

✓ [Evidence Based](#)

Top 15 Peppermint Oil Uses and Benefits, for Gut Health, Headaches & More

By [Dr. Josh Axe, DC, DMN, CNS](#)

August 3, 2019



Listen to this Article

Sam Scholl

1×



Instaread

What Is Peppermint Oil? | Top 15 Oil Uses and Benefits |
How to Use It Safely | Precautions, Side Effects and Interactions



Peppermint oil is one of the most versatile essential oils out there. It can be used aromatically, topically and internally to address a number of health concerns, from muscles aches and seasonal allergy symptoms, to low

energy and digestive complaints. It's also commonly used to boost energy levels and improve both skin and hair health.

According to a [review](#) conducted by the USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University, peppermint has significant antimicrobial and antiviral activities. It also works as a strong antioxidant, displays anti-tumor actions in lab studies, shows anti-allergenic potential and pain-killing effects, helps to relax the gastrointestinal tract and may be chemopreventive.

It's no wonder why peppermint oil is one of the most popular essential oils in the world and why I recommend that everyone has it in his or her medicine cabinet at home.

What Is Peppermint Oil?

Peppermint is a hybrid species of spearmint and water mint (*Mentha aquatica*). The essential oils are gathered by CO2 or cold extraction of the fresh aerial parts of the flowering plant. The most active ingredients include menthol (50–60 percent) and menthone (10–30 percent).

Forms

You can find peppermint in several forms, including peppermint essential oil, peppermint leaves, peppermint spray and peppermint tablets. Menthol is the most active ingredient in peppermint and it gives the leaves their invigorating and energizing effects. Menthol oil is commonly used in balms, shampoos and other body products for its beneficial properties.

History

Not only is peppermint oil one of the oldest European herbs [used for medicinal purposes](#), other historical accounts date its use to ancient Japanese and Chinese folk medicine. It's also mentioned in Greek

mythology when the nymph Mentha (or Minthe) was transformed into a sweet-smelling herb by Pluto, who had fallen in love with her and wanted people to appreciate her for years to come.

The many peppermint oil uses have been documented back to 1,000 B.C. and have been found in several Egyptian pyramids.

Today, peppermint oil is recommended for its anti-nausea benefits and soothing effects on the gastric lining and colon. It's also valued for its cooling effects and helps to relieve sore muscles when used topically. In addition to this, peppermint essential oil displays antimicrobial properties, which is why it can be used to fight infections and even freshen your breath. Pretty impressive, right?

Top 15 Oil Uses and Benefits

Some of the many uses and benefits of peppermint oil include:

1. Relieve Muscle and Joint Pain

If you are wondering if peppermint oil is good for pain, the answer is a resounding “yes!” Peppermint essential oil is a very effective natural painkiller and muscle relaxant. It also has cooling, invigorating and antispasmodic properties. Peppermint oil is especially helpful in alleviating a tension headache, in one clinical trial performing as well as acetaminophen.

A study shows that peppermint oil applied topically has pain relief benefits associated with fibromyalgia and myofascial pain syndrome. Researchers found that peppermint oil, eucalyptus, menthol, capsaicin and other herbal preparations may be helpful because they work as topical analgesics.

To use peppermint oil for pain relief, simply apply 2–3 drops topically to the area of concern three times daily, add 5 drops to a warm water bath

with Epsom salt or try my recipe for [Homemade Muscle Rub](#). Combining peppermint with lavender oil is also a great way to help your body relax and reduce muscle pain.

2. Sinus Care and Other Respiratory Benefits

Inhaling diffused peppermint oil can help to unclog your sinuses and offer relief from a scratchy throat. Peppermint acts as an expectorant, helping to open your airways, clear mucus and reduce congestion, and is one of the [best essential oils for colds](#), the flu, cough, sinusitis, asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory conditions.

[Lab studies](#) show that the compounds found in peppermint oil have antimicrobial, antiviral and antioxidant properties, meaning it may also help to fight infections that lead to symptoms involving the respiratory tract.

Mix peppermint oil it with coconut oil and [eucalyptus oil](#) to make my [Homemade Vapor Rub](#). You can also diffuse 5 drops of peppermint or apply 2–3 drops topically to your temples, chest and back of neck.

3. Seasonal Allergy Relief

Peppermint oil is highly effective at relaxing muscles in your nasal passages and helping to clear out the muck and pollen from your respiratory tract during allergy season. It's considered one of the best [essential oils for allergies](#) because of its expectorant, anti-inflammatory and invigorating properties.

A [lab study](#) published in the *European Journal of Medical Research* found that menthol displayed potential therapeutic efficacy for the treatment of chronic inflammatory disorders such as allergic rhinitis, colitis and bronchial asthma.

