



Essential Oil of the Month: Peppermint

-By. Kathy Padecky, Aromatherapist, HHP

Peppermint

Botanical Name: *Mentha piperita*. *Menthe* is derived from the Latin word meaning thought.

Why I love this essential oil: Peppermint is refreshing. It reminds me of Christmas and candy canes. When I was a little girl, my mom would rub peppermint salve on my upset tummy. Peppermint is soothing and comforting. It reminds me of a York Peppermint patty, a yummy taste. On a hot day, peppermint essential oil mixed with a lotion is my first choice to cool my body. I rub it at the nape of my neck. Peppermint is in my bath and shower gel. It gives my hair a minty scent and produces a cooling sensation