

## The Nervous System - Part 1

Kristine Brown - Traditional Community Herbalist

### What Does the Nervous System Consist of?

- Brain
- Nerves
- Spinal Cord

### What is the Function of the Nervous System?

The main function of the nervous system is to direct immediate responses to stimuli, generally through coordinating the activities of other organ systems.

The nervous system is divided into two parts: the central nervous system and the peripheral nervous system. The central nervous system includes the brain and spinal cord while the peripheral nervous system contains the nerve cells that control voluntary and involuntary movements.

The brain performs complex integrative functions and controls voluntary activities.

The spinal cord relays information to and from the brain and also directs many involuntary activities that are simple and also performs less complex integrative functions.

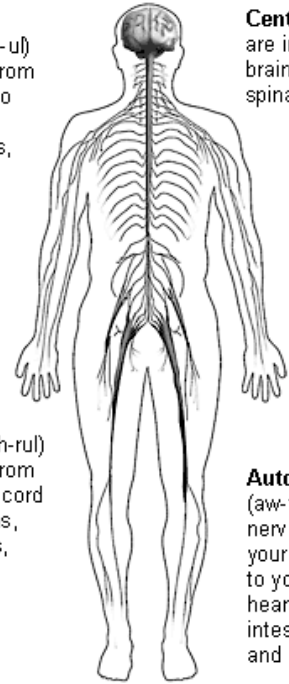
The peripheral nervous system links our central nervous system with other organs and systems.

**Cranial**  
(KRAY-nee-ul)  
nerves go from your brain to your eyes, mouth, ears, and other parts of your head.

**Central** nerves are in your brain and spinal cord.

**Peripheral**  
(puh-RIF-uh-rul)  
nerves go from your spinal cord to your arms, hands, legs, and feet.

**Autonomic**  
(aw-toh-NOM-ik)  
nerves go from your spinal cord to your lungs, heart, stomach, intestines, bladder, and sex organs.



### Common Acute and Chronic Problems for Nervous System:

Neuropathy / Neuralgia	Anxiety
Post traumatic stress disorder(PTSD)	Depression
Psychosis	Spinal Cord Injuries
Parkinson's disease	Multiple sclerosis
Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)	Alzheimer's disease
Huntington's disease	Encephalitis
Meningitis	Drug/Alcohol Withdrawal
Stroke	Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA)
Pinched nerve	Tumors
Brain trauma	Lyme disease
Aphasia	Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
Bipolar disorder	Dementia
Epilepsy	Dyslexia

Myasthenia gravis  
Schizophrenia  
Shingles

Tinnitus / Vertigo  
Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)  
Tay-Sachs disease

### **Herbal Applications for the Nervous System:**

Extracts	Food
Infusions	Teas
Salves	Ointments
Bath teas	

### **Herbs for the Nervous System:**

#### *Adaptagenic Nervines*

Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*)  
Eleuthero (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*)  
Reishi (*Ganoderma lucidum*, *G. tsugae*)  
Tulsi (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*)

#### *Nourishing Nervines*

Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*)  
Linden (*Tilia spp.*)  
Nettles (*Urtica dioica*)  
Oat (*Avena sativa*)  
Tulsi (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*)

#### *Relaxant Nervines*

California Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*)  
Cannabis (*Cannabis indica*)  
Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*)  
Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomila*)  
Hops (*Humulus lupulus*)  
Kava Kava (*Piper methysticum*)  
Lavender (*Lavendula angustifolia*)  
Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)  
Mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*)  
Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*)  
Passionflower (*Passiflora spp.*)  
Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)  
Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*)  
Valerian (*Valerian officinalis*)  
Vervain (*Verbena hastata*)  
Wild Lettuce (*Lactuca virosa*)

#### *Restorative Nervines*

Castor oil (*Ricinus communis*)  
Oat (*Avena sativa*)  
St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

#### *Stimulant Nervines*

Cacao (*Theobroma cacao*)  
Coffee (*Coffea arabica*)  
Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)  
Yerba Mate (*Ilex paraguariensis*)

#### *Tonic / Trophorestorative Nervines*

Oat (*Avena sativa*)  
Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*)  
Vervain (*Verbena hastata*, *V. spp.*)  
Tulsi (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*)

#### *Brain Specific Herbs:*

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)  
Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*)  
Gotu Kola (*Centella asiatica*, *Hydrocotyle asiatica*)  
Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)  
Lion's Mane (*Hericium erinaceus*)  
Rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*)  
Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)  
Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)

**Ways to Maintain Nervous System Health:**

- ~ Practice meditation, yoga or other body centering activities
- ~ Embrace your sensuality
- ~ Take relaxing baths with herbal bath herbs
- ~ Consume nourishing herbs that support, calm and strengthen such as Milky Oats
- ~ Enjoy your meals
- ~ Create a relaxing environment when you are stressed
- ~ Spend time in nature
- ~ Get adequate sleep
- ~ Use mantras such as Robin Rose Bennett's "It is enough just to be."
- ~ Get plenty of Omega-3's, high in EPA to DHA ratio

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

*General Nervous System Information*

- ~ The Gift of Healing Herbs : Plant Medicines and Home Remedies for a Vibrantly Healthy Life by Robin Rose Bennett\*
- ~ The Herbal Handbook: A User's Guide to Medical Herbalism by David Hoffmann
- ~ Herbal Medicine From the Heart of the Earth by Sharon Tilgner, N.D.
- ~ The Authentic Herbal Healer by Holly Bellebuono
- ~ Holistic Anatomy by Pip Waller
- ~The Encyclopedia of Medicinal Plants by Andrew Chevallier\*
- ~The Complete Medicinal Herbal by Penelope Ody\*
- ~The Holistic Herbal by David Hoffmann\*

*Nervous System*

- ~ Rogers' School of Herbal Medicine Volume 9 - The Brain by Robert Dale Rogers
- ~ Rogers' School of Herbal Medicine Volume 10 - Nervous System by Robert Dale Rogers

**Online Resources**

Melanie Flach of Rose Bear Medicinals on Nervines:

<http://www.rosebearmedicinals.com/blog/nervines-herbs-nervous-system>

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)

Mountain Rose Herbs on adaptogens and nervines:

<http://mountainroseblog.com/understanding-nervines-adaptogens/>

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