When I became pregnant two years ago, I was elated. My journey to motherhood had begun. Our daughter arrived exactly one week before her due date, at home, into the waiting arms of her father. Labor had gone quickly, and I gave birth naturally without any medical intervention. Watching my newborn baby wiggle her way up my bare belly to instinctively start nursing at my breast, I knew firsthand what a miracle birthing and mothering truly is.

I attributed my smooth pregnancy and speedy labor to several factors. About a year earlier, I had reduced my busy work schedule down to part-time, which allowed more time to care for myself and reconnect with my husband. I nurtured myself with whole, organic foods, regular yoga, long daily walks, plenty of rest, affirmative birthing stories and supportive, loving people. I read Ina May Gaskin’s Spiritual Midwifery, and La Leche League’s The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding. My husband made notes from Penny Simkin’s The Birth Partner and taped them to our fridge. We discussed the benefits of water births, learned about attachment parenting and family bed sharing, purchased cloth diapers and a sling, and prepared ourselves for what we knew would be a transformative experience. I also turned to what felt familiar and comforting to me: herbs.

For the past decade I had been studying and practicing herbal healing. I had completed certification as a master herbalist, and apprenticed at an herb farm to learn about growing, drying, processing and wild-crafting medicinal herbs. I had many of these useful plants growing in my own garden, close at hand. Over the years, I had established a small, home-based herbal business, focusing on natural care for the whole family, and with the help of my sister (a practicing midwife), had developed salves, teas and oils specific to mama and baby care. During the last trimester of my pregnancy I finished training as a postpartum doula, and added herbal postpartum care to my repertoire. Although I had shared my herbal knowledge with countless others, here was a unique opportunity to use these skills to strengthen, heal and nourish not only myself, but also my newborn child.
Karin Kliewer is an herbalist and postpartum doula who operates a small natural soap and herbal baths to ease congestion, you will know that your family is getting the best care possible.

Here are six reasons why:

1. Building a relationship with healing herbs is a wonderful way to connect with family members, especially children. When learning about healing herbs, remember that you really only need to start with a few.

2. Learning about the herbs you are using in your family can be a way for you to discuss your needs and desires about medical care for your family.

3. Building relationships with herbs is an empowering experience for mothers and other caregivers.

4. Involving older siblings can be an empowering experience for them as well. When preparing these gentle remedies, talk with your unborn child, explaining how you will use them, buy your plants from reputable organic sources in minimally processed or bulk form. If possible, grow the herbs yourself using organic methods. You don't have to grow them in a garden, even your windowsill can be used.

5. Pure Calendula Diaper Salve

6. Herbal Sitz Bath Blend

To infuse oil, fill glass jar with calendula blossoms. Cover herbs with oil completely, plus 1 inch extra oil above the herbs. Store in a warm sunny window and steep 3–4 weeks, shaking jar periodically. If you are not using a jar with a lid, use a brown paper bag to cover the herbs and tie with a rubber band. It is always wise to consult with your midwife or qualified health practitioner if you are considering taking herbal remedies during pregnancy. There are many wonderful tonic herbs that can aid everything from morning sickness to increasing milk supply to combating postpartum and postpartum and for baby care can be an empowering experience for mothers and other caregivers.

Herbal Sitz Bath Blend

For centuries, medicinal plants, flowers and common garden "weeds" have been used to welcome, nurture and care for him.

For the past decade I have been studying and practicing herbal healing. I had completed certification as a master herbalist, and apprenticed at an herb farm to learn about horticulture, growing, processing and using medicinal herbs. I learned many of these simple natural remedies growing up in my own garden, close at hand. Over the years, I have established a small, home-based business through the use of natural herbs. My clients request natural treatments for the whole family, and with the help of my herbs, I aim to restore and enhance their health and well-being.

Herbs for Pregnancy, Postpartum and Baby

To make certain that you are using the right herbs, consider taking herbal remedies during pregnancy. There are many wonderful herbs that can be used without harm and with the right precautions. For example, black cohosh, should not be used until the final stage of pregnancy, and even then with caution. When making products like salves or massage oils for children, consider using simple, effective herbal remedies. As you become more confident in working with herbs, you will find plenty of opportunity to share your skills and pass the empowering knowledge of herbal healing on to other households.

When learning about healing herbs, remember that you really only need to start with a few. Herbs should be harvested when they are at their peak, so having a basic understanding of their growing cycle is helpful. Knowing whether to use the leaves, flowers, berries, roots or bark is also important. Leaves and blossoms are best harvested just before noon, when the volatile oils are released, and after the morning dew has dried. Roots can be harvested at any time, but it is best to harvest them from the fall to the spring before the soil is frozen. Herbs should be dried, either by air-drying or with a food dehydrator. To air dry, hang bunches of herbs in a shady spot with good air circulation, or in a cool, dry place. Epsom salts can be used to create a rich soil. Herbs that are fully dry can be used without further processing.

Determining Dosage of Herbal Remedies

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Herbal Medicine Maker's Handbook: A Home Manual, by James Green, gives excellent, effectiveness and safety. For example, red raspberry leaf, although generally considered a safe herb, should not be used by pregnant women. If a woman is experiencing bleeding or other symptoms of pregnancy, red raspberry leaf should not be used. Herbs that are fully dry can be used without further processing.

For a year or more.

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Mother Nature’s Child: Simple Herbal Remedies for Pregnancy, Postpartum and Beyond

Written by Karen Kliewer

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