

Peppermint Oil: A Potent Oil with the Power of Menthol

History shows a wide range of uses for peppermint as an essential oil, which has been used for over 200 years in ancient Rome and Egypt. Various cultures have used this oil not only for its minty fragrance, but also to symbolize hospitality. Peppermint oil is also a popular oil in medicine due to its [therapeutic benefits](#).

What Is Peppermint Oil?

Peppermint oil is derived from the leaves of the peppermint plant or *Mentha piperita*, a hybrid of the water mint and spearmint plants, and *M. arvensis* var. *piperascens*, a plant from the Labiatae family.¹ The essential oil is often used as a home remedy for stomach problems, muscle pain, and headaches. Aside from being available in its oil form, peppermint oil can be found in supplemental capsule form.²

Uses and Benefits of Peppermint Oil

Peppermint oil is often used in [aromatherapy](#), or the use of essential oils to support health. Studies have found that aromatherapy is effective in relieving anxiety, pain, and vomiting, as well as improving memory. The aroma of peppermint oil has been shown to improve memory and raise alertness.

According to findings, peppermint oil exhibits antiviral, antimicrobial, antifungal, antioxidant, analgesic, radioprotective, and antiedema properties.³

Below are other common uses of peppermint oil:

- **Relief for Stomach Problems**

Peppermint oil is a safe and effective alternative to medications like Buscopan in reducing colonic spasms.⁴ It eases abdominal pain by allowing gas to pass through easily. Peppermint oil also provides relief for indigestion and upset stomach.

Research⁵ has also shown that peppermint oil is effective in improving the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Another show that it has helped reduce total irritable bowel syndrome score by 50 percent among 75 percent of the participants.⁶

Peppermint contains large concentrations of menthol and is twice as potent in the essential oil form in decreasing smooth muscle spasm and blocking calcium channels in the gut.

- **Respiratory Benefits**

Peppermint oil can be used as an expectorant and decongestant. It can clear up phlegm in your respiratory tract when used as a chest rub or inhaled through a vaporizer.

The essential oil may also provide benefits to individuals with tuberculosis. Researchers found that when inhaled, the oil can help decrease tuberculosis-induced inflammation and prevent the disorder from worsening or recurring.⁷ Peppermint oil can also work against asthma as it contains rosmarinic acid, which helps curb inflammation-causing chemicals that may cause the condition.

- **Pain Relief**

Peppermint is beneficial in addressing pain. It can be used to relieve sore muscles when used with massage or added to bath water. Dabbing a few drops on your wrist or inhaling the aroma can reduce headache pain. Like with sore muscles, it can be massaged onto your temples.

- **Positive Effect on Cancer-Related Treatments**

Peppermint oil can substitute drugs that address chemotherapy-induced nausea. It can also help treat hot flashes in women receiving treatment for breast cancer.⁸

- **Treatment of Herpes Infections**

Peppermint oil was found to have a beneficial effect on drug-resistant herpes simplex virus when applied topically. Because of its lipophilic nature, peppermint oil is able to pass through the skin, making it an ideal treatment against recurrent herpes infection.⁹

Using peppermint oil on shingles rash also improves pain induced by the disease.

- **Hair and Skin Health**

Mixing peppermint oil into massage oils, shampoos, body washes, and lotions gives these products antiseptic and antimicrobial properties, helping cool skin and eliminate dandruff or lice from your scalp. It can also improve frizzy hair and may contribute to hair growth.¹⁰

Peppermint oil can aid in oil secretion in skin, therefore preventing acne. It can also heal cracked lips, which is why it's often an ingredient in lip balms.¹¹

- **Dental Health**

Peppermint oil extract is shown to be more effective than the mouthwash chemical chlorhexidine in preventing the development of biofilm that contribute to cavities.¹² It can also prevent bad breath. To use, just add one to two drops to your toothpaste.

