

PERSONALISED HERBALISM

& the magic of a magisterial prescription

*A workshop on constitutional assessment, bespoke tinctures and
herbal synergy*

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A stylized graphic of a flower with five petals, rendered in white and light blue, set against a background of overlapping green and yellow circles. The word 'herbal' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, and the word 'reality' is written in a bold, black, serif font, both positioned to the left of the floral graphic.

**herbal
reality**

What we'll explore today



01

The holistic consultation

Making a clinical assessment of the whole patient

02

Constitutional assessment

How constitution influences prescribing

03

Creating a magisterial formula

Prescribing principles: From case history to a bespoke medicine

04

The value of synergy

Why the formula is greater than the sum of its parts

05

Herbal Reality resources

Monographs, courses and how to find a herbalist

What is a medical herbalist?



Facilitating the relationship between plants and people

Herbalism bridges humanity's oldest healing tradition with modern clinical practice.

Traditional wisdom and scientific understanding

A synthesis of ethnobotany, phytochemistry and evidence-based medicine.

Individualised, holistic care

Every prescription is bespoke — the patient's full picture, not just symptoms, guides treatment.

Preventative medicine & chronic condition management

Herbalists excel where conventional medicine can struggle: Metabolic, hormonal, immune and mental health.

Integrative care

Working alongside GPs and other healthcare professionals.

SECTION 01

The holistic consultation

Treating the whole person — beyond the presenting complaint

- Enquiry into presenting complaint
- Questions around body systems
- Emotional and psychological landscape
- Lifestyle, diet and social context
- Physical examination
- Patient priorities

The consultation process



1

Explain format and gain consent

Set expectations, explain confidentiality, discuss the purpose of the appointment.

2

Full health history (1–1.5 hours)

PC, PMH, DH, FH, SH, diet, systems review, red flags, physical exam.

3

Formulate & dispense

Select herbs, determine proportions, blend and dispense the personalised tincture in-session.

4

Post-consultation letter

Written summary: lifestyle guidance, dietary advice and the full herbal prescription.

5

Follow-up appointment

Review at 4–6 weeks. Adjust the formula as the patient's picture evolves.

Case study: Patient history



21 y/o female — Two-year history of oligomenorrhea, mood swings and acne

PC	Irregular periods, PMS, acne
PMH	Healthy child — no accidents, injuries or hospitalisations
DH	Ibuprofen 500 mg (days 1–3 of cycle), multivitamin
FH	T2DM (maternal grandmother)
SH	Lives with friend, full-time student, smokes 10/day
Diet	Vegetarian 6y. B: oats, berries, yoghurt; L: falafel wrap, crisps; D: pasta, mushrooms, pesto; S: chocolate, apple

Case study — Systems review



GIT

Bloating before period. Perimenstrual diarrhoea & cramping

CVS

Cold hands and feet. Varicose veins

RS

Asthmatic

US

History of UTI — 2 × antibiotic courses in 2024

NS

NAR

Gynae

See PC — oligomenorrhea, PMS, acne

MS

NAR

Skin

Vitiligo

Red flags checked. No chance of pregnancy. · BP 121/74 · HR 67 bpm · Physical exam conducted

SECTION 02

Constitutional assessment

Understanding the patient's constitution determines the prescribed herbs

Western

- Hot / Cold
- Damp / Dry
- Excess / Deficient
- Organ system tendencies
- Tissue states

Ayurvedic

- Vata · Pitta · Kapha
- Prakriti vs vikriti
- Agni (digestive fire)
- Ojas (vitality)
- Ama (toxins)

TCM

- Yin / yang balance
- Qi, blood, fluids
- Five Element theory
- *Zang-fu* patterns
- Heat, cold, damp, wind

Constitutional assessment: A case study



21 y/o female — oligomenorrhea, PMS, acne, cold peripheries, bloating

Constitutional picture

Temperature Cold — cold hands and feet, poor circulation

Moisture Slightly damp — bloating, perimenstrual symptoms

Tone Tension / spasm — dysmenorrhea, varicose veins

Excess Androgen excess — acne, irregular cycles

Deficiency Reproductive system — cycle dysregulation

How this shapes the prescription

- Warming herbs (ginger, cinnamon) for cold constitution
- Anti-androgenic herbs (peony, burdock) for androgen excess
- Antispasmodics for tension pattern in the reproductive system
- Bitter/hepatic herbs to process hormones via the liver
- Adaptogens to address underlying HPA dysregulation

