

Peppermint Oil

This fact sheet provides basic information about peppermint oil—uses, potential side effects, and resources for more information. The herb peppermint, a cross between two types of mint (water mint and spearmint), grows throughout Europe and North America. Peppermint is often used to flavor foods, and the leaves can be used fresh or dried in teas.

Common Name—peppermint oil

Latin Name—*Mentha x piperita*

What It Is Used For

- Peppermint oil has been used for a variety of health conditions, including nausea, indigestion, and cold symptoms.
- Peppermint oil is also used for headaches, muscle and nerve pain, and stomach and bowel conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome.

How It Is Used

Essential oil of peppermint can be taken in very small doses in capsule or liquid forms. The essential oil can also be diluted with another oil and applied to the skin.

What the Science Says

- Results from several studies suggest that peppermint oil may improve symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome.
- A few studies have found that peppermint oil, in combination with caraway oil, may help relieve indigestion, but this evidence is preliminary.
- Although there are some promising results, there is no clear-cut evidence to support the use of peppermint oil for other health conditions.

Side Effects and Cautions

- Peppermint oil appears to be safe for most adults when used in small doses. Possible side effects include allergic reactions and heartburn.
- Capsules containing peppermint oil are often coated to reduce the likelihood of heartburn. If they are taken at the same time as medicines such as antacids, this coating can break down more quickly and increase the risk of heartburn and nausea.
- Tell your health care providers about any complementary and alternative practices you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care.

Sources

Peppermint. Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database Web site. Accessed at <http://www.naturaldatabase.com> on December 28, 2006.

Peppermint oil (*Mentha x piperita* L.). Natural Standard Database Web site. Accessed at <http://www.naturalstandard.com> on December 28, 2006.

Peppermint. In: Blumenthal M, Goldberg A, Brinckman J, eds. *Herbal Medicine: Expanded Commission E Monographs*. Newton, MA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2000:297-303.

For More Information

Visit the NCCAM Web site at nccam.nih.gov and view:

- *What's in the Bottle? An Introduction to Dietary Supplements* at nccam.nih.gov/health/bottle/
- *Herbal Supplements: Consider Safety, Too* at nccam.nih.gov/health/supplement-safety/

NCCAM Clearinghouse

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-644-6226

TTY (for deaf and hard-of-hearing callers): 1-866-464-3615

E-mail: info@nccam.nih.gov

CAM on PubMed

Web site: nccam.nih.gov/camonpubmed/

NIH Office of Dietary Supplements

Web site: www.ods.od.nih.gov

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