

Healthy Living : Herbs and Alternatives Expert

Natural Living Goes High-Tech: Alt-Med Apps for the iPhone

Weekly advice from our herbs and alternatives expert

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By [Sara Altshul](#)

My iPhone does things my cell phone never could, and it really was worth waiting on line for four hours last July to acquire it. It's found me taxis, movies, reviews and restaurants, figured out tips after a meal, connected me to my [Facebook](#) family, helped me settle bets by letting me Google wherever I am, and entertained me with silly

applications like the world's tiniest violin and a harmonica you can sort of play with your mouth.

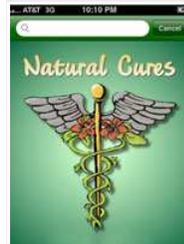
Inspired by Amanda MacMillan's recent [blog about iPhone fitness programs](#), I decided to check out a handful of apps that focus on my beat, natural healing. Here's my review:

NaturalCures (free)

Created by Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, a leading fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome specialist and author of [From Fatigued to Fantastic](#) and [Pain Free 1-2-3](#). This site distills Dr. Teitelbaum's expertise about how to recover your vitality and end chronic pain. Features include an A to Z directory of health problems and natural remedies tailored to each; a nutrition tab that lists some supplements; and natural health news and blogs from other leading natural health experts.

Pros: It seems to be especially helpful for people with fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue problems.

Cons: Herbs are largely ignored as treatments for various conditions, which I think is an oversight for an app called "NaturalCures."



Apple.com

iAroma (\$9.99)

This one's a basic primer on how to use essential oils for healing and spirit-lifting. It lists about 75 essential oils and their therapeutic value, and has an A to Z conditions list that tells you which essential oil treatments ease specific problems—including dosages and "how to use" info. An A to Z "emotional" category tells you which essential oils are appropriate for problems from anger to worry.

Pros: It's handy if you're in a health food store trying to figure out which oil to use for which condition.

Cons: I can't find anything that indicates the source of the information. It would be reassuring to know that an experienced clinical aromatherapist collaborated with the iAroma's developers.

iPlant (\$1.99)

More than 300 culinary and medicinal herbs are listed in this database, with 150 or so photos.

Pros: So far, it's the only application I've found with an extensive listing of medicinal herbs.

Cons: No sources or scientific citations are included yet, though the developer tells me he's working out agreements to include these. There's no dosage or other info that herbalists consider critical, either, such as part of plant used, or what kind of preparation to choose (tea, tincture, capsules, etc). What's more, my quick scan revealed questionable and just plain silly statements—such as: "using kava with a group of people may induce you to publicly confess everything" and "chamomile is an excellent herb for people that complain about every little thing."

YogaMudra (\$8.99)

Mudras are Buddhist hand gestures that practitioners use as a meditation aid and to enable healing. This very cool app uses vivid photographs to