Building a magisterial formula

"Magisterial" — made bespoke for the patient, as individually prescribed

1

Define treatment goals

2

Identify desired
actions and energetics

3

Select and proportion
herbs

4

Screen for safety

Preparations & creating a prescription



Standard specification

105 ml per week · 15 ml/day · 5–8 herbs

Internal

- Tincture
- Tea/decoction
- Capsule/powder

External

- Creams
- Balms
- Liniment

1

Define treatment goals

Regulate hormones · reduce inflammation · support glucose metabolism

2

Identify desired plant actions & energetics

Anti-inflammatory · anti-androgenic · bitter · hepatic · adaptogen · circulatory stimulant

3

Select the herbs

Choose herbs fulfilling multiple actions where possible. Always screen for safety first.

Desired herbal actions



Selecting actions to inform herbs included in the prescription

Anti-inflammatory

Acne, bloating, dysmenorrhea — chronic low-grade inflammation is a thread throughout

Bitter / hepatic

Liver processing of excess androgens; supports digestion and hormone clearance

Adaptogen

Stress is a major hormonal disruptor — adrenal support stabilises the HPA axis

Anti-androgenic

Directly addresses androgen excess driving acne and menstrual irregularity

Hormonal modulation

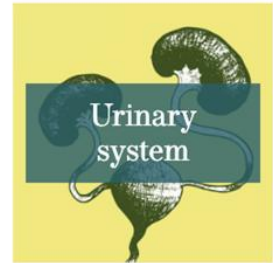
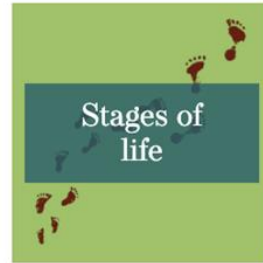
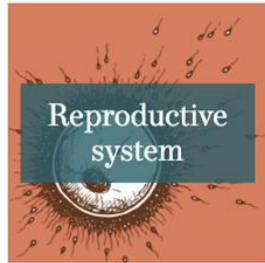
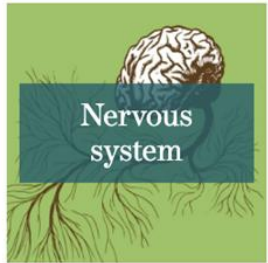
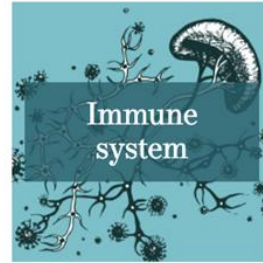
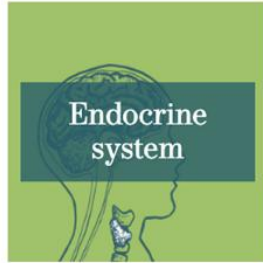
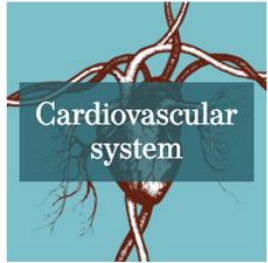
Works on the HPG axis to normalise LH/FSH ratio and restore cycle regularity

Circulatory stimulant

Addresses cold peripheries and supports pelvic circulation

A systems-based approach

Understanding and grouping herbs through their systems affinities



The prescription — Rx1 main mix



Herb	Latin name	Ratio	Volume	Primary role
Liquorice root	<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i>	1:3	20 ml	Harmoniser, adaptogen, anti-inflammatory
Peony	<i>Paeonia lactiflora</i>	1:3	20 ml	Anti-androgenic, hormonal modulation
Cinnamon	<i>Cinnamomum zeylandicum</i>	1:3	10 ml	Circulatory stimulant, blood glucose modulation
Thyme	<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>	1:4	20 ml	Anti-inflammatory, respiratory affinity, antimicrobial
Gymnema	<i>Gymnema sylvestris</i>	1:3	20 ml	Blood glucose regulation, anti-inflammatory
Burdock	<i>Arctium lappa</i>	1:3	10 ml	Bitter, hepatic, anti-androgenic
Ginger	<i>Zingiber officinale</i>	1:3	5 ml	Circulatory stimulant, digestive, warming
Total: 105 ml Sig. 7.5 ml b.i.d.				

