

Monthly column JULY SOAP, PERFUMERY & COSMETICS

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The Summer Holidays

The moment you have all been waiting for has arrived and the children are on their summer holidays. Within no time at all they are bored, have effectively turned your carefully manicured home into a refuse tip, and exhausted in days the plans that you thought would last for weeks.

It is the time to employ "The Day Trip". You made the mistake of telling them about it the night before, and they have been so excited that they have not slept a wink all night, which is fair, because neither have you. At 6.00 am when you are starting to get ready to beat the motorway rush, the children are either dead, like zombies or having irritable tantrums.

You load the car with cool boxes, drinks for the journey, sweets, comics, chairs, mats, swimming trunks, towels and enough paraphernalia to keep an army going for months. The kids are pacified with things that are guaranteed to rot their teeth, the smallest member of the family (who has been taking lessons from Houdini) is eventually strapped into the car seat and your partner (who has been less than helpful) has finally checked the tyre pressures and topped up the windscreen wash bottle.

You arrive at your destination only to discover that the box with all the medical supplies has been left on the kitchen table. This is an open invitation for fate to intervene with every disaster it can throw at you.

The Natural Cure for Grazes. Cuts and Scrapes

It is inevitable that somebody is going to have a scrape at some stage of the day, but luckily there are plenty of remedies available. It is advisable to send out search parties for Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), German Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), Roman Chamomile (*Anthemis nobilis*), Burdock (*Arctium lappa*), and Comfrey (*Symphitum officinale*) the moment you arrive. If you are anything like a professional you will have some sort of stove and billycan in the boot, if not you will have to improvise. Boil up some fresh water, throw in herbs and allow to cool. Strain of the juice into a bottle (baby's is perfect) and keep for later. Apply as and when required.

The Natural Cure for Rashes

Be on the look out for the Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*). If your child falls into this, then you are better off letting him extract himself, because there is no point the two of you

suffering the painful blisters that will erupt as a photoreaction to the sunlight. Wrap child in the dog blanket and head back for home, you can always have a competition to see who can say “you stupid boy” with the most venom.

The most likely painful rash will be from the Stinging Nettle (*Urtica urens* or *U. dioica*), once again shout warnings like “Careful, that is a stinging nettle”, but do not venture too close yourself. Seek a sorrel (*Rumex* spp), because the old belief that Dock leaf will soothe and reduce swellings and rash is fully justified.

The Natural Cure for Stings

It will only be a matter of time before the lure of jam caked fingers, squash coated lips and yummy cakes melting in the sun will tempt our friends the wasps to come visiting. At this stage there are a number of options, you can clean the kids up and clear things away slowly and methodically, you can spray the whole feast with copious quantities of poison so that no living thing will be able to eat it, or you can scream, shout, wave your arms, trample your picnic to death and probably get bitten. Most of the women folk opt for the last suggestion.

If you had some Cucumber (*Cucumis sativum*) in any of the sandwiches, then immediately put it on the wasp sting while you look for something better. It will soothe the bite. On the off-chance that you intended to have a barbeque and make a jacket potato, then a slice of raw Potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) would also be quite effective. You should immediately set off on the trail of some Mallow (*Malva sylvestris* or *Althaea* sp). Collect the flowers, or use the whole plant if the blooms are in short supply, macerate in a little water to make a poultice (mash) and apply to the bite. An even easier plant to find is the Common Plantain that is full of soothing mucilage and can be used in the same way.

Sun burn

There is always the possibility that somebody will suffer some sunburn. Clearly we do not have the benefit of Aloe vera (*Aloe barbadensis*) in the UK, but we would have the benefit of *Laminaria saccharina*, the long broad-leaved seaweed known as Oarweed, Sugary Wrack, Tangleweed, or Sea Tangle. This contains some interesting polysaccharides not dissimilar to those found in Aloe and may provide some temporary relief. Rinse the leaf in fresh water, score it with a sharp knife and apply to the skin while it is still wet.

Remedy for tar and stains

If you have any French dressing or cooking oil, this will remove most of the tar and oil picked up on the beach. Alternatively, if your little angels have really tried your patience to the limit, take a

little (or lot of) petrol from the tank to remove the tar and then let them practice lighting a campfire with a box of matches. Sadly accidents can happen.