

CAMéxico: Mexican Herbal Remedy Usage Across Borders

How to Use This Guide

Despite US Latinos' high use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), CAM practices are not frequently discussed with health care providers (HCPs), largely because HCPs never asked. Among the Mexican population, many use herbal preparations, but the specific herbs have not yet been well-researched.

This guide is an initial step in (1) developing conversations regarding the breadth of health practices individuals engage in and (2) getting an overview of the efficacy of some commonly used herbs among a Mexican population. Note that many herbs are native to Mexico and that some purposes do not translate well into American biomedicine (e.g., *aigre*), further emphasizing the need for open dialogue regarding CAM.

Color Coding

Information available on the National Institutes of Health websites (National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) - Herbs at a Glance; and MedlinePlus - Herbs and Supplements) was used to denote the efficacy rating for each herb. The following color codes were used:

- Green = Well-researched, okay to recommend
- Yellow = Limited or mixed research, be aware
- Red = Well-researched, but with important contraindications/adverse effects
- Black = Insufficient information available to make determination



Data presented are primary data collected in the state of Guanajuato in Mexico as part of a project supported by the UNC Gillings School of Global Health, UNC School of Medicine - Proyecto Puentes de Salud, and UNC Center for Global Initiatives. Amy Patel, MPH (amypatel@alumni.unc.edu) is the project lead.

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Top 40 Herbs

Over 100 different herbs were used by participants in Mexico. This table highlights the top 40 herbs and notes the number of times each herb was used for a unique health purpose.

	Herb	Frequency Count	Percent of Total Frequency
1.	Honey with lime	65	6.3
2.	Chamomile	61	5.9
3.	Aloe vera	59	5.8
4.	Eucalyptus	50	4.9
5.	Rue	50	4.9
6.	Cinnamon	47	4.6
7.	Mullein	42	4.1
8.	Garlic	38	3.7
9.	Spearmint	32	3.1
10.	Hierba de perro	32	3.1
11.	Rosebuds	31	3.0
12.	Thyme	30	2.9
13.	Arnica	30	2.9
14.	Basil	29	2.8
15.	Lime leaves	28	2.7
16.	Horse tail	25	2.4
17.	Corn silk	25	2.4
18.	Olive oil	24	2.3
19.	Rosemary	22	2.1
20.	Wormwood	22	2.1
21.	Nopal cactus	21	2.0
22.	Oregano	21	2.0
23.	Orange leaves	20	1.9
24.	Honey	18	1.8
25.	Marjoram	16	1.6
26.	Star anise	14	1.4
27.	Hibiscus	14	1.4
28.	Linden	13	1.3
29.	Camelina	10	1.0
30.	Chocolate	7	0.7
31.	Clove	6	0.6
32.	Dandelion	6	0.6
33.	Chaparral	6	0.6
34.	Sapodilla	6	0.6
35.	Lime	6	0.6
36.	Fiber	5	0.5
37.	Peppermint	5	0.5
38.	Ginger	4	0.4
39.	Rosemary buds	4	0.4
40.	Sage	3	0.3

Top 10 Purposes with Herbs

1. **Cough- 236 times**
 - Honey with lime- 20%
 - Eucalyptus- 18%
 - Mullein- 14%
 - Cinnamon- 7%
 - Garlic- 6%
 - Honey- 6%
 - Other- 29%
2. **Stomach- 154 times**
 - Hierba de perro- 15%
 - Wormwood- 11%
 - Chamomile- 10%
 - Spearmint- 10%
 - Basil- 9%
 - Cinnamon- 6%
 - Other- 39%
3. **General health- 53 times**
 - Lime leaves- 14%
 - Chamomile- 10%
 - Cinnamon- 10%
 - Orange leaves- 10%
 - Hibiscus- 8%
 - Marjoram- 6%
 - Nopal cactus- 6%
 - Other- 37%
4. **Kidneys- 37 times**
 - Horsetail -34%
 - Cornsilk- 29%
 - Hibiscus- 9%
 - Chaparral- 6%
 - Other- 23%
5. **Nervios- 32 times**
 - Lime leaves- 25%
 - Orange leaves- 19%
 - Linden- 16%
 - Sapodilla- 6%
 - Other- 34%
6. **Throat- 29 times**
 - Honey with lime- 54%
 - Thyme- 8%
 - Ginger- 4%
 - Other- 35%
7. **Diarrhea- 28 times**
 - Hierba de perro- 31%
 - Wormwood- 12%
 - Rosebuds- 8%
 - Spearmint- 8%
 - Other- 42%
8. **Stomach and wounds- 25 times**
 - Arnica- 75%
 - Aloe vera- 25%
9. **Aigre- 25 times**
 - Rue- 20%
 - Cinnamon- 16%
 - Chocolate- 12%
 - Thyme- 12%
 - Other- 40%
10. **Fever- 22 times**
 - Aloe vera- 50%
 - Rosebuds- 27%
 - Chamomile- 14%
 - Zacate de ojo- 5%
 - Cinnamon- 5%

Annotated List of Top 10 Herbs with Purposes and Contraindications (CI)

1. **Honey with lime**
 - Cough
 - Throat
 - Fever, cough
2. **Chamomile**
 - Stomach
 - Colic
 - Eyes- to clean and when dry
 - General health
 - Cough
 - Body pain
 - Fever
 - Other
 - CI: Allergic reactions
3. **Aloe vera**
 - Fever
 - Stomach and wounds

- Bug bites
 - Burns, skin bumps
 - Wounds, cuts
 - Back pain
 - Gastritis
 - Flu
 - **CI: No issues if topical; several possible issues if oral**
 - ❖ Can be too strong on the stomach, laxative effects
 - ❖ Can lower blood glucose levels
4. **Eucalyptus**
- Cough
 - Having cold in the body
 - Flu
 - Safe in small amounts in food; undiluted oil is unsafe, both topically and orally, but medicinal eucalyptol from the oil seems safe
 - **CI: Moderate - With medications changed by the liver (CYP1A2, CYP2C19, CYP2C9, CYP3A4 substrates)**
5. **Rue**
- Ears
 - Headache
 - Stomach
 - Aigre
 - Body pain
6. **Cinnamon**
- Cough
 - Stomach
 - General health
 - Aigre
 - Flu
 - Menstruation
 - **CI: Allergies**
7. **Mullein**
- Cough
 - Fever and cough
8. **Garlic**
- Cough
 - Bug bites
 - Teeth
 - Digestion
 - **CI: Major - Isoniazid (INH, Nydrazid); HIV/AIDS medications (NNRTIs); Saquinavir (Fortovase, Invirase)**
 - **CI: Moderate - Contraceptive drugs; Cyclosporine (Neoral, Sandimmune); meds changed by the liver (CYP2E1, CYP3A4 substrates); meds that slow blood clotting (anticoagulant/antiplatelet drugs); and Warfarin (Coumadin)**
 - **CI: With supplements - fish oil (containing EPA); herbs/supplements that might slow blood clotting, like angelica, clove, danshen, ginger, ginkgo, red clover, turmeric, vitamin E, willow, and others**
9. **Spearmint**
- Stomach
 - Memory/concentration
 - General health
 - Diarrhea
 - Stress
 - Pregnancy related, like nausea
10. **Hierba de perro**
- Stomach
 - Diarrhea