

## Herbal Nervines and Sedatives

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### **Why Herbal Nervines and Sedatives?**

- ~ They support the nervous system while relaxing it
- ~ They are safe and effective
- ~ Can help induce restful sleep
- ~ They partner well with other natural healing methods such as deep breathing, hydrotherapy, exercise, meditation, visualization, and nutritional counseling to relieve tension and stress
- ~ Increased nourishment to the nervous system
- ~ Help to restore the nervous system
- ~ Not usually addictive

### **Herbal Nervines:**

These herbs are nutritive to the nervous system. They support the nervous system and calm it. Nervines relieve muscle tension and spasms, anxiety, circular thoughts and insomnia. Nervines can be stimulating, such as caffeine containing herbs or relaxing such as Skullcap. Stimulating nervines are for low energy states, depression and lethargy while relaxing nervines are for calming anxious and/or circular thoughts, tension and mild insomnia. Some nervines assist with repairing actual nerve damage or weakness.

Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) (gentle nervine for adults)  
 Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*)  
 Lavender (*Lavendula spp.*)  
 Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)  
 Linden (*Tilia americana, T. cordata*)  
 Marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*)  
 Oatstraw & Milky Oats (*Avena sativa*)  
 Passionflower (*Passiflora spp.*)  
 St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)  
 Skullcap (*Scutellaria spp.*)  
 Wild Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)  
 Wood Betony (*Stachys officinalis*)

### **Herbal Sedatives:**

These herbs relax the nervous system and encourage sleep. Herbal sedatives are given for over-excitement, moderate to severe insomnia and anxiety.

California Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*)  
 Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) (mild sedative for children)  
 Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*)  
 Damiana (*Turnera diffusa*)

Hops (*Humulus lupulus*)  
Jamaican Dogwood (*Piscidia piscipula*)  
Kava (*Piper methysticum*)  
Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)  
Mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*)  
Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*)  
New England Aster (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*)  
Passionflower (*Passiflora spp.*)  
St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)  
Skullcap (*Scutellaria spp.*)  
Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*)  
Wild Lettuce (*Lactuca virosa*)

### **How to Incorporate Herbal Nervines and Sedatives into Your Day**

Some nervines and sedatives work well in teas while others are best taken in extract form.

### **A Note About Herbal Relaxants**

Relaxants are not the same as nervines and sedatives. Relaxants work to relax contracted tissues such as antispasmodics. Herbs can be stimulating and relaxing in that they stimulate activity while relaxing resistance to that activity.

### **Recommended Herbal Books (\*indicates available through library loan system):**

- ~The Encyclopedia of Medicinal Plants by Andrew Chevallier\*
- ~The Complete Medicinal Herbal by Penelope Ody\*
- ~The Holistic Herbal by David Hoffmann\*
- ~The Practice of Traditional Western Herbalism by Matthew Wood
- ~Herbal Medicine From the Heart of the Earth by Sharol Tilgner, ND

### **Online Resources**

Kiva Rose on Nervines:

<http://bearmedicineherbals.com/terms-of-the-trade-nervine.html>

Christopher Hobbs on Herbal Nervines:

[http://www.healthy.net/Health/Article/Herbal\\_Nervines/950](http://www.healthy.net/Health/Article/Herbal_Nervines/950)

Christa Sinadinos, Stress Relief with Nervine Herbs:

[http://www.starwest-botanicals.com/content/stress\\_relief.html](http://www.starwest-botanicals.com/content/stress_relief.html)