UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF NATURAL REMEDIES
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There’s no doubt that modern medicine continues to make remarkable strides, developing a wide range of innovative diagnostic techniques, surgical procedures, and pharmaceutical drugs at a steady pace. Yet amid all these wonders of technology and ingenuity, an increasing number of people are finding that the solution to their ailments can be found in some old medicinal treatments—in some cases, ones that date back literally thousands of years. These “natural remedies,” as they are commonly called, derive from the products of the Earth, not a laboratory; and they can generate powerful healing effects without the need for invasive surgery or other physically uncomfortable procedures.

To many, it comes as no surprise that the bounties of nature can produce benefits better than artificial concoctions ever could. But even though a lot of people are inclined to take the subject seriously, they’re not always certain how to take further action. After all, there’s a tremendous amount of information on the subject available in cyberspace, and it can be difficult to cut through all the verbiage out there. What do we mean, exactly, when we talk about natural remedies? Where do you go to obtain natural healing products? How can you distinguish between authentic natural remedies and ersatz products from fly-by-night companies? These are all valid questions, and as a way of providing a few answers, or at least an introduction to encourage further study, we have assembled this simple overview of the subject, covering five different kinds of natural remedy treatments that have found widespread acceptance.
CHAPTER 1: AYURVEDA MEDICINE
In Sanskrit, “Ayurveda” means “science of life,” and that’s an apt descriptor for this ancient medicinal practice. Its lineage is very old—in fact, it’s not certain at all when Ayurveda medicine originated, although where it arose is fairly clear. The historical record shows that Ayurveda concepts were in circulation during the Indus Valley Civilization (approx. 3300–1700 B.C.) that dominated northwest India, although these ideas may have been concocted even earlier. Ayurveda therapy has come down to us today through a number of treatises that attribute the development of these ideas to divine intervention and the work of wise sages throughout the ages.

However Ayurveda medicine may have originated, it was practiced for thousands of years and remains in use even today, particularly in India, where a majority of the population is said to rely on it or related therapies at least on occasion. It can be used by itself or in conjunction with modern therapies; for this reason, Ayurveda is classified as a complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).

According to Ayurveda medicine, the human body is governed by three “bioelements”: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. These are known as doshas. To remain healthy, the body must keep these substances in balance; when this fails, the result is illness—sometimes serious illness.

Ayurveda practitioners believe in the unity of the mind and body, and that a disorder in one can adversely affect the other. For that reason, therapy emphasizes nutrition and proper eating habits, using a variety of herbs and spices to help the patient attain physical harmony. In addition, practitioners also help their patients manage stress and physical discomfort with massage techniques, meditation, exercise, and other relaxation methods.
CHAPTER 2:
TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE
Traditional Chinese medicine, often abbreviated TCM, is another form of “natural” therapy that has its roots in ancient Asia. Its exact origins are lost to history, but it is known that TCM has been continually in use for thousands of years. During this long process of development, it has accumulated and refined a wide range of theories, ideas, and therapies, a process influenced in part by Eastern philosophical traditions such as Taoism and Confucianism. For many centuries it was practiced exclusively in China (although it shares certain ideas with therapies found in other parts of Asia), but TCM has spread throughout the globe during the modern era, with a number of practitioners in North America today.

Traditional Chinese medicine emphasizes the interconnectivity of humans and nature as well as the interconnectivity of the various organs of the body. As with Ayurveda, TCM places great importance on the need to balance various bodily elements and forces as a way of maintaining health and curing disease.

To provide the reader with a grasp of what traditional Chinese medicine is all about, it may be best to simply explore some of the more important concepts and theories associated with it.

**Yin and Yang** – The concept of yin and yang as well as the black-and-white circular symbol that represents it are already familiar to Western audiences. It’s an old idea, dating back to the second millennium B.C., that represents the dual, complementary nature of all matter in the universe, including the human body. Yin is responsible for cold sensations in the body, while yang controls heat sensations. In traditional Chinese medicine, illnesses are commonly attributed to an imbalance of yin and yang.

**The Five Elements** – TCM also holds that the human body, and nature as a whole, is composed of five basic elements: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. For example, the heart is classified as a fire element, and the ear as a water element.
The Meridian Network – TCM practitioners believe that the life force of the body, or “qi,” travels through paths known as meridians. The human body contains twelve standard (or principal) meridians, each of which is associated with an internal organ and an extremity (i.e., hand or foot). In addition, there are eight “extraordinary meridians” responsible for storing bodily energy. Unlike the standard meridians, these are not associated with specific organs or extremities.

TCM practitioners diagnose physical problems through direct observation of the patient’s body, like checking body heat and visually examining the tongue. This is done without the use of special instruments, and without causing pain or discomfort to the patient. Prescribed therapy to treat the patient’s ailments can take any one of the following forms:

- Acupuncture and moxibustion
- Massage therapy (tui na)
- Herbal medicine
- Food therapy
- Marital arts
- Meditation and breathing techniques (e.g., qi gong)

Practitioners commonly prescribe Chinese herbal medicine such as Honso Kampo and blue poppy herbs to help patients overcome illness.
CHAPTER 3: HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE
The branch of alternative medicine known as homeopathy was originated in 1796 by the German physician Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843). As a village doctor in late 18th century Saxony, Hahnemann was deeply unhappy with the practice of medicine of the time, and soon quit his position to become a writer and translator of medical texts. It was then that he stumbled onto the medical discoveries that would make him famous around the world.