To help relieve seasonal allergies symptoms, diffuse peppermint and eucalyptus oil at home, or apply 2–3 drops of peppermint oil topically to

your temples, chest and back of neck.

4. Increase Energy and Improve Exercise Performance

For a non-toxic alternative to dangerous energy drinks, take a few whiffs of peppermint. It will help to boost your energy levels on long road trips, in school or any other time you need to “burn the midnight oil.” Peppermint oil may also help to improve memory and alertness when inhaled. And it can be used to enhance your physical performance, whether you need a little push during your weekly workouts or you are training for an athletic event.

A study published in the *Avicenna Journal of Phytomedicine* investigated the effects of peppermint ingestion on exercise performance. Thirty healthy male college students were randomly divided into experimental and control groups. They were given a single oral dose of peppermint essential oil and measurements were taken on their physiological parameters and performance.

Researchers observed significant improvements in all of the tested variables after ingestion of peppermint oil. Those in the experimental group showed an incremental and significant increase in their grip force, standing vertical jump and standing long jump. The peppermint oil group also showed a significant increase in the amount of air that is exhaled from the lungs, peak breathing flow rate and peak exhaling flow rate, which suggests that peppermint may have a positive effect on the bronchial smooth muscles.

To boost your energy levels and improve concentration with peppermint oil, take 1–2 drops internally with a glass of water, or apply 2–3 drops topically to your temples and back of neck.



TOP PEPPERMINT OIL USES

Peppermint is a hybrid specie of spearmint and water mint (*Mentha aquatica*)



spearmint



peppermint



water mint

The essential oils are gathered by CO₂ or cold extraction of the fresh aerial parts of the flowering plant.

The most active ingredients include menthol (50-60%) and menthone (10-30%).





THE TOP PEPPERMINT OIL USES INCLUDE

1

RELIEVE MUSCLE AND JOINT PAIN

Rub into the area of concern 3x daily

2-3 DROPS



Add to a warm water bath with Epsom salt

5 DROPS



2

PROVIDE SINUS CARE AND OTHER RESPIRATORY BENEFITS

Rub temples, chest and back of neck

2-3 DROPS



Add to diffuser

5 DROPS



3

PROVIDE SEASONAL ALLERGY RELIEF

Rub temples, chest and back of neck

2-3 DROPS



Add to diffuser with eucalyptus oil

2-3 DROPS EACH



4

INCREASE ENERGY AND IMPROVE EXERCISE PERFORMANCE

Drink with a glass of water

1-2 DROPS



Rub temples and back of neck

2-3 DROPS EACH



5

ALLEVIATE HEADACHES

Rub temples, forehead and back of neck

2-3 DROPS



6

IMPROVE IBS SYMPTOMS

Drink with a glass of water

1-2 DROPS



Rub abdomen area

2-3 DROPS



7

FRESHEN BREATH AND SUPPORT ORAL HEALTH

1 DROP

Add to toothpaste



Add under tongue before drinking
a glass of water

1 DROP



8

PROMOTE HAIR GROWTH AND REDUCE DANDRUFF

Add to shampoo or conditioner

2-3 DROPS



Massage into scalp while showering

2-3 DROPS



9

RELIEVE ITCHINESS

Rub into the area of concern 3x daily

2-3 DROPS



For sensitive skin, combine with coconut oil 1:1

2-3 DROPS



Add to warm water bath

5-10 DROPS



10

REPEL BUGS NATURALLY

Rub into exposed skin areas (2.5 hours use)

2-3 DROPS



11

REDUCE NAUSEA

Inhale directly from bottle

Add to glass of distilled water

1 DROP

Rub behind ears

1-2 DROPS

12

IMPROVE SKIN HEALTH

Mix with lavender oil 1:1 and apply to area of concern

2-3 DROPS

13

PROVIDE SUNBURN PROTECTION AND RELIEF

Mix with half-teaspoon of coconut oil and apply to skin

2-3 DROPS**Dr. Axe**

5. Alleviate Headaches

Peppermint oil for headaches has the ability to improve circulation, soothe the gut and relax tense muscles. All of these conditions can cause tension headaches or migraines, making peppermint oil one of the best essential oils for headaches.

A clinical trial from researchers at the Neurological Clinic at the University of Kiel, Germany, found that a combination of peppermint oil, eucalyptus oil and ethanol had a “significant analgesic effect with a reduction in sensitivity to headaches.” When these oils were applied to the forehead and temples, they also increased cognitive performance, and had a muscle-relaxing and mentally relaxing effect.

