

Pine Oil: A Potential Panacea?

Pine oil provides a pile of profound health benefits as tall as its trees. Discover more about pine oil and why it's a favorite essential oil in aromatherapy.

What Is Pine Oil?

Pine oil is a colorless to pale yellow essential oil. Depending on its source, pine oil may either have a fresh, earthy, and forest-like fragrance or a strong, dry, balsamic, turpentine-like odor. Also called fir leaf oil or oleum folii pini sylvestris, pine oil should not be confused with pine nut oil. Pine nut oil, which is also referred to as pinon, pine kernel, or Indian nut, is a vegetable oil mostly used for cooking. It is derived from the seeds of the pine tree. [1](#)

Pine oil, on the other hand, is extracted through steam distillation of the needle-like foliage of the pine tree. Generally, pine oil comes from trees of the genus Pinus.

Some of its well-known varieties include:[2](#)

- **Dwarf pine needle (*Pinus mugo*)** – A tall and shrub-like tree harvested from the Swiss Alps. In Europe, this plant is used in healing skin and scalp diseases.
- **Long leaf pine or turpentine (*Pinus palustris*)** – This tree, which grows up to 150 feet, originates from the United States and is widely used for the distillation of American gum spirits of turpentine. It was also used by the Native Americans to prevent scurvy. [3](#)
- **Scotch pine or Norway pine (*Pinus sylvestris*)** – This high, evergreen tree has a reddish-brown and deeply fissured bark that grows pair of long, stiff needles. Largely produced in the Baltic states, the essential oil from this species is a hypertensive, tonic stimulant.

Uses of Pine Oil

Below are some practical uses for pine oil – plus handy tips on how you can use it at home. Pine oil can be used as:

- **Fragrance in soaps, creams, detergents, and many pharmaceutical preparations** – Analgesic ointments, nasal decongestants, and cough and cold medicines [4](#)
- **Flavoring component in many edible products**, including alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, baked goods, confectionery, frozen dairy desserts, gelatins, and puddings
- **Insect repellent** – To protect your wool sweaters from moths and other insects, pour 10 drops of pine oil onto small pieces of untreated wood. Place the pieces of wood in your closets or drawers. [5](#)
- **Air freshener** – Eliminate the awful smell of cigarettes and stale air by adding four drops of pine oil to one cup of water. Pour the mixture in a spray bottle, shake it well, and spray it to instantly freshen up your room. Avoid spraying it on furniture.

- **Massage oil before and after exercise** – Create your own pre-and post-workout massage oil to prevent or soothe strained muscles. Add three drops of pine oil, juniper-berry oil, and rosemary oil in two ounces of jojoba oil.

Composition of Pine Oil

Pine oil contains 50 to 97 percent monoterpene hydrocarbons, of which 60 to 65 percent is α -terpineol. It also has car-3-ene, dipentene, β -pinene, α -terpinene, γ -terpinene, bornyl acetate, cadinene, sylvestrene, and camphene. [6](#)

Pine oil is best blended with botanical essential oils like cedarwood, rosemary, sage, labdanum, and juniper.

Benefits of Pine Oil

Pine oil has antimicrobial, antiseptic, antifungal, anti-neuralgic, and anti-rheumatic properties.[7](#) It also works as a good decongestant and expectorant for respiratory ailments. In addition, pine oil is praised for its ability to naturally:

- Ease muscular stiffness and rheumatism as a rubefacient[8](#)
- Relax the body when added in bath
- Stimulate healthy metabolism[9](#)
- Boost activity levels
- Help eliminate excess water, uric acid, salt, and fat through urination
- Neutralize free radicals with its rich antioxidant capacity
- Cure urinary tract infection (UTI)

What I love about pine oil is that it's a natural analgesic and anti-inflammatory agent, which makes it a potential substitute for non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) that comes with loads of devastating side effects. Check out my [NSAIDs: The Painful Truth Behind Painkillers](#) infographic for more information on NSAIDs.

How to Make Pine Oil

The essential oil is obtained by steam distillation of fresh twigs and needles of the pine tree. Sometimes sawdust from the hard wood is also used. In order to extract the oil, the botanical material is placed in a still and is subjected to extremely high temperatures.

To make your own pine oil at home, follow this easy do-it-yourself guide from eHow.[10](#)

What you will need:

- 1/2 cup sweet almond oil

- 2 to 3 cups pine tree needles
- Large-mouth jar with lid
- Mortar and pestle
- Cheesecloth or fine-mesh cotton gauze
- Dark bottle with cap for storage

Procedure:

1. Harvest fresh pine needles. Do not use pine needles that have fallen to the ground, as they are very likely to cause molds and spoil your essential oil.
2. Wash the pine needles with warm water and mild detergent soap to remove impurities. Rinse thoroughly.
3. Pat the pine needles dry with clean paper towels.
4. Gently bruise the leaves using mortar and pestle.
5. Pour the sweet almond oil into the large-mouth jar.
6. Add all the pine needles into the jar.
7. Cover the jar and shake it to cover the needles with almond oil.
8. Store the jar in a warm room with an ambient temperature of at least 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Keep it out of direct sunlight.
9. Shake the jar once a day for seven days.
10. After one week, put in a dark storage – for example, inside your cupboard – and allow it to age/ferment for at least 14 days. Do not shake the jar during this time period.
11. After 14 days, sift the oil through a piece of cheesecloth or fine-mesh cotton gauze to remove solid particles. Squeeze cheesecloth to get remaining essential oil.
12. Transfer your homemade pine oil in a dark bottle. Cover with cap tightly to keep it fresh longer and to avoid contamination.

Warning: Do not ingest homemade essential oils. Discard homemade pine oil after 10 to 12 months.

How Does Pine Oil Work?

The most common ways to administer pine oil are orally, topically, and through inhalation.

In aromatherapy, pine oil is indicated and used for cuts, lice, excessive perspiration, scabies, sores on the skin, arthritis, gout, muscular aches and pains, asthma, bronchitis, common colds and flu, and stress-related conditions such as neuralgia.¹¹ If you're going to use pine oil topically as a moisturizing oil to improve skin condition or as a liniment for muscle pain relief, I recommend doing a skin test first before applying it to large portions of your skin. It should also be diluted with a carrier oil.

Is Pine Oil Safe?

Pine oil is generally safe except for isolated reports of sensitizing reaction in some individuals. Dwarf pine oil is a common cause of contact dermatitis. But this is only true in oxidized oils.¹² This is why you should make sure you only buy pure, high-quality essential oils from trusted sellers and manufacturers. Discard old and expired bottles of pine oil.

If you are planning to get pregnant, already pregnant, or breastfeeding your child, I advise against taking pine oil or any kind of essential oil without the consent of your doctor.

Side Effects of Pine Oil

While pine oil has low risks of toxicity in humans, inappropriate dosage, improper application, or use of low-quality and oxidized variants may cause skin rashes, eye irritation, gastrointestinal issues, severe aspiration, and respiratory distress.¹³ As a safety precaution, do not integrate pine oil or any type of essential oil in your treatment protocol without seeking expert medical opinion. Consult your a natural healthcare practitioner about this matter, so you can be guided accordingly.

Again, for simple dermal applications, I recommend doing a skin test first. Apply pine oil on a small area of your skin. Wait for 24 to 48 hours to see if redness or any sign of irritation will occur before using it on larger parts of your body.