Hahnemann's big idea was that "like cures like"—that is, a drug (or other substance) that produces specific symptoms in healthy individuals will cure sick individuals who present the same symptoms. By introducing very tiny quantities of medicinal substances into the body, it is possible to boost natural healing powers and enable an ailing individual to regain their health. Homeopathy has been shown to be a safe method of treatment; the standard procedure is to use only the minimum amount of a prescribed substance needed to generate the desired healing effect. The type of natural substance used depends on the particular constitution and symptoms of the patient, as determined after a consultation with a homeopathic professional.

Homeopathic remedies are used in the treatment of a broad array of ailments, including but not limited to anxiety, depression, allergies, headaches, sinus infections, heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and Crohn's disease. The process begins with a consultation in which the practitioner asks questions relating to the patient's current health status. After getting a clear overview of the patient's condition, the practitioner will pick the specific medicine appropriate for treatment. During the course of the treatment, the patient will meet with the practitioner at regular intervals to monitor the progress toward recovery and adjust the prescribed remedies when and if necessary.
Unlike the other medicinal treatments we have explored thus far, gemmotherapy cannot boast a history that can be measured in centuries, although arguably it derives from quite old concepts. This natural therapy technique has its origins in 1950s France, where a group of homeopaths discovered the medicinal properties of embryonic tissue taken from shrubs and trees during the germination period of these plants. Specifically, this type of natural substance was shown to be highly effective in cleansing or detoxifying the human body.

This new treatment method, soon dubbed gemmotherapy, earned official recognition when it was included in the French Pharmacopoeia. Before long, gemmotherapy became very popular in neighboring Italy, where it remains widely practiced to this day; the Italian Ministry of Health oversees the countrywide manufacture of remedies associated with this kind of therapy. Although Italy is one of the leading centers for gemmotherapy, this kind of treatment has found acceptance in other lands as well, including North America.

To prepare gemmotherapy remedies—and we'll simplify the process for the sake of convenience—the tissues are soaked in glycerin and alcohol for several weeks and then filtered to collect a liquid solution known as souche.

When properly administered, gemmotherapy remedies help cleanse the body of toxins that contribute to aging and the development of disease. The type of remedies used is calculated by a professional who takes into consideration the individual’s particular constitution and needs. Gemmotherapy has been used to treat a very broad range of illnesses and maladies, including the following:

- GOUT
- HERPES
- INSOMNIA
- KIDNEY DISORDERS
- MIGRaines
- Osteoporosis
- SINUSITIS
- ACNE
- GUM DISEASE
- HAY FEVER
- VARICOSE VEINS
- MUSCLE SPASMS
- EMPHYSEMA

GemmaTherapy helps enhance the body’s immune system and metabolism while detoxifying vital organs. Its popularity continues to grow throughout the Western world.
CHAPTER 5:
PHYTOTHERAPY
"Phyto" is the Greek word for plant, so "phytotherapy" is the practice of using herbal medicine to cure illness and other physical maladies. Like traditional Chinese medicine, this type of therapy extends thousands of years into the past, well before recorded history; unlike TCM, however, phytotherapy draws heavily on herbs associated with the Western tradition rather than the Asiatic. As another example of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), it can be used in conjunction with standard medical treatment and drug regimens, as its practitioners are trained to identify and work around potentially dangerous chemical interactions.

With phytotherapy, enormous care is taken to ensure that herbs are grown organically according to the highest standards, as the quality of herbal therapy depends on the conditions to which these organic materials were subjected during their cultivation. Processes such as spectrophotometry and gas chromatography are often used to ensure that plants conform to acceptable standards.

The phytotherapy practitioner begins the process by consulting with the patient to learn about their health history and current overall physical condition. This enables the practitioner to figure out which specific herbal prescription is appropriate for the patient.

Phytotherapy has been used to treat a number of medical conditions such as acne, depression, migraines, thyroid problems, and menopause, to mention just a handful of relevant maladies. It can also enhance the fitness of healthy individuals by boosting the immune system, energy levels, mental acuity, ability to cope with stress, and more.
The world of natural remedies is a complex one—confusingly so, for those who are new to the subject. It encompasses disciplines that have their roots in, variously, ancient Asia (in the cases of Ayurveda and traditional Chinese medicine), in 18th century Germany (homeopathy), and in mid-20th century France (gemmotherapy). What all these treatments have in common is their reliance not on invasive surgical techniques but on herbs and other natural products, which are carefully treated and administered to provide the patient relief from ailments and/or boost their vitality. When properly used, the natural remedies in these disciplines can work powerfully without the need for radical surgical procedures and painful physical therapy.
Founded in 2006, Forrest Health distributes a wide range of natural health products such as herbal remedies, vitamins, health supplements, diagnostic tests, and more. Company CEO Dr. Steven Forrest is a graduate of the Palmer College of Chiropractic and the Palo Alto School of Hypnotherapy.