To use peppermint oil as a natural headache remedy, simply apply 2–3 drops to your temples, forehead and back of neck.

6. Improve IBS Symptoms

Peppermint oil capsules have been shown to be effective at naturally treating irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Peppermint oil for IBS reduces spasms in the colon, relaxes the muscles of your intestines, and can help to reduce bloating and gassiness.

A placebo-controlled, randomized clinical trial found a 50 percent reduction in IBS symptoms with 75 percent of patients who used it. When 57 patients with IBS were treated with two peppermint oil capsules twice a day for four weeks or placebo, a majority of the patients in the peppermint group experienced improved symptoms, including reduced abdominal bleeding, abdominal pain or discomfort, diarrhea, constipation and urgency at defecation.

To help relieve IBS symptoms, try taking 1–2 drops of peppermint oil internally with a glass of water or adding it to a capsule before meals. You can also apply 2–3 drops topically to your abdomen.

7. Freshen Breath and Support Oral Health

Tried-and-true for well over 1,000 years, mint oil has been used to naturally freshen breath. This is probably due to the way peppermint oil kills bacteria and fungus that can lead to cavities or infection.

And a lab study published in the *European Journal of Dentistry* found that

peppermint oil (along with [tea tree oil](#) and thyme essential oil) displayed antimicrobial activities against oral pathogens, including *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Enterococcus fecalis*, *Escherichia coli* and *Candida albicans*.

To boost your oral health and freshen your breath, try making my [Homemade Baking Soda Toothpaste](#) or [Homemade Mouthwash](#). You can also add a drop of peppermint oil right to your store-bought toothpaste or add a drop under your tongue before drinking a glass of water.

8. Promote Hair Growth and Reduce Dandruff

Many people ask me “what does peppermint oil do for your hair?”

Peppermint oil is actually used in many high-quality hair care products because it can naturally thicken and nourish damaged hair. It can be used as a natural treatment for thinning hair, and it helps to stimulate the scalp and energize your mind.

Plus, menthol is a powerful [antiseptic agent](#), so it may help to remove germs that may buildup in your hair. Menthol is even used in [anti-dandruff shampoos](#).

Can peppermint oil regrow hair? It may actually be one of the best oils for hair growth. An [animal study](#) that tested the efficacy of peppermint oil for hair growth on mice showed that after topical application of peppermint for four weeks, there was a significant increase in dermal thickness, follicle number and follicle depth. Peppermint oil was more effective than topical application of saline, jojoba oil and minoxidil, a medication that’s used for hair growth.

To use peppermint oil for hair to promote hair growth and nourishment, simply add 2–3 drops of peppermint to your shampoo and conditioner. You can also make my [Homemade Rosemary Mint Shampoo](#), make a peppermint oil spray by adding 5–10 drops of oil to a spray bottle filled with water, or simply massage 2–3 drops of peppermint oil into your scalp while showering.

9. Relieve Itchiness

Research shows that the menthol content found in peppermint oil inhibits itching. A triple-blind clinical trial involving 96 randomly selected pregnant women diagnosed with pruritus tested peppermint's ability to improve symptoms. Pruritus is a common skin problem that's associated with a frustrating, ongoing itchiness that cannot be soothed.

For the study, women applied a combination of peppermint oil and sesame oil or placebo twice a day for two weeks. Researchers found that the severity of the itch in the treated group showed a significant statistical difference compared to the placebo group.

Living with itchiness can be a pain. To help relieve itching with peppermint, simply apply 2–3 drops topically to the area of concern or add 5–10 drops to a warm water bath. If you are using peppermint on sensitive skin, combine it with equal parts carrier oil before topical application. You can also mix peppermint oil into a lotion or cream in place of the carrier oil. You can also combine peppermint oil with lavender oil for itch relief, as lavender has soothing properties.

10. Repel Bugs Naturally

Unlike us humans, a number of little critters hate the smell of peppermint oil, including ants, spiders, cockroaches, mosquitos, mice and possibly even lice. This makes peppermint oil for spiders, peppermint oil for ants, peppermint oil for mice and other pests an effective and natural rebelling agent. Peppermint oil for ticks may also be effective.

A review of plant-based insect repellents published in *Malaria Journal* found that the most effective plant essential oils used in bug repellents include peppermint, lemongrass, geraniol, pine, cedar, thyme and patchouli and clove. These oils have shown to repel malaria, filarial and yellow fever vectors for 60–180 minutes.

A further study showed that peppermint oil resulted in 150 minutes of complete protection time against mosquitos, with just 0.1 mL of oil applied on the arms. The researchers noted that after 150 minutes, the efficacy of peppermint oil decreased and needed to be reapplied.