- **Comfort for Stress and Nervous System Problems**

Due to its energizing effects, peppermint oil is used to manage stress and treat nervous disorders and mental fatigue. Studies suggest that the essential oil may have an effect similar to psychostimulants, as shown in a study involving mice.¹³

In addition to these health benefits, peppermint oil can also be used as a [natural insect repellent](#). The cooling sensation provided by peppermint can also help relieve itching caused by insects by blocking the sensation.

Composition of Peppermint Oil

Studies¹⁴ ¹⁵ ¹⁶ on peppermint essential oil have found that two of its major components are menthol and menthone, which are the reason why peppermint oil is widely used as an ingredient in lozenges, toothpastes, balms, and rubs. Other constituents found in the oil are menthyl acetate, 1,8-cineole, limonene, beta-pinene, and beta-caryophyllene.

How to Make Peppermint Oil

There are several ways to make your own peppermint oil at home. Here is one recipe you can try at home:¹⁷

You'll need:

- **Fresh peppermint leaves** – You can find these in supermarkets or health food stores. You can also grow your own, as the peppermint plant is easy to grow and you can make sure that the plant is not mixed with any chemical additives.
- **A glass jar with a tight lid**
- **Carrier oil** – This will infuse the carrier oil with the essence of peppermint. You can use olive oil for this.

Procedure:

1. Wash the peppermint leaves, then crush or chop them. This will release their natural oil.
2. Place them in the jar and pour the carrier oil. Make sure the oil covers the leaves completely. Afterward, seal the jar tightly and wait 24 hours.
3. Next, strain the oil and add more chopped peppermint leaves and carrier oil, then reseal.
4. Repeat this process for five days.
5. Remove the peppermint leaves by straining and pour the oil into another container. Store in a cool place.

How Does Peppermint Oil Work?

While it is tempting to buy products with peppermint oil, using it in its whole state will yield more positive results. However, it should never be used in its undiluted form, which can cause skin irritations, especially those with sensitive skin. It must first be diluted and should only be used if a qualified practitioner is present.¹⁸

Peppermint oil is sensitive to light and heat damage, and should only be stored in a cool, dark place in tightly sealed bottles. It is also important to keep them away from other oils, supplements, and drugs, because they may affect their composition.¹⁹ For instance, peppermint oil can disrupt the rate at which your body processes the drug cyclosporine. This causes more of the medication to stay in your bloodstream.²⁰

Is Peppermint Oil Safe?

Peppermint oil is safe in low amounts in most adults, but it can trigger side effects in people with sensitivities. It is important for the following individuals to avoid using this essential oil or use it only after consulting a healthcare professional:[21](#), [22](#), [23](#)

- **Pregnant and nursing women** – Peppermint is found to decrease milk production and should be used sparingly toward the end of pregnancy.[24](#)
- **Infants and children under seven** – Must not be used undiluted due to the toxicity of the product.[25](#)
- **Diabetics** – One study states that using peppermint oil may raise your risk of having low blood sugar or hypoglycemia.[26](#)
- **Those with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and hiatal hernia** – Peppermint can relax the sphincter between the stomach and the esophagus, causing acid to rise up to the esophagus.[27](#)
- **Those with gallbladder problems** – Peppermint oil may cause gallbladder inflammation, so those diagnosed with gallstones should consult a physician first before using peppermint oil.[28](#)
- **Those taking antacids** – These acid-reducing drugs can cause peppermint oil in capsule form to break down easily, increasing the risk of heartburn.[29](#)

Side Effects of Peppermint Oil

Avoid using peppermint oil as a stimulant daily, as it can interfere with sleep.[30](#) Reports show that peppermint oil overdose can cause the following symptoms:[31](#)

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- Skin rashes
- Slow or rapid breathing
- Abdominal pain and diarrhea
- Vomiting and nausea
- Urinary problems
- Convulsions
- Depression
- Unconsciousness

While this oil can offer profound benefits, I recommend speaking to a healthcare provider before using it for therapeutic benefits.