

## A is for Arnica

by Dr. Sara Ohgushi, Naturopathic Physician

Q: What's your favorite natural medicine for a first aid kit?

A: There is one medicine that everyone, especially parents, should keep with them or in the car: homeopathic Arnica. Arnica is for trauma: from bumps on the head to bruises anywhere, Arnica will gently, sometimes dramatically, nudge the body more in balance and speed healing. A child given Arnica can go from screaming in pain to resting quietly in your lap within minutes. Given soon after an injury, sometimes the big bruise you might expect won't develop.

Of course you still do the appropriate first aid measures such as applying pressure to stop bleeding, or lying the person down and covering them with a blanket to prevent shock. And if you suspect bones are broken, stitches or other further medical care is needed, give the Arnica on the way to the hospital, or while you're waiting for the ambulance (but do not give Arnica pellets to an unconscious patient).

Arnica can help people of all ages and even animals. It is derived from the mountain flower *Arnica montana*, but as with all homeopathic preparations it is highly diluted and thus nontoxic and safe for even pregnant women and babies. As a midwife I commonly give Arnica to moms immediately following childbirth, especially if they have swelling or bruising. I also give it to newborn babies with bruising on their heads (in liquid or a small amount of a pulverized lactose pellet internally, or topically).

Arnica is helpful in numerous conditions including:

- black eyes
- teeth knocked loose
- back sprains
- after car accidents (especially for whiplash and/or bruising)
- after dental work or surgery
- achy "weekend warriors"
- head injuries and concussions
- chronic lingering effects of old traumas, even years later

In short, anything black and blue or achy and sore usually responds well to Arnica. Think of Arnica when you feel beaten and the bed feels too hard.

Note that homeopathic medicines are very specific and in a given situation there may be a more appropriate medicine, but Arnica is often a good one to start with.

The potency is not too important. Generally in a healthfood store you will find 6X, 6C, 12C or 30C. These numbers refer to the number of dilutions; lower numbers may need to be repeated more often. Dosing is flexible: you may need only one dose, or three times a day during a recovery, or in an acute situation you can repeat up to every 15-30 min if it seems to be helping. Two or three of the lactose pellets is all that's needed for one dose. From the cap of the container pop them directly into the mouth of the injured person to suck or dissolve under the tongue. Since they are mostly just lactose they taste sweet and kids like them. In fact, you might want to hide your homeopathics from children, although no harm will come to a child who eats the whole contents of one or more containers.

Arnica is also available topically; it is one of the main ingredients in the topical cream Traumeel, for example. Such preparations are great to apply to strains, sprains and bruises, anytime the skin is intact.

A very nice thing about homeopathy is its price: one container of Arnica (for taking internally) that will last you a long time costs \$6-8. That's a great price for quite a bit of relief of suffering and speeded healing.

Note: This article is not meant to substitute for direct medical advice. For more details, references to this article or questions, email Dr. Ohgushi at [sao@imagina.com](mailto:sao@imagina.com)

Copyright 2004 All Rights Reserved by Sara Ohgushi ND