Liquorice

Glycyrrhiza glabra · Root · Fabaceae

Actions

Adaptogen, adrenal tonic, anti-inflammatory, demulcent, expectorant, harmoniser

Constituents

Glycyrrhizin, flavonoids, polysaccharides, isoflavones

Clinical

Adrenal fatigue, gastric ulcers, respiratory catarrh, hormonal support

Energetics

Sweet, moist, warm — ideal for depleted, dry presentations

Cautions

Avoid in hypertension and oedema; limit duration at high doses

In formula

Harmoniser + anti-inflammatory; anchors the blend at highest volume (20 ml)



Peony

Paeonia lactiflora · Root · *Paeoniaceae*

Actions

Anti-androgenic, hormonal modulation, anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, nervine

Constituents

Paeoniflorin, paeonol, tannins, monoterpene glycosides

Clinical

PCOS, oligomenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, elevated testosterone, PMS, uterine spasm

Energetics

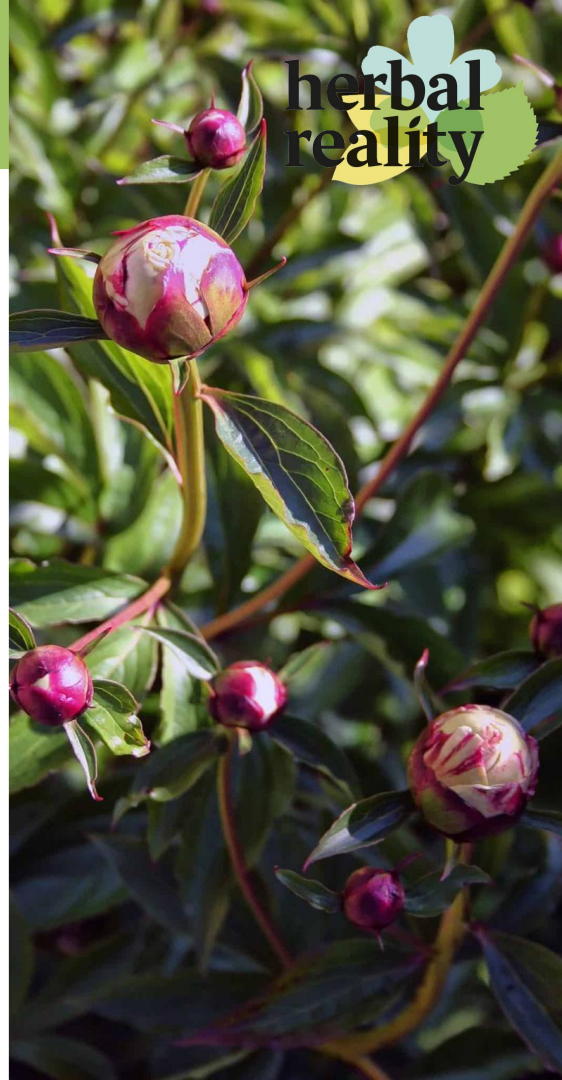
Cool, moist — suits hot, tense, excess presentations

Cautions

Use cautiously in pregnancy; may potentiate anticoagulants

In formula

Classic PCOS pairing with licorice — the primary anti-androgenic herb



The value of synergy

The formula is greater than the sum of its parts

Pharmacodynamic synergy

Multiple herbs acting to produce the same outcome through different mechanistic pathways.

Pharmacokinetic synergy

A particular herb affecting the absorption, distribution, metabolism or elimination of another.

Toxicity reduction synergy

One herb reducing the toxicity potential of another.

Systems interaction synergy

Herbs affecting physiological function of different body systems to promote homeostasis.

Pharmacodynamic synergy



Hyperandrogenism

Liquorice

- Reduces testosterone production
- Modulates adrenal steroid metabolism

Peony

- Reduces ovarian androgen production
- Enhances aromatase activity
- Modulates ovarian steroidogenesis

Burdock

- Supports hepatic hormone metabolism and clearance.

Insulin resistance

Gymnema

- Reduces glucose absorption.
- Enhances insulin sensitivity.
- Improves β -cell function

Cinnamon

- Improves insulin receptor signalling.
- Increases GLUT4 translocation.
- Enhances glucose uptake.

Chronic inflammation

Liquorice

- NF- κ B inhibition
- COX inhibition
- Cytokine reduction

Ginger

- NF- κ B inhibition
- COX inhibition
- Cytokine reduction

All three herbs affect androgen excess from different angles.

