounds with rich gifts of healing for body, mind, and spirit.

## What are Herbs?

Medicinal herbs are plants with healing properties used to prevent and treat illness. Herbalism is the most ancient form of medicine known to humans. Many of today's pharmaceuticals were originally derived from herbs. Herbs are very different from drugs. While drugs suppress symptoms, herbs support and enhance the body's own natural healing processes.

## Which Systems Go Wrong?

These three main systems become disordered by toxins, viruses and bacteria:

- **Gastrointestinal system:** Yeast overgrowth and "autistic enterocolitis," a novel form of inflammatory bowel disease that correlates to a chronic, sub-acute measles virus in the intestines, are common problems. The overuse of antibiotics causes yeasts to proliferate and colonize the GI tract. Toxic chemicals from yeasts weaken and perforate the intestinal lining, leading to "leaky gut syndrome."
- **Immune system:** In autoimmune disease, the body attacks its own brain structures. Chronic sub-acute viral infections can also severely impede normal immune function.
- **Nervous system:** Demyelination of nerves affects learning, memory, communication, and social skills. Heavy metal toxicity can lead to sensory problems, repetitive motions, poor eye contact, loss of language, extremes of emotion, behavioral dysfunctions, sleep disturbances, and other issues.

Look to organic natural herbs once special diets and nutritional supplements are in place as part of the Defeat Autism Now! (DAN!) protocol.

## Cleansing the Gastrointestinal System

**Garlic** or **Usnea**, both *antifungals*, are an effective first line of defense against yeast overgrowth. For repairing intestinal permeability look to demulcent herbs such as **Slippery Elm** and **Marshmallow Root** and to mucosal regeneratives such as **Licorice** or **Chamomile**. They soothe, regenerate, and repair the ragged and inflamed tissue of the mucosal lining.

Treatment of enterocolitis involves targeting bowel pathogens and addressing constipation and/or diarrhea. To cleanse the area and eliminate pathogens use *anti-microbial* herbs such as **Bearberry**, *anti-inflammatory* herbs such as **Meadowsweet**, and *astringent* herbs such as **Agrimony**. For constipation use *laxative* herbs such as **Burdock** and **Buckthorn**. *Tannin-containing* herbs such as **Oak Bark** will stop diarrhea. To soothe the accompanying gas and cramping, try *anti-spasmodic* herbs such as **Fennel Seed** and **Cramp Bark**.

## Targeting the Immune System

Use deep *immune-activating* tonic herbs such as **Astragalus** and **Shiitake** as *alternatives to antibiotics* when treating ear infections, colds, and fevers. Clear up sinus infections with *berberine-containing* herbs such as **Goldenseal**. **Thyme** is a powerful *antimicrobial* and *expectorant* that makes an excellent tea for sore throats. Use **mullein**, an *anti-inflammatory pain-reliever*, to make herbal ear drops. Battle chronic, sub-acute viruses with herbal *anti-virals* such as **Echinacea** and **Licorice**.

During chelation, support detoxification organs. The liver, kidneys, and lymphatic system must be able to excrete the toxins the chelating agents bind to and pull out. *Hepatic* herbs such as **Milk Thistle** and **Yellow Dock** tone and strengthen the liver and increase the flow of bile. *Diuretic/tonic* herbs such as **Dandelion Leaf** and **Horsetail** support the kidneys and *lymphatic tonics* such as **Cleavers** keep the lymph from stagnating and encourage drainage.

## Calming the Nervous System

An astonishing array of *nervine* herbs are available to address behavioral dysfunctions. **Skullcap** helps reduce self-stimulatory behaviors, **Ginkgo** targets poor awareness and focus, and **Golden Root** is a vital part of a self-injury protocol.

Herbs ranging in strength from mild to quite strong in the form of *relaxants* such as **Lavender**, *sedatives* such as **Lemon Balm**, and *hypnotics* such as **Valerian** will quiet the body and bring on sleep.

**Aromatherapy** and **Flower Essences** are wonderful, supportive, complementary therapies that support all three systems of the triad. Use *essential oils*, with specific therapeutic actions and chemical properties, to assist in battling issues like yeast overgrowth and constipation, and in detoxification.

**Flower essences** are liquid extracts prepared from sun infusions of certain flowers. They heal and shift a variety of emotional states including anxiety, apathy, resistance, and extremes of emotion.

## Reach for Herbs, Not Drugs

Explore herbal and other natural treatments from God's pharmacy. The best sources are small, herbalist-owned companies that grow organic plants, make their own medicines and products, and are environmentally conscious. Medicines made by hand using the whole herb are far superior to the herbal pills typically found in health food stores. Go online to Avena Botanicals, Jean's Greens, Mountain Rose, and Wise Woman. Consult a trained herbal professional for guidance about dosages and type, as both are unique to each individual. To learn more, read McIntyre's *The Herbal for Mother and Child*, and *The Complete Illustrated Herbal* by Hoffmann. (See booklist.)

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