

Spearmint Oil: The Gentler Mint Oil

[Peppermint oil](#) is strong, too strong for some people. It may induce skin irritations and other side effects. If you're looking for a safer mint oil, look to peppermint's cousin: spearmint (*Mentha spicata*), also known by names such as the common or garden spearmint, green mint, fish mint, or our lady's mint.¹

This herb is known for its distinct aroma. It is also a favorite in the culinary world, added to dishes and beverages or used as a garnish. The spearmint herb is steam-distilled to produce the essential oil and in this form it can provide a number of important health benefits.

What Is Spearmint Oil?

There are many who believe that peppermint oil is just too strong and use spearmint oil instead. Mixing the two is another popular option.² No matter your sensitivity, Spearmint essential oil is the gentler than peppermint oil, especially for children. Although the oils possess similar properties, spearmint contains lower amounts of menthol compared to peppermint oil.

The use of spearmint oil dates back to ancient times. This perennial herb originated from the Mediterranean region. In Ayurvedic medicine, it was used to treat digestive conditions, skin problems, and headaches.³ The historical record shows that it was used extensively ancient Greece. It was added to baths and used to treat sexually transmitted diseases, whiten teeth, and heal mouth sores.⁴

In modern times, this essential oil is still widely used as a cure for digestive discomfort, as well as for menstrual problems and nausea.⁵

Uses of Spearmint Oil

The uses of spearmint oil extend beyond the kitchen and the medicine cabinet. For instance, it can also be used to help the mind relax or to instill positive emotions. I have compiled a list of spearmint oil's specific uses below:⁶ ⁷ ⁸ ⁹

- **Aromatherapy oil:** Because of its menthol content, spearmint oil is often used in aromatherapy to help treat fatigue, headaches, migraines, nervousness, and even digestive problems.
- **Food ingredient** – Oil of spearmint is sometimes added to baked goods, frozen dairy, meats, beverages, and chewing gum. Note, however, that you are better off consuming whole, raw foods than these processed ones.
- **Fragrance** – This essential oil is added to certain types of perfume. It is commonly mixed with other herbs like jasmine, lavender, bergamot, and sandalwood.
- **Ingredient in pharmaceutical products** – It is often added to tooth powders, gargles, and toothpastes.
- **Disinfectant** – Spearmint oil can be used to treat internal and external infections, including scabies, dermatitis, syphilis, and other transmittable conditions.

- **Bath oil** – When added to bath water, spearmint oil can induce relaxation and can cool you off by reducing your body temperature.
- **Massage oil** – With its antispasmodic properties, spearmint oil can help relieve muscle pain and even abdominal pain due to menstruation.
- **Insecticide** – This oil can ward off mosquitoes and other insects. It is often added to [insect repellents](#), creams, mats, and fumigants.

Composition of Spearmint Oil

Spearmint essential oil contains hydrocarbons, alcohols, esters, oxides, and ketones. Its main components include alpha-pinene, beta-pinene, camphor, cineole, caryophyllene, linalool, limonene, menthol, and myrcene.¹⁰

As I previously mentioned, spearmint essential oil does not contain as much menthol as peppermint oil – only about 0.5 percent compared to peppermint's 40 percent.¹¹

Benefits of Spearmint Oil

According to a study published in the *Journal of Essential Oil Research*,¹² spearmint oil's antimicrobial properties are obtained from its chemical constituents: cis-carveol and carvone. It demonstrated effectiveness against four bacterial strains (*Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli*, *Bacillus subtilis*, and *Pasturella multocida*) and fungal pathogens (*Aspergillus niger*, *Mucor mucedo*, *Fusarium solani*, *Botryodiplodia theobromae*, and *Rhizopus solani*).

Spearmint oil's antimicrobial effects were also shown in another study, published in the *Journal of Microbiology Research*.¹³ It highlighted spearmint oil's effect on *Bacillus subtilis*, *Aspergillus niger*, and *Candida albicans*. The oil was most potent against *Escherichia coli*, and also exhibited benefits as an antiseptic and preservative.

Because of its potent antimicrobial nature, the use of spearmint essential oil can provide the following benefits:¹⁴

- Because spearmint oil has antiseptic properties (due to the presence of menthol, myrcene, and caryophyllene), it can protect wounds and ulcers from infection and even help them heal faster.
- It can help treat [sexually transmitted diseases \(STDs\)](#), such as gonorrhea and syphilis.
- It can help treat internal wounds and infections in the stomach and intestines.

Apart from this, spearmint oil can also:¹⁵

- Help relax nerves and muscle spasms due to its menthol content
- Let excessive gas pass naturally from your stomach and intestines
- Cure headaches and stress-related neural problems
- Address menstrual problems, such as irregular periods, obstructed menses, and early menopause as it induces the secretion of the hormone estrogen
- Stimulate nerves and brain function, as well as blood circulation

- Treat common respiratory problems, such as colds, nasal congestion, asthma, and flu

How to Make Spearmint Oil

Like other herbal oils, spearmint essential oil is produced through steam distillation¹⁶ – particularly by distilling the flowering tops of the plant. Spearmint oil has a pale yellow or pale olive color, as well as a fresh, herbaceous scent.

How Does Spearmint Oil Work?

Spearmint essential oil can be used in a number of ways:¹⁷ ¹⁸

- **Inhalation** – Compared to peppermint oil, spearmint oil is milder and can be used on children. Two drops can help treat respiratory problems and stress.
- **Added to bath water** – Add two to three drops to your bath water to help relieve fatigue, fever, and muscle pain.
- **Massage oil** – By mixing spearmint oil with carrier oils like almond oil or evening primrose oil, it can be applied to ease body pains, menstrual pain, and muscle spasms.
- **Topical application** – Add a few drops of this oil to your skincare products and it may help treat itching, athlete's foot, dermatitis, insect bites, and other skin conditions.
- **Taken internally** – Ingesting spearmint oil can help treat digestive problems. However, this should never be done without the aid of a professional aromatherapist.

Is Spearmint Oil Safe?

Like other essential oils, using spearmint undiluted can cause skin sensitivities. It should first be blended with carrier oils like olive oil, almond oil, and [coconut oil](#). Using it topically without any carrier oil may cause skin irritations, burning, and even photosensitivity.

To determine if you have sensitivity to any of these herbal oils, apply a drop to a small area of your skin and observe if there are any adverse effects. If you have sensitive skin, it is wise to avoid using essential oils altogether, or to consult a professional before use.

Despite the potential for skin irritation, spearmint oil can be used to effectively stimulate the mucous membranes found in the digestive, respiratory, and urinary tracts.

Spearmint oil has a “Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS)” for ingestion rating from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).¹⁹ However, it should not be ingested without the presence of an experienced aromatherapy practitioner.

Pregnant women should avoid using spearmint oil, as it promotes the secretion of estrogen and potentially increase the possibility of miscarriage.²⁰ It is gentler than peppermint oil and can be used on children for their benefits on digestive health,²¹ I

but I recommend consulting your physician or an experienced aromatherapist prior to using spearmint oil.

Side Effects of Spearmint Oil

Overexposure to herbal oils due to inhalation can induce headaches, skin irritations, nausea, lightheadedness, and even emotional problems.[22](#)

The advice of a professional should be sought prior to using spearmint oil or any herbal oil.