



# How to Apply a Poultice

A poultice is a layer of mashed, moistened or heated herbs applied to the skin. The herbs may be in direct contact with the skin, or there may be a layer of cloth in between. Poultices are used to treat a wide variety of ailments both external and internal, from antiseptic onion poultices to a pain-relieving cayenne plaster (the terms plaster and poultice are often used interchangeably).

## Steps

- 1 Grind roots, seeds and other hard herbs in a coffee grinder or mortar and pestle.**
  - You may use fruits and vegetables in poultices, too. These are usually grated instead of ground.
  - Already-fine herbs and powders don't need to be ground.
- 2 Mix the ground or dried herb with a bit of oil or water until it forms a moist paste.**
  - Some herbs should be warmed before application as a poultice. Warm poultices are particularly useful for drawing out pus and soothing inflammation.
  - Warm the herbal paste either in the microwave or a double boiler. Some purists might disagree with microwaving herbal medication, but there is no arguing the microwave's convenience.
  - You may create a poultice from a single herb, or a combination. With combination poultices, several steps--for example, cutting, grinding, grating, mixing and heating--are involved with creating the herbal application.
- 3 Spread a thin layer of the poultice preparation on a clean piece of cloth, then apply to the affected area of the skin.**
  - Cheesecloth is ideal for applying poultices.
  - Depending on which herbal formulation you're using, you will either apply the herbal preparation directly to your skin (with the single layer of cloth over it) or place another layer of cloth between your skin and the moistened herbs.
- 4 Apply a layer of plastic wrap over the poultice to hold it in place and retain heat.**
  - If you don't have plastic wrap handy, you can use a clean bandage to hold the poultice in place.
- 5 Leave the poultice in place until it has dried or cooled, or until the symptoms have subsided.**
- 6 Reapply the poultice as necessary, using a fresh cloth and fresh herbal preparation every time.**

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## Tips

- Although the terms plaster and poultice are often used interchangeably, "poultice" properly refers to a treatment placed directly on the skin, then covered with cloth. "Plaster" properly refers to a treatment sandwiched between two pieces of cloth before application to the skin.
- If you soak the cloth in a tea or oil before application, but don't use any solid material, this is known as a compress.
- You can apply poultices to children, adults and animals. For children and animals, take special care to make sure the poultice stays in place and the herbal preparation doesn't get ingested.

## Things You'll Need

- Coffee grinder or mortar and pestle
- Dried herbs, roots, seeds or fruit
- Clean cloth
- Oil or water
- Plastic wrap or bandage