

Peppermint

Mentha x piperita L.

[Fam. *Lamiaceae*]

OVERVIEW

Peppermint is one of the most popular herbs in teas, candies, and chewing gums. The U.S. is the world's leading producer of peppermint oil, making an average of 4,117 tons annually. Although the traditional use is as a tea to improve digestion, most clinical trials have studied the oil in enteric-coated capsules used internally to treat irritable bowel syndrome and externally to treat tension headache.

USES

INTERNAL: Peppermint leaf: General indigestion and non-ulcer dyspepsia. Peppermint oil: Irritable bowel syndrome (enteric-coated capsules); colonic spasm during barium enema and during colonoscopy; catarrh of upper respiratory tract and inflammation of mucous linings of the mouth.

EXTERNAL: Peppermint oil: Tension headaches (oil solution rubbed on forehead and temples; use extreme caution with undiluted peppermint oil); for muscle and nerve pain (usually in the form of liniments).

DOSAGE

Internal

CONCENTRATED PEPPERMINT WATER: 0.25–1.0 ml.

DRIED LEAF: 1–4 g, 3 times daily after meals for flatulent digestive pains.

INFUSION (TEA): Pour about 150 ml of boiled water over 1.5 g of dried leaf, steep for 5–10 minutes in a covered vessel, squeeze tea bag over the cup, and take 2–5 times daily on an empty stomach to relieve upset stomach.

PEPPERMINT SPIRIT: 20 drops (1 ml) with water.

TINCTURE: 2–5 ml; 3 times daily [1:5 (g/ml), 45% ethanol].

ESSENTIAL OIL: 6–12 drops total daily dose [EDITOR'S NOTE: Caution: Peppermint oil is highly concentrated; therefore, divide into 3 doses and dilute in water or juice.]; 0.05–0.2 ml 3 times daily.

ESSENTIAL OIL IN ENTERIC-COATED CAPSULE: 0.2 ml oil (187 mg), 3 times daily with water before meals for irritable colon.

INHALANT: 3–4 drops of essential oil added to hot

water and the steam vapor inhaled deeply.

Combination Preparations

ESSENTIAL OIL: 90 mg peppermint oil and 50 mg caraway oil, 1 enteric-coated capsule, 3 times daily, before meals, for non-ulcer dyspepsia.

External

ESSENTIAL OIL: Spread on forehead and temples. Repeat after 15–30 minutes for tension headache.

ESSENTIAL OIL: Drops rubbed in the affected skin areas, should be diluted with lukewarm water or vegetable oil.

NASAL OINTMENT: Semi-solid preparation containing 1–5% essential oil.

TINCTURE: Aqueous-alcoholic preparation containing 5–10% essential oil for local application.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

CRUDE HERB: Gallstones, esophageal reflux.

ESSENTIAL OIL: Achlorhydria (absence of free hydrochloric acid in gastric juice), obstruction of bile ducts, gallbladder inflammation, and severe liver damage. Consult with a healthcare provider before using peppermint oil in cases of gallstones.

Peppermint oil should not be used on the faces (particularly the noses) of infants and small children. Peppermint oil is contraindicated for infants and small children because of the potential risk of spasms of the tongue or respiratory arrest.

PREGNANCY AND LACTATION: No known restrictions.

ADVERSE EFFECTS

No adverse effects are known. Oral-contact sensitivity to peppermint oil and/or menthol has caused side effects of burning-mouth syndrome, recurrent oral ulceration, or a skin condition known as lichenoid reaction.

DRUG INTERACTIONS

Peppermint preparations may interfere with gastrointestinal-stimulant drugs (e.g., cisapride) used to treat nighttime heartburn. Use of peppermint oil capsules with antacids or during meals can cause the oil to be released prematurely, resulting in a loss of effectiveness.

Comments

When using a dietary supplement, purchase it from a reliable source. For best results, use the same brand of product throughout the period of use. As with all medications and dietary supplements, please inform your healthcare provider of all herbs and medications you are taking. Interactions may occur between medications and herbs or even among different herbs when taken at the same time. Treat your herbal supplement with care by taking it as directed, storing it as advised on the label, and keeping it out of the reach of children and pets. Consult your healthcare provider with any questions.



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