Liquorice

- Glycyrrhizin-containing herbs enhance bioavailability and solubility through inhibition of P-glycoprotein efflux pumps.
- Liquorice improves intestinal absorption of paeoniflorin.
- This explains the traditional pairing of liquorice and peony in TCM formulas.

Ginger

Enhances bioavailability by:

- Increasing digestive secretions
- Increasing gastrointestinal perfusion
- Acceleration of gastric emptying

Thereby enhancing absorption and distribution of accompanying herbs.

Toxicity and side effect reduction



Although not applicable in this particular prescription, the same principle applies.

Toxicity

- The demulcent and anti-inflammatory actions help to reduce gastric irritation sometimes caused by higher doses of ginger or cinnamon.
- Liquorice increases the metabolism of toxic alkaloids, thereby reducing toxicity levels.

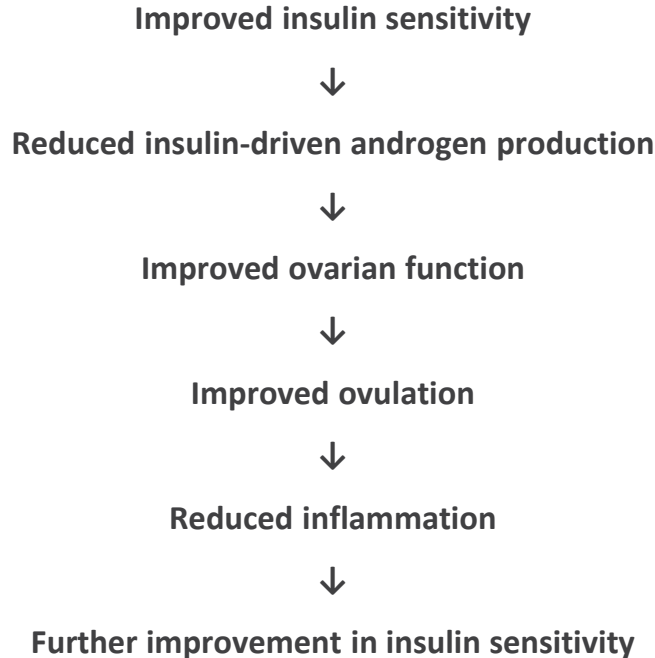
Side effects

- Ginger and gymnema can reduce appetite and slow digestion, ginger increases digestive motility.
- Liquorice helps to mitigate any digestive discomfort caused by the bitter actions of burdock.

System interactions



These herbs encourage balance through correcting pathophysiological mechanism of PCOS creating a positive feedback loop.



Herbal Reality resources

Most Western herbal wisdom lives in books. Online resources are often product-driven, unreferenced or inaccurate. That's why Herbal Reality was created .



What Herbal Reality is

- A primary source for practitioners, patients & healthcare professionals
- Evidence-based — tradition, phytochemistry & clinical research
- Multi-tradition: Western, Ayurvedic & TCM perspectives
- Herbalist-led, ad-free, no corporate sponsorship

Content published monthly

- Herb monographs
- Conditions articles
- Quality & sustainability pieces
- Thought pieces
- Foraging & recipes
- HerbCast podcast

Herbal monographs



Herbal Reality monographs each include:

1. Actions

The therapeutic actions the herb exerts — e.g., adaptogenic, bitter, anti-inflammatory

2. Indications

The conditions and patient presentations the herb is suited to

3. Safety, cautions & contraindications

Who should not take it; drug interactions; dosage thresholds

4. Preparations & dosage

Tincture ratios, infusion strength, capsule equivalents, duration guidance

5. Constituents

The phytochemical profile driving the herb's activity

6. Research

Clinical trials, systematic reviews, in vitro and in vivo studies

7. Quality & sustainability

Adulteration risks, sourcing guidance, conservation status

Case Studies

Explore how herbalists work with real patients. Each case study walks through consultation, reasoning and the prescription.

herbalreality.com/case-studies

Find a Herbalist

Professional registers ensure qualified, insured practitioners.

NIMH — National Institute of Medical Herbalists

CPP — College of Practitioners of Phytotherapy

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Questions, reflections,
or prescriptions to share?

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herbalreality.com

A voice for herbal medicine

A stylized graphic of a flower with five petals in shades of teal and light blue, and a green leaf with serrated edges. The text 'herbal reality' is overlaid on the graphic.

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