



HERBAL EXTRACT
COMPANY

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF HERBAL MEDICINE DOSING

"Use what you need to use for the patient."

Liquid herbal medicines offer versatility in treatment, allowing for personalised medicine tailored to individual needs. This makes them a crucial part of Western Herbal Medicine and naturopathy.

The key though is dosage!

The subject of appropriate dosing (or posology) is perhaps the most controversial aspect of Western Herbal Medicine. **Herbal dosing can be complex due to variations in plant constituents, extraction methods, and individual patient factors.** This can lead to confusion and disparities in what is considered a therapeutic dose. Factors like dosage form, strength, quality of preparations, and formulation methods all influence the effectiveness of herbal treatments.



So how then do you determine the correct dose and prescription for your patient?

There's no single "best" herbal dosing philosophy. Different approaches emphasise high or low dosages, few or many herbs. The effectiveness of each approach depends on the practitioner, patient, and condition. It's important to be open-minded, critical, and flexible in your approach, recognising that no philosophy is universally superior.

Spectrum of Dosing Philosophies



Pharmacological (or Heroic) Dosing

- High doses to produce a strong physiological effect, often to suppress symptoms.
- Typical dosage of liquid herbal extract 5mL three times daily.



Physiological Dosing

- Minimum dose to produce a physiological effect, rooted in the vitalist herbal tradition.
- Typical dosage: 30-60 drops of liquid herbal extract.



"Wise Woman" Dosing

- Pioneered by North American Herbalist Susun Weed, this involves consuming larger quantities of milder, more common herbs in food form.
- Example: A strong nettle infusion or a plate of dandelion greens with lemon and olive oil.



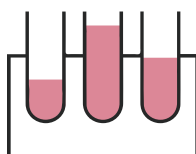
Drop Dosing

- A preferred method for some herbalists, especially those influenced by Dorothy Hall or the Eclectic tradition.
- Works on a more subtle level than pharmacological dosing, focusing on the plant's energetics.
- Dosage: 5-30 drops three times daily, depending on patient sensitivity.
- Offers increased compliance and affordability.



Homeopathic Dosing

- Based on the law of similars, regardless of dose amount or dilution.
- Typically involves potentized remedies in small doses.



Herbal dosing can be challenging due to inconsistencies between different approaches.

Rather than focusing on an absolute "correct" dose, it's more effective to consider various dosing strategies. Choosing the right strategy is crucial for successful patient outcomes.

Constructing a Formula

Key Tips for Effective Herbal Dosing

Understand the therapeutic goal.
Know why you are prescribing a herb.



Choose a dosing concept (e.g., material or drop dosing).



Consult reliable sources
(e.g., British Herbal Pharmacopeia, bottle recommendations).



Select herbs based on a technique or philosophy. (e.g. 4 to 6 herbs in a synergistic formula or use simples). This in part depends upon your philosophy. Often the more well matched your herb choices are to your objectives, the fewer you need.



Use patient-friendly measurements
(e.g., teaspoons or 5-10mL).



Prioritise herbs according to primary and assistant medicines.



Consider individual factors age, sex, weight, current medication, tolerance, timing (e.g. before or after food), sensitivity and synergy. Are the goals to address acute symptoms or provide a long-term tonic effect.



Start low and increase gradually (titration). This involves starting with a small amount and increasing until the desired results are achieved or unwanted effects are observed. Titration is about getting the correct dose for the individual and helps discover the lowest dose that is needed to get results. The Eclectic physician John Scudder said: *"The appropriate dose of a herb is the smallest dose it takes to get results."*



Adjust dosing for infants and children. The rule of thumb is "20% of the adult dose for infants, 30% for children 2 to 6 years of age and 50% for children under 12." See our website under Resources for the summary of key dosage rules for children.^{i iii}



Document patient responses. To refine dosing strategies and support clinical decision making.



Stay informed. Continuous learning is essential, integrating traditional knowledge with current research.

Flexibility in Herbal Dosing



Herbal doses are recommendations, not strict rules. They should be used as a guide, considering individual factors and the specific needs of the patient.



Plants have complex chemistry. Their composition can be influenced by various factors, making it important to exercise discretion in dosing.



Remember this simple mantra: *"Use what you need to use for the patient."* The focus should be on using the appropriate amount of herb for the patient's needs. Don't limit the dosage based on bottle size.



Individualised care is a hallmark of herbal medicine. By tailoring doses to specific patients, practitioners can achieve better outcomes.

Improving Compliance with Liquid Herbs



Mask the taste: Use juice, glycerol, liquorice, or therapeutic grade culinary essential oils such as peppermint. Keep in mind that in the case of bitters the taste is an essential part of therapy.



Dilute or chill the extract.



Take with food.



Suck on an ice cube before taking the dose to reduce the intensity.



Make it fun for children by using a curly straw or putting the dose in jelly set in an ice tray.

Remember, many people adapt to the taste of liquid herbs over time.

The Art of Herbal Medicine Dosing: Balancing Intuition and Evidence

Effective Herbal Medicine combines:

- **Intuitive selection** of complementary herbs.
- **Informed dosing** based on traditional wisdom and evidence-based science.

Dosage inconsistencies among manufacturers can be confusing. The Herbal Extract Company recommends:

Compounding doses based on historical references (such as national pharmacopoeias i.e. the British Herbal Pharmacopoeia) and clinical experience.

An effective dosage range based on adult doses. They are not maximum toxic doses. Be cautious with low dose herbs like Poke Root and Cayenne.

Understanding that other companies will have differing recommendations based on their philosophies and manufacturing methods.