11. Reduce Nausea

When 34 patients experienced post-operative nausea after undergoing cardiac surgery and they used a nasal inhaler that contained peppermint oil, their nausea levels were found to be significantly different than before inhaling peppermint.

The patients were asked to rate their feelings of nausea on a scale of 0 to 5, with 5 being the greatest nausea. The average score went from 3.29 before peppermint oil inhalation, to 1.44 two minutes after using peppermint.

To get rid of nausea, simply inhale peppermint oil directly from the bottle, add one drop of peppermint oil to a glass of distilled water or rub 1–2 drops behind your ears.

12. Improve Colic Symptoms

There is research that suggests peppermint oil can be useful as a natural colic remedy. According to a crossover study published in *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, using peppermint oil is equally effective as the drug Simethione for treating infantile colic, without the side effects associated with prescribed medications.

Researchers found that the mean crying time among infants with colic went from 192 minutes per day to 111 minutes per day. All mothers reported an equal decrease of frequency and duration of colic episodes among those using peppermint oil and Simethione, a medication that's used to relieve gassiness, bloating and stomach discomfort.

For the study, infants were given one drop of *Mentha piperita* per kilogram

of body weight once a day for a seven-day period. Before using peppermint oil on your infant, I recommend that you discuss this treatment plan with your child's pediatrician.

13. Boost Skin Health

Peppermint oil has calming, softening, toning and anti-inflammatory effects on the skin when it's used topically. Peppermint oil also has antiseptic and antimicrobial properties.

A review of essential oils as potential antimicrobials to treat skin diseases published in *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* found that peppermint oil is effective when used to reduce blackheads, chicken pox, greasy skin, dermatitis, inflammation, itchy skin, ringworm, scabies and sunburn.

To improve the health of your skin and use peppermint oil as a home remedy for acne, mix 2–3 drops of peppermint with equal parts lavender essential oil and apply the combination topically to the area of concern.

14. Sunburn Protection and Relief

Peppermint oil can hydrate burnt skin and relieve the pain from sunburns. It can also be used to help prevent sunburn. An in vitro study found that peppermint oil has a SPF (sun protection factor) value that's higher than most other essential oils, including lavender, eucalyptus, tea tree and rose oils.

To help heal your skin after sun exposure and to help protect your skin from sunburn, mix 2–3 drops of peppermint oil with a half-teaspoon of coconut oil and apply it directly to your skin, or make my natural homemade sunburn spray to relieve pain and support healthy skin renewal.

15. Potential Anti-Cancer Agent

Although more research is needed in this area, some lab studies indicate that peppermint may be useful as an anticancer agent. One such study found that the compound menthol inhibits prostate cancer growth by inducing cell death and regulating cellular processes.

How to Use It Safely

Peppermint oil is incredibly versatile. It's safe for both internal and external use in appropriate amounts and can be used with or without a carrier oil to dilute it (when used topically). Here are some safe and effective ways to use peppermint oil in your day-to-day routine:

Diffuse it. Want to feel awake and alert? Try adding about 5 drops of peppermint oil to a diffuser for an energizing scent that easily fills a room. You may even find you start to breathe easier! (Just follow essential oil safety guidelines and breathe it in as the scent diffuses through the room — there's no need to hold your head over the air coming from the diffuser.)

Cook with it. Using edible essential oils, like peppermint, in cooking is an incredible, *natural* way to get not only peppermint oil benefits, but also a great minty punch to dishes. Peppermint bark, anyone?

Add it to smoothies or drinks. Many people wonder — Can you drink peppermint oil? Whether it's a drop in your water or two drops in a smoothie, pure peppermint oil can really give a refreshing kick to a beverage. Plus, it's a great choice for fighting off bacteria and stomach issues.

Create a massage oil with it. Can you apply peppermint oil directly to skin? Yes! Since peppermint oil soothes, cools and invigorates, it's the perfect ingredient for massage oil. Dilute several drops in almond or grapeseed oil. For bonus relaxation, add lavender and eucalyptus.

Scrub your feet with it. Tired of cosmetics and personal care products full of unknown, unsavory chemicals? I recommend making your own whenever you can. Peppermint oil makes a great addition to an exfoliating foot scrub to give your feet a treat.

Grow it at home: Growing peppermint is a great way to reap the plant's benefits at home. The peppermint plant needs a good amount of sun and plenty of water. It won't tolerate dry conditions. To make peppermint tea with your home-grown leaves, simply add 5-10 leaves to a mug and muddle them. Then pour hot water over the leaves and let it steep for about 10 minutes.

The possibilities are virtually endless. People use peppermint oil in DIY shampoos, hairsprays, lip balms and more.

