

# Bergamot Oil: A Gamut of Goodness

---

More than just offering a familiar scent or flavor, bergamot oil is bursting with a powerhouse of benefits. Find out how this sweet-smelling essential oil can work wonders for your health.

## What Is Bergamot Oil?

Bergamot essential oil is made from the hand- or cold-pressed rind of a nearly ripe fruit of the bergamot tree, also known as the *Citrus bergamia* from the Rutaceae family. The bergamot orange tree is the result of the cross-breeding of the lemon tree and the orange tree,<sup>1</sup> which explains its pear-like shape and yellow color.<sup>2</sup> Fun fact: 100 bergamot oranges will yield only about three ounces or 85 grams of bergamot oil.

Although its roots can be traced back to South East Asia, bergamot was more widely cultivated in the Southern part of Italy, specifically in the coastal regions of Reggio di Calabria and Sicily. As a matter of fact, bergamot essential oil was named after the city of Bergamo in Lombardy, Italy, where it was originally sold. Bergamot is also produced in the Ivory Coast, Argentina, Morocco, Turkey, and Brazil.

## Uses of Bergamot Oil

I highly recommend using bergamot essential oil as a natural mosquito repellent, insect-bite salve, deodorant, inhalant, and relaxing massage oil.<sup>3</sup>

Below are some of its other practical uses:

- **Sweet and citrus scent** – Because of its unique fruity and subtly spicy aroma, bergamot oil is frequently added to different perfume and cosmetic products. Bergamot oil is a major ingredient in the original 4711 Eau De Cologne by Johann Maria Farina at the beginning of 18th-century Germany. Bergamot oil blends perfectly well with other essential oils such as cedarwood, citronella, clary sage, geranium, ho leaf, neroli, lavender, lemon, palmarosa, rosewood, tangerine, and ylang-ylang.
- **Fruity flavoring** – If Italians have bergamot marmalade, people in Sweden and Norway enjoy bergamot-flavored snus, a smokeless, sugar-free tobacco from the 18th century.<sup>4</sup> It is also used as the distinct flavoring in Earl Grey and Lady Grey teas, and in delectable confectionaries such as the Turkish Delight.
- **Pest repellent** – To shield crops from being attacked by pests, bergamot plant, whose roots have a potent odor, is grown as a companion crop on vegetable gardens.

## Composition of Bergamot Oil

Bergamot essential oil is light yellow-green in color. Its active chemical components include a-pinene, myrcene, limonene, a-bergaptene, b-bisabolene, linalool, linalyl acetate, nerol, neryl acetate, geraniol, geraniol acetate, and a-terpineol.

Melitidin and brutieridin, which studies show exhibit statin-like properties, is only found in citrus bergamot.<sup>5</sup>

## Benefits of Bergamot Oil

Bergamot oil boasts of powerful antibacterial, analgesic, antiseptic, antispasmodic, and soothing effects. Back in the day, Italians used bergamot oil in folk medicine to cool fevers and expel intestinal worms. The juice of the bergamot fruit, on the other hand, was used in Calabrian indigenous medicine to treat and malaria.<sup>6</sup> In addition, bergamot essential oil:

