

# Sage Oil: The Oil That “Saves”

History shows that the [sage](#) plant possesses the longest record of use as a culinary and medicinal herb. Even today this perennial plant has numerous functions. When converted to an essential oil, sage provides even more benefits – learn more facts and trivia about sage oil.

## What Is Sage Oil?

Sage essential oil comes from the steam distilled leaves of the herb sage or *Salvia Officinalis*. Also known as garden sage, Dalmation sage, true sage, and common sage,<sup>1</sup> this herb gets its name from the Latin word “salvere,” which means “to save,”<sup>2</sup> and is best known for its therapeutic properties.

The plant is native to southern European regions and nations surrounding the Mediterranean sea, particularly Greece and Yugoslavia.<sup>3</sup> Accounts show that the Romans and Greeks had a high regard for sage and even considered it sacred. During the ancient times, sage was used to preserve meat and prevent other foods from spoiling.<sup>4</sup>

According to historical accounts, sage oil was considered good for both the body and mind. Sage essential oil is often compared to clary sage (*Salvia sclarea*). While they both come from the same evergreen shrub family, they are very different from each other. Both oils have a pale yellow-green color, but sage has a strong, spicy scent, while clary sage has a sweet, nutty aroma. Because sage oil may trigger sensitizations in some, clary sage oil is often used as a substitute to it because of its milder nature.<sup>5</sup>

## Uses of Sage Oil

From being used as a treatment for common conditions like digestive problems to being added to skincare and cosmetic products, sage oil has a wide range of functions. Some of them are:<sup>6 7 8</sup>

- **Treatment for health conditions** – Sage oil is primarily used to help relieve digestive problems. It can also be used to help treat respiratory problems, menstrual difficulties, fungal infections, and skin problems.
- **Hair conditioner** – Sage oil contains beneficial properties that help address dandruff and oily hair. It can also be used as a shampoo because of its cleansing effects.
- **Skin moisturizer** – The oil of sage is often used to help prevent signs of aging like wrinkles and sagging skin. It is also added to skin care products like anti-mark and anti-spot creams, which help prevent cracks, scars, and other unwanted marks on skin.
- **Laxative** – It is used to trigger excretion and help relieve constipation.
- **Stimulant** – In [aromatherapy](#), this oil can be used to stimulate the mind and help address mental fatigue and depression.
- **Fragrance** – Sage oil is added to soaps, colognes, and perfumes because of its strong, fragrant scent.

## Composition of Sage Oil

There are several varieties of sage oil, depending on certain factors like geographical location, climate, part of the plant used, and method of extraction.<sup>9</sup> A predominant component of all types is thujone (about 22 to 61 percent).<sup>10</sup> Thujone has been a subject of debate among many experts because of its negative effect on the nervous system. Research shows that it can cause convulsions and tend to be hallucinogenic.<sup>11</sup> However, when used appropriately and in correct amounts, sage oil does not induce these effects.

Other major constituents found in the essential oil of sage include camphor, 1,8-cineole, and camphene.<sup>12</sup>

## Benefits of Sage Oil

Sage essential oil provides several benefits from a wide range of properties. It functions as an effective antibacterial agent, helping inhibit the growth of bacterial infections. In a study published in the *Brazilian Journal of Microbiology*,<sup>13</sup> it was found that the essential oils of eucalyptus, juniper, mint, rosemary, sage, clove, and thyme possessed antimicrobial properties against Vancomycin-resistant *Enterococci* and *E. coli* strains. Of all the tested oils, the researchers found that thyme and sage essential oil showed the best results against the said strains of bacteria.

In another study,<sup>14</sup> which tested the antimicrobial and antioxidant properties of rosemary and sage oils on several bacterial and fungal strains, it was found that both oils had potent activities against *E. coli*, *Salmonella typhi*, *S. enteritidis*, and *Shigella sonnei*.

