

Peppermint Essential Oil

The aroma of peppermint essential oil is familiar and refreshing – and most people can benefit from inhaling it. Part of the mint oil family which also includes spearmint and water mint, peppermint essential oil is a versatile oil, perhaps almost as popular and widely-used as lavender.

Peppermint oil properties

Peppermint essential oil contains menthol and menthone, both of which can be used for pain relief as well as to energize. They also help to prevent growth of harmful bacteria. It has many uses both topically and as an inhalation and can be used orally under supervision or as part of a commercial preparation such as in IBS tablets. Its anti-microbial properties and delicious scent make it great for use in home-made cleaning products as well as to relieve headaches, muscle soreness and nasal congestion. Peppermint essential oil can be safely used to help boost body and mind, and for overall health.

Peppermint oil has been studied for its effects on the symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). Results from several studies indicate that [it can be a safe and effective short-term treatment for IBS](#).

What to use peppermint essential oil for

You can use peppermint oil around the house as a cleaning ingredient, as well as in aromatherapy, in your relaxing bath, and even in some cosmetic products. It's also wonderful in a sports massage. Add just a few drops to a home-made spray cleaner and use it on bathrooms and kitchens. Peppermint is also a great, non-toxic natural deterrent for pests and insects.

Medically, peppermint essential oil is a great all-rounder that helps to relieve muscle spasms and flatulence (including symptoms of IBS) and is effective for cramps, or tired, sore muscles as part of an aromatherapy massage.

If you have a cold, break out the peppermint oil in a steam inhalation or diffuser, as its pungent scent can help to cut through congestion and help aid breathing. Like lavender, an inhalation of peppermint oil can soothe nervous tension and irritability, and if your irritability is down to a headache, the peppermint oil can work on that too; peppermint is thought to help relieve migraines and sore heads. It can even help get rid of feelings of nausea if rubbed behind the ears.

Safety and precautions

In low dilutions, peppermint oil is non-toxic and shouldn't irritate the skin but its menthol content may irritate skin and mucus membranes. It should never be used around eyes, inner ears, or sensitive areas.

Although peppermint oil can be safely taken internally, it's not advisable to do so unless part of a commercial preparation or under supervision from a professional aromatherapist. Overdose can lead to symptoms such as vomiting, slow or rapid breathing, convulsions, depression, and even unconsciousness, so if accidentally swallowed, seek medical advice.

Pregnant and nursing women should not use peppermint essential oil without medical advice.

Due to its stimulant properties, using peppermint essential oil on a daily basis can cause sleep problems.

Did you know?

Peppermint is mentioned in Greek mythology - the nymph 'Mentha' was transformed into a sweet-smelling herb so that she releases her aroma every time she is stepped on.

Aristotle believed peppermint to be a natural aphrodisiac, and Alexander the Great actually forbade soldiers from consuming it in case it 'conjured erotic and distracting feelings.'