- **Alleviates symptoms and complications of bacterial infections<sup>7</sup>** – According to a study published in the April 2009 issue of the *Journal of Applied Microbiology*, bergamot oil can produce positive results against *Enterococcus faecium* and *Enterococcus faecalis* bacteria that are resistant to the potent antibiotic vancomycin. These enterococcal species are a common source of a variety of infections, including urinary tract infections (UTI), bacteremia, endocarditis, and meningitis. Just add bergamot oil to your sitz bath or hip bath to help prevent the spread of bacterial infections from the urethra into the bladder.
- **Acts as a substitute for statins<sup>8</sup>** – A newly published research in the *Journal of Natural Products* revealed that citrus bergamot has statin-like principles and carries the 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaric acid (HMG) moiety. Today, one in four Americans over age 45 now takes cholesterol-lowering drugs known as statins, typically for the primary prevention of heart attacks and strokes. If you'll ask me, not only is their benefit highly limited to those with a genetic condition, but these drugs come with an avalanche of potential side effects, too. Check out my article "[Side Effects of Statins](#)." Keep in mind: there are far better ways to prevent heart disease than taking statins or unnecessarily lowering your cholesterol, including eating right, exercising, and maintaining healthy vitamin D levels.
- **Speeds up the healing process for cold sores, mouth ulcers, and herpes<sup>9</sup>** – Bergamot oil has a similar antibacterial effect on shingles and chickenpox, which are also caused by the varicella zoster virus from herpes. Apply bergamot essential oil topically on affected area until condition improves.
- **Prevents and improves skin condition from fungal infections<sup>10</sup>** – In a study published in the *Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy*, Italian researchers have proven bergamot essential oil's amazing antifungal properties when used as a topical remedy for infections brought by candida fungus strains.
- **Reduces anxiety and stress<sup>11</sup>** – Experts say that when used in aromatherapy preparations, bergamot oil can lessen stress and anxiety levels of patients prior to surgery. It also relieves depression and eliminates chronic fatigue syndrome. Learn how [aromatherapy](#) can resolve your anxiety issues.

## How to Make Bergamot Oil

There are two main methods to obtain citrus essential oils like tangerine, lemon, and bergamot:<sup>12</sup>

1. **Expression or cold-pressing** – In the early days, expression is done by manually pressing the rind or the fruit peelings until the oil comes out of it. A more modern and less labor-intensive version of this is called the *écuelle à piquer*, which is basically the same process but features a mechanical device that uses centrifugal force.
2. **Distillation** – This process involves either water or steam. Due to contact with water, the aroma of distilled bergamot essential oil is diminished, and is therefore considered of lower quality compared to the expressed variety.

Currently, the bergamot essential oil produced in Reggio Calabria, Italy, ranks as the highest in quality in the international trading market.<sup>13</sup>

## How Does Bergamot Oil Work?

Bergamot oil has a number of beneficial active chemicals in it, which is why it can be used effectively for different conditions in a variety of ways.

Bergamot essential oil can be:<sup>14</sup>

- Added to water for an aromatic bath to help reduce stress
- Inhaled for an instant boost of positivity
- Applied topically to soothe insect bites
- Used with chamomile and fennel essential oil to massage your abdominal area for treatment of gas, indigestion, and flatulence
- Mixed with lavender, salt, and filtered water as a genital wash to prevent UTI recurrence

## Is Bergamot Oil Safe?

The use of bergamot oil is generally safe. But I still encourage you to err on the side of caution at all times. Always consult your physician before adding anything to your treatment plan.

Due to its potential health risks, I discourage either topical or internal administration of bergamot oil to pregnant or nursing women and very young children.

Taking bergamot oil orally is also not advisable for individuals with existing potassium deficiency, as it is known to deplete potassium stores in the body and cause muscle cramps and twitching.

Since bergamot oil can heighten your vulnerability to sun damage, never use it with photosensitizing drugs like Ciprofloxacin (Cipro), norfloxacin (Noroxin), lomefloxacin (Maxaquin), ofloxacin (Floxin), and levofloxacin (Levaquin), to name a few, as doing so may cause serious adverse reactions.

## Side Effects of Bergamot Oil

I'm a strong advocate of safe sun exposure. But perhaps one of the very few moments when I'll advise against basking under the sun is after you've applied bergamot oil on your skin. Due to its bergamottin and bergapten content, which absorbs ultraviolet light, bergamot oil may induce photosensitivity (oversensitivity to the sun) and may lead to extreme sunburn and other complications.

The same warning goes to all essential oils derived from citrus fruits like lime, orange, and lemon. To avoid this from happening, wait for up to 72 hours after topical application before heading outdoors.

According to studies, bergamot essential oil has antimicrobial and antifungal properties, which may make it beneficial for a wide array of skin disorders. However, it may not be true for everybody. An eMedTV article reports that bergamot oil can cause skin irritation to some people, which manifests through blisters, scabs, redness, and changes in skin pigmentation.<sup>15</sup> Before using bergamot essential oil as an all-natural skincare treatment, performing a 24-hour skin test on a small area of your skin would be a very logical step to do first.