



Steam Inhalation

Steam inhalation is a wonderfully supportive respiratory therapy. It can help soothe and relax airways, break up and thin out mucus, and inhibit growth of disease-causing microbes in the respiratory tract.

While steam inhalation can be done with steam from water alone, this therapy is greatly enhanced when herbs or, even more potent yet, essential oils are added to the water being steamed. The concept is simple: we breathe in the (ideally herbally medicated) steam through nose and mouth deep into the lungs, where both heat/moisture and herbal/essential oil benefits take effect.

Instructions:

Boil some water in a pot on the stove. If you're using fresh or dried herbs, heat them with the water. If you're using essential oils, add after the water has finished being heated. Once boiling, remove from heat; there should be heavy steam coming off the water's surface. Lean your head forward over the steam (carefully! Steam can scald.), with eyes closed (essential oils can sting), and cover your head with a towel to create a tent which will help hold in the steam. Spend about five minutes breathing these healing vapors in deeply. Repeat multiple times/day for acute conditions.

Herbal Participants:

Choose herbs and/or essential oils which are antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and/or airway opening as needed. Peppermint and eucalyptus are cooling and opening. Rosemary, thyme, and tea tree are antimicrobial. Frankincense is anti-inflammatory. This is far from an extensive list! Consult with your doctor if you're not sure which herbal allies to add to your steam.