Precautions, Side Effects and Interactions

Although it's such a beneficial and effective remedy, there are some peppermint essential oil warnings to keep in mind. Can peppermint oil hurt you? It's considered safe when used appropriately.

When you are using peppermint on sensitive skin, always dilute it with a carrier oil (like coconut oil) first. If you're new to using peppermint oil, it's a good idea to try a patch test on a small area of skin before applying peppermint oil to larger surfaces.

I don't recommend using peppermint oil on the face or chest of infants or young children because it can cause skin irritations. There also isn't enough evidence to recommend peppermint oil use for women who are pregnant or nursing.

Is peppermint oil safe for dogs? Because peppermint oil for fleas is so effective, it's commonly used in dog flea repellents. Peppermint oil for dogs can also be used to cool sore muscles and soothe upset stomachs. It's

recommended using peppermint oil topically for dogs by adding it to dog-friendly shampoos.

As for a related question you may be wondering: Is peppermint oil safe for cats? I don't recommend using peppermint oil for cats because it may cause adverse side effects. Instead, using spearmint oil on cats may help to relieve nausea, diarrhea and other digestive issues. When looking at peppermint vs. spearmint, peppermint's flavor and fragrance is much stronger because it has a higher menthol content.

Is peppermint oil toxic to humans? Peppermint oil is *likely safe* when taken by mouth in amounts commonly found in food, and when used topically and aromatically.

Is peppermint oil good to drink? The answer is generally yes, but only in small amounts. That being said, taking excessive amounts of the oil orally can be toxic, so remember that a little bit goes a long way and all you need is 1–2 drops at a time. For some people, ingesting it may cause peppermint oil side effects for some that include heartburn, flushing, mouth sores and headache.

Some prescription medications and over-the-counter medications may adversely interact with peppermint oil. Enteric-coated peppermint oil supplements may cause rapid dissolving, leading to heartburn, nausea and rapid absorption of some medications.

The following medications carry a “moderate” potential for interaction with peppermint oil:

Neoral, Sandimmune, Elavil, Haldol, Zofran, Inderal, Theo-Dur, Calan, Isoptin, Prilosec, Prevacid, Protonix, Diazepam, Valium, Soma, Viracept, Cataflam, Voltaren, Ibuprofen/Motrin, Mobic, Feldene, Celebrex, Elavil, Warfarin/Coumadin, Glucotrol, losartan, Cozaar, Mevacor, Nizoral, Sporanox, Allegra, Halcion.

The following medications carry a “minor” potential for interaction with peppermint oil:

Over-the-counter and prescription antacids including Tums, Rolaids, Ripan, Bilagog, Amphojel, Tagamet, Zantac, Axid, Pepcid, Prilosec, Prevacid, Aciphex, Protonix, Nexium.

Natural supplement precautions:

Peppermint can reduce the absorption of iron when taken simultaneously. If you're taking iron supplements and peppermint oil, allow at least three hours between the two. Peppermint oil also increases the absorption of quercetin when taken at the same time, so allow at least three hours between taking these together as well.

Final Thoughts

- Peppermint is a hybrid species of spearmint and water mint (*Mentha aquatica*). What is peppermint oil used for? It's known for its cooling, invigorating, expectorant, antimicrobial, antispasmodic, energy boosting and pain-relieving properties.
- Peppermint oil is one of the oldest European herbs used for medicinal purposes and its menthol content is responsible for many of its therapeutic benefits.
- The top uses for peppermint oil and peppermint benefits include its ability to:

- relieve muscle and joint pain
 - provide sinus care and other respiratory benefits
 - provide seasonal allergy relief
 - increase energy and improve exercise performance
 - alleviate headaches
 - improve IBS symptoms
 - freshen breath and support oral health
 - promote hair growth and reduce dandruff
 - relieve itchiness
 - repel bugs naturally
 - reduce nausea
 - improve colic symptoms
 - improve skin health
 - provide sunburn protection and relief
- What are the side effects of peppermint oil? For people with a sensitivity to peppermint oil, it may cause headache, heart burn and adverse skin reactions. It should not be used on the skin of infants or young children.

Ad

An advertisement featuring a smiling man, Dr. Josh Axe, in a kitchen setting. The text on the right side of the image promotes Ancient Nutrition products available on Amazon. The text includes a 'Did you know?' header, the product availability information, the Amazon logo, and a 'Shop Products Now' call to action with a right-pointing arrow.

Did you know?
ANCIENT NUTRITION products are
available at **amazon**
Shop Products Now >

Dr. Josh Axe
Co-Founder Ancient Nutrition