

HERBAL ABORTIVES AS A LABOR FACILITATOR

There are two main types of herbs used as abortives. Emmenagogues and oxytocins.

EMMENAGOGUES

Emmenagogues stimulate blood circulation to the pelvic area and uterus and help to stimulate menstruation.

*Vitamin C - no buffers or fillers. Dose: 500 mg every hour for 12 hours up to 5 days.

Toxicity: possible kidney irritation, loose bowels.

* Ginger - *Zingiber officinale*, Dose: 1 oz. fresh or dry root to pint of water.

Toxicity: possible light-headedness.

* Pennyroyal - *Mentha pulegium* & *Hedeoma pulegiodes*, Dose: 1/4 cup of herb to 1 quart water once a day for no more than 6 days.

Toxicity: nausea, numbness in hand and legs, liver irritation, kidney and bladder irritation, diarrhea, The essential oil is fatal internally. Contraindications: kidney conditions.

* Angelica root - *Angelica archangelica*, Dosage: 1/4 cup herb to 1 quart water as tea. Tincture - 10-20 drops every two hours. Dried root less toxic than fresh.

Toxicity: irritant to kidney and liver, not studied as much as pennyroyal. Contraindicated in diabetes as it raises blood sugar levels.

* Mugwort Leaf - *Artemisia vulgaris*, Dosage: 3 teaspoon per cup tea, 3 cups per day, for no more than six days.

Toxicity: higher doses can cause liver damage and convulsions. Nausea. Contraindications: Uterine inflammation or recent pelvic infection.

* Black Cohosh Root - *Cimicifuga racemosa*, Dosage: 3 teaspoons per cup, 4 times a day. Tincture 20 drops every 6 hours.

Toxicity: Diarrhea, dizziness, headache, decreased pulse rate, tremors, fatalities can occur in large enough doses.

* Tansy - *Tanacetum vulgare*. Note: Do not confuse with tansy ragwort, *Senecio jacobaea*, which is a poisonous plant known to cause death in cattle thru liver failure. Dosage: Tea, 4-8 teaspoons per qt. sipped throughout day. 10 drops tincture in warm water every two hours til bleeding commences, for no more than 5 days.

Toxicity: breast lumps, possible hemorrhage, liver irritant. Essential oil is fatal - do not ingest.

OXYTOMIC HERBS

They imitate oxytocin in the body to stimulate uterine contractions and release prostaglandin hormones. All oxytomic herbs are toxic to some

degree. Women can experience very painful contractions. They are generally hard on the liver. Women with a history of liver disease such as hepatitis may wish to avoid them all together.

*Blue Cohosh root - *Caulophyllum thalictroides*, Dosage: Tea - 3 teaspoons herb per cup, 3 cups per day, tincture - 20 drops every 4 hours, for six days or til bleeding commences. Toxicity: nausea, vomiting, headaches, convulsions in large doses, kidney and liver irritant, Contraindications: low blood pressure. Some of the constituents of Cohosh are more soluble as tincture.

* Angelica - see emmenagogues.

* Cotton root bark - *Gossypium herbacetum*, Dosage: 12 teaspoons per quart, 1/2 - 1 quart thru day. Tincture 10 drops every few hours til bleeding commences, for no more than 6 days.

Toxicity : seemingly low based on the New Mexico study. Cotton is a heavily sprayed crop with pesticides that are only used on non food crops. Those pesticides can cause liver irritation, and other problems. Organic cotton root bark may be difficult to find.

Other Herb used

*Wild Carrot Seed - *Daucus carota*, used as a preventative. Dosage: 1 teaspoon a day chewed and washed down with fluid. Believed to work as an implantation preventor by making the uterine lining unsuitable. See appendix B.

Toxicity: So far appears to be low toxicity, long term effects unknown. Identification must be absolute as many wild members of this family look similar and can be fatal.

* Trillium root - *Trillium* spp. Dosage: tincture 30 drops 3-4 times a day. Tea 3 teaspoons per cup, 1 quart per day. Trillium root is used by midwives to facilitate softening of the cervix and is often used as a labor adjunct in the case of rigid os or as a preparatory agent before trying to induce labor with stronger herbs. It occasionally will start labor on it's own. As an abortive there is not a lot of current use info on effectiveness and side effects. Trillium root should only be harvested from garden grown plants as it is rare in the wild due to habitat destruction by logging and urban growth.