In addition to these, sage essential oil has been successful in helping treat a number of health problems that affect the nervous system, heart and blood pressure, respiratory system, and digestive system, as well as metabolic and endocrine conditions.<sup>15</sup>

Other benefits provided by sage oil include:<sup>16</sup>

- Antiseptic properties that make it ideal for cleaning wounds, surgical incisions, sores, and ulcers
- Reduces the effects of exposure to toxins and narcotics, and consumption of excessively salty or spicy foods
- Reduces inflammation of the skin, gut, and excretory tracts
- Assists in the metabolism of food by promoting the production of bile and gastric juices in the digestive system
- Helps regulate menstrual cycles and activates hormones like [estrogen](#)
- Stimulates the brain, nervous system, liver, and circulatory and excretory systems

## How to Make Sage Oil

As previously mentioned, the oil in sage is obtained through steam distillation. This process helps preserve sage's beneficial compounds and uses only heat and water. Be wary of cheap oils, as these often contain additional solvents that may irritate your skin.<sup>17</sup>

Like with other herbal oils, you can also make your own sage oil at home. Here's a step-by-step guide from eHow:<sup>18</sup>

### **What You Need:**

- Fresh sage plant
- Freezer bag
- Glass jar
- Carrier oil, like [olive oil](#)
- Funnel
- Rubber mallet
- Strainer
- Colored glass container

### **Procedure:**

- Place a cup of fresh sage into the freezer bag. After squeezing the air out, seal the bag, and pound the bag using a rubber mallet.
- Place the crushed sage into a wide-mouthed glass container and add half a cup of carrier oil. Seal it tightly and place the jar where it can stay warm (where sun can touch it). Leave it alone for 48 hours.
- Strain the oil from the mixture and transfer the oil back to the jar. Discard the sage leaves.
- To create a more potent formula, repeat the first three steps.
- Place the sage oil into the colored glass container to slow its aging process. It can stay fresh for a year if placed in a cabinet, or longer if stored in the refrigerator.

### **How Does Sage Oil Work?**

Sage oil is like any other essential oil – it must first be diluted with a carrier oil before use. An unadulterated essential oil can cause skin irritations.

There are several ways to use sage essential oil.<sup>19</sup> In aromatherapy, it is used through a vaporizer. When inhaled, this essential oil can help calm the nerves and

stimulating the senses. As a massage oil or used in the bath, it can help relax muscles. It can even help women cope with menstrual problems. Sage oil can also be applied topically but with much caution to avoid adverse effects. Although sage oil is generally regarded as safe (GRAS) for internal consumption by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA),<sup>20</sup> it, like other essential oils, should never be taken internally without the supervision of an experienced health care professional.

## Is Sage Oil Safe?

Sage oil is only dangerous when used in high concentrations. Its thujone content, which is considered hazardous when isolated, does not pose any problem for its users if the oil is used moderately. Among other herbs that contain this chemical compound, sage is considered the most commonly used and safest.<sup>21</sup> However, it is because of thujone that it shouldn't be used by people with sensitivities or children of all ages.

[People who drink alcohol](#) should avoid using sage oil, as it can heighten the intoxication. Pregnant women (the oil can cause uterine contractions) and nursing women (it can slow down breast milk production) should also avoid using it.<sup>22</sup> Because it works as a stimulant, people with [epilepsy](#) or hysteria should also avoid using this essential oil.<sup>23</sup>

To check if you are a good candidate to benefit from this essential oil, I suggest consulting a qualified aromatherapy practitioner or physician first.

## Side Effects of Sage Oil

Sage oil should not be used or applied topically on the skin of individuals with skin problems because of potential irritations. Other reported side effects include inflammation of lips and lining of the mouth, kidney problems, rapid heartbeat, seizures, tremors, vertigo, vomiting, and wheezing.<sup>24</sup>

To avoid the potential skin problems, I suggest using clary sage oil, which possesses similar beneficial properties but is milder.