

Hey kid, stick an onion on your ear

Here are some common childhood maladies and how to heal them, as described in Andrea Candee's "Gentle Healing for Baby and Child" (Pocket Books, \$13.95). Most of the fix-its here can be found in your kitchen or health food store.

Earache

Nature's Rx: Yellow onion

How to use it: Cut the onion in half and warm it in a 200-degree oven for a few minutes. Wrap in cheesecloth and hold against the child's ear.

Why it works: Yellow onions are high in antimicrobial compounds, which reduce swelling and promote circulation.

Bleeding cut

Nature's Rx: Cayenne

How to use it: Sprinkle over cut.

Why it works: Cayenne's astringency helps

close the wound. It's also high in vitamin K, which promotes clotting, and in minerals, which are soothing. And surprise: It doesn't sting at all.

Stuffy nose

Nature's Rx: Eucalyptus oil

How to use it: Fill a plastic vial with cotton, adding a few drops of oil of eucalyptus and replace the cap. Have your child unclog it and inhale whenever he or she feels stuffy. Or put several drops of oil of eucalyptus in a vaporizer for nighttime relief.

Why it works: Eucalyptus stimulates secretions, aiding decongestion.

Sore throat

Nature's Rx: Lemon, salt (common table salt or preferably sea salt) and water

How to use them: Combine the juice of half a lemon with 1 tablespoon salt in 1/2 cup warm water. Have your child gargle with it four times a day.

Why it works: The astringency of the lemon, combined with salt and water, reduces inflammation and pain while providing antimicrobial protection.

Splinter (wood, glass or insect stinger)

Nature's Rx: Banana peel

How to use it: Cut a 1-inch-square piece or peel from a ripe banana (the riper, the better). Attach pulp-side-down against skin with surgical tape and leave on overnight. In the morning, remove peel — and splinter.

Why it works: The banana peel's digestive enzymes draw foreign matter to the skin's surface.

Nature's cures

Flowers, fruit & other alternatives to treat kids' ailments

By BARBARA HOFFMAN

If you've ever chased a screaming child with a pin, trying to extract her splinter, you'll go bananas over this:

Take a piece of banana peel, tape it to the kid's skin — and watch the splinter surface the next morning.

Bananas, onions, cayenne and more are the remedies of choice in the new book, "Gentle Healing for Baby and Child." Written by herbalist Andrea Candee with David Andrusia, it offers natural solutions for everything from asthma to wart removal.

The book couldn't have come at a better time. Several months ago the Food and Drug Administration yanked about 30 medications, many aimed at children, which contained phenylpropanolamine, linked to bleeding in the brain.

Meanwhile, concern over the frequent use of antibiotics continues to rise. Studies here and abroad have shown that kids recovered from sinus and middle-ear infections as quickly or even more quickly without medication than with it — and are less likely to suffer later infections or side effects.



Studies have found alternative remedies often work as well as "mainstream" medications.

"Medications, in essence, are helpful poisons," says Dr. Lewis Mehl-Madrona. "The biggest advantage of herbs is that they're less toxic."

As clinical program director for Beth Israel Hospital's Center for Health and Healing, Mehl-Madrona uses herbs like white willow bark, valerian and skullcap in his work with autistic children, who tend to be sensitive to "mainstream" medications that can make them hyper.

"I'm not opposed to mainstream medicine — in the emergency room, it's magnificent," says author Candee. "But I am opposed to the overuse of pharmaceuticals."

Candee, who lives and practices in Westchester County, traces her interest in herbs back to the late '60s, when her father had a major coronary and was

put on several medications to lower cholesterol. So severe were their side effects that she pursued alternatives that wouldn't make him sick.

"Back then all we had was Prevention magazine and [nutritionist and author] Adelle Davis," she says. "My father wasn't impressed." But Candee kept on, studying at places like Utah's School of Natural Healing and apprenticing with master herbalists until she became one, too.

Her sons, now 23 and 30, are her "lifelong experiments," she laughs.

She found that yellow onions healed their bruises, while powdered ginger — sprinkled generously into their bathwater — relieved aching muscles. Echinacea and garlic were her favorite cold remedies, and went down well with juice.

"My kids were used to getting shot glasses of

remedies, Candee concedes, is that they need to be taken more frequently than mainstream medications; another is that herbs, unlike prescription and over-the-counter drugs, aren't regulated. So saying, Candee sticks to the companies she trusts, including Gaia, Quantum, Rainbow Light and Herb Pharm.

And there's no substitute for medical help in an emergency — when a child can't breathe or breaks a bone. "Vigilance is absolutely key," she says. "If your child's condition isn't improving with natural methods, seek medical help."

As for that trick with the banana — also good for dislodging bee stingers and glass — make sure you're neat about it: "If it's drippy and messy, [your kids] will never let you at them again."

herbs — in fact, they went off to college with their shot glasses," she says. "I hoped they were only putting herbs in them!"

One downside of herbal