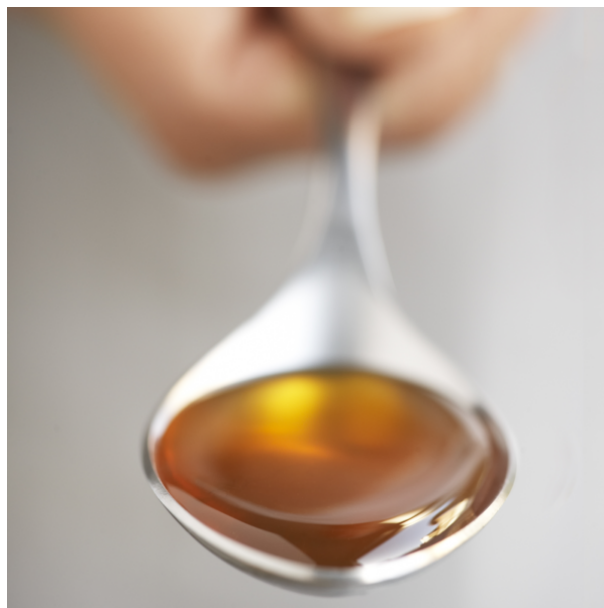


## TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

When we think about traditional medicine and old customs, one of the first things that come to our minds is herbs and home remedies. So how could we start searching? We soon decided that, before searching the net, it would be a good idea to ask our grandparents what things were like when they were young. And this is mainly what they said:

They were young just after the end of the Spanish Civil War, and back then it wasn't as easy as it is today to go to a doctor. Only a few were privileged enough to have access to a doctor, and even they had trouble. Imagine ordinary and poor people ... they had to look after themselves by using **home remedies** such as the following:

- When someone had a cold, they couldn't just take a pill and sleep it off. They would make an ointment out of different herbs and oils and rub it on their throats.
- They also used to take honey and lemon to soothe a cough, or leave half an onion on their bedside table to get rid of a runny nose.



- When somebody was sick with tonsillitis, they heated oil and applied it on their throats with a piece of cloth.
- They did very peculiar things like, when someone had ear infection, they asked a woman who had just given birth for some breast milk, they would fill a metal thimble with the milk, heat it and pour it in their ears.



- When somebody had stomach ache, they would boil rice, put it between two pieces of cloth and apply it to the stomach.
- Castor oil was used for intestine pains.



- Or when a kid got a bump on their forehead, they would wrap a coin in a piece of cloth and cover the skin to stop the swelling.
- They applied ammonia on a mosquito bite.
- And they ate olives for travel sickness!



In the past, people had very strong **beliefs and superstitions** like the evil eye or things that brought bad luck. And they had to find solutions to fight it.

The belief in the evil eye shows similar characteristics in almost every culture. It consists of an illness that comes from jealousy or envy. Negative energy is carried from the person who feels jealous to another person, and this may cause sadness, stomach ache, headache or back ache.



The jealous person accumulates negative energy and casts the evil eye on the envied person or their offspring only by staring at them.



Babies and young children are particularly sensitive to the evil eye.

The most common way to defend yourself from the evil eye is by using a charm or an amulet, by putting an iron horseshoe on the door or by wearing a red ribbon or necklaces with jet or coral. At least two of our grandmas are superstitious and take lots of precautions to protect themselves from the evil eye.



**Medicinal herbs and plants** have always been part of traditional medicine and their uses are extensive. Old Chinese, Indian and Japanese medicine were known to make the largest use of medicinal plants. Later in history, herbal medicine was introduced in Europe, and eventually in the USA.

Although some plants actually have healing properties, a large proportion of their use has been proven to have little to no effect, so watch out for certain esoteric practices or fake therapies. It is great that traditions don't get lost in time, but it is important to know that plants and herbs are not a real substitute of modern medicine.

Anyway, let's concentrate on the good effects of plants and herbs. Many parts of a plant are used for medicine: roots, tender branches, leaves, fruits, flowers and berries.



Now we will mention certain home remedies that still work today:

- If you have a cough, a good thing you can do is fill a large bowl with water and rosemary or eucalyptus in it. Lean over the bowl and place a towel over your head for 5 minutes inhaling the vapours.



- If you have sore eyes or swollen eyelids, wet a piece of cloth in chamomile infusion and place it on you eyes. It will ease the pain and the swelling.



- For burns, you can apply aloe vera taken directly from the plant. Honey is also good to heal minor burns.



- If you need to fight stress or anxiety, lavender has got calming properties.



- If you have problems with your digestion, ginger or tangerine infusions will do you good. Oregano helps digest too.



- Thyme stimulates your appetite and oranges are good for stomach pains as well as intestinal inflammation..



- We use garlic to prevent hypertension and poor blood circulation.



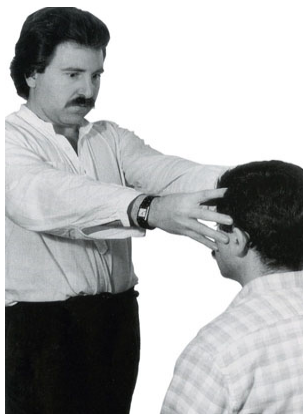
Something that is very much connected with beliefs and with trying to deal with health problems is the existence of **quack doctors**.

In the olden days, sick people used to visit a quack doctor, either because they couldn't afford to visit a real doctor or because of their beliefs and customs.

Quack doctors didn't formally learn any particular skills or made academic studies. They had a gift. They might inherit this gift or be born with it. That is why, the family paid attention to any sign during pregnancy and childbirth. Crying inside your mother's womb and being born on Christmas Eve or on Good Friday were signs of having the gift of healing.

Quack doctors used to treat physical, emotional or psychological issues and also love or money problems.

They tried to heal illnesses with natural remedies (herbs and flowers). They also used their hands to relieve pains and they said prayers that they learnt from sacred books.



Magic and religion were mixed together with healing concoctions. Being body and soul doctors, quack doctors were always present in villages and churches. Whether their rituals had healing effects has not been confirmed by science.

In rural Spain, quack doctors and regular doctors have often worked together.

There are still around 10,000 quack doctors in Spain at present. Unfortunately, they take advantage of people who are desperate to

find a solution for their physical or psychological problems.

One way or another, neither quack doctors nor real doctors could have every remedy they prescribed at hand. They needed another person, **the apothecary**, to make medicines, ointments and concoctions.

At first, apothecaries had their own space at home. Later, they specialized in selling their products and moved their work to suitable premises to carry out their practices. These premises were divided into two different spaces: a larger space that was used as a laboratory (this is where they spent most of their time making their master formulas) and another space dedicated to sell their products. They also had a small space to store the medicines that they made.



Later in time, when industrial laboratories emerged, drugs were produced in one place and then distributed to pharmacies. As the master formulas almost disappeared, the warehouse space grew and pharmacists became more devoted to their customers.



When social security arose, in the middle of the 20th century, every citizen could afford to get their medicines at the pharmacy. As a result, there was a great increase in the sales of regular medicines.

When we asked our grandparents whether they used to go to the apothecary or the pharmacy when they were young, they said they did. But the place looked very different from a current pharmacy. From the moment you entered the apothecary's, you could breathe the pain and disease in the air, you felt surrounded by pots you were afraid to approach. It all smelt of alcohol and there were no flowers or garish colours to make the products more attractive.

Today, pharmacies seem almost like supermarkets, they said.



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