* Parsley - *Petroselinum* spp. Used as a fresh plant vaginal insert for 24 hours. Personally I have heard of no cases of even bringing on a delayed period with this method.

Toxicity: low.

Misc. Herbs listed as abortives: Agave, Osha, Mistletoe, Rue, Peyote, Sweet flag, Papaya seed, Feverfew, Motherwort, Wood Sorrel, Damiana, Evening Primrose.

The above is by no means an exhaustive list, many mild emmenagogues are listed as abortives in literature both scientific and folkloric: Marjoram,

Oregano, Beet, Celery, Papaya fruit, Peppermint, Valerian, etc. While they may help facilitate onset of a slow period, such as the type where there's cramping and pelvic heaviness but bleeding has not yet commenced, it's doubtful they would act as abortives.

Dosages mentioned above may be on the conservative side in many cases. However, since the serious side effects show up at higher doses it's best to be cautious. I've seen better results with tea than with tincture and with mixing 2 -3 herbs together in a blend. Herbal abortives effects may be enhanced by a day of fasting, working with ritual, and massage of the uterine acupressure points along the ankles several times a day for at least ten minutes at a time. Again the success rate is very low for actual pregnancies.

Ideally if a woman wished to use herbal abortives I would recommend finding a clinic that does early pregnancy testing of the type that can detect pregnancy within a few days of conception, preferably one that can see women on a walk in basis so you don't have to wait for an appointment. Then if you are not pregnant you can use a mild emmenagogue such as marjoram, without stressing your body. Since early testing is not 100% accurate and if you are fairly sure you are pregnant, you may wish to use one of the less toxic abortives such as Vitamin C. Since most of the abortives are so hard on the body they should only be used in cases of confirmed pregnancy. Why put your liver thru more stress than it already gets in today's world?

[Susun Weed](#) lists this recipe in The Child Bearing Year:

Emmenagogue Brew

2 tablespoons (Tbsp) dried Blue Cohosh Root
(substitute 20 drops of blue cohosh tincture to each cup)

3 Tbsp dried pennyroyal leaves

2 Tbsp dried Tansy in flower

Boil the Blue Cohosh in a quart of water (if the tincture is used, skip this step, just boil the water) for 5 minutes.

Place the pennyroyal and tansy in a glass quart canning jar (or equivalent). Pour the boiled water (with the blue cohosh - if you used the dried herb) into the jar, cap and allow to steep for 30 minutes. Strain the herbs out and reheat before using. If you use the blue cohosh tincture add 20 drops after reheating the tea.

Together these 3 herbs can produce profuse menstrual flow in sensitive women. The usual dose, is a steaming hot cupful every four hours, day and night, for up to 5 days or until bleeding is well underway. The effectiveness of this formula is enhanced by the addition of tablespoonful of brewers yeast to every cup. ³

For the blue cohosh you may want to use a tincture, an alcohol extract is the best way to capture the uterine contracting properties of blue cohosh, its properties are not very soluble in water. Meaning an alcohol extract would be stronger. To modify the recipe to use the tincture, add 20 drops of the tincture to each cup of tea just before drinking it. In her book, she calls for the dried herb, so you decide how you want to do it, it's your choice.

Susun calls American Pennyroyal "one of the most powerful of all emmenagogues" She recommends a dose of 20 drops of tincture in a cup of hot water. Not more than four cups per day and for no more than 5 days to induce menstruation with out taxing the woman. ³

One herbalist gave me this recipe: And told me to listen to my body.

20 drops each of blue cohosh and black cohosh tinctures, every 2 hours

Drink a cup of pennyroyal and rue tea using the dried herb, every four hours for several days.

Other sources suggest these dosages:

Take as whole plant steep as tea or in tincture form into hot water. No more than three cups a day. Very effective. Can mix with blue cohosh to help cramping. Side effects: nausea, numbness in extremities, dizziness, sweating. Too much is highly toxic and the essential oil is deadly. ¹²

Standard Infusion (leaves and flowers): Steep 15-30 min, $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$, 3-4 hours.

Standard Tincture: 20-60 drops ($\frac{1}{4}$ to 1 tsp.) 3-4 hours.

Powdered Leaves and Flowers: 3-8 size #0 capsules, frequently. ⁴

The most common **side effect** with this herb seems to be nausea, and it seems to affect the majority of women who use this herb. So if you choose to use this herb be aware of this and plan to take it easy, and expect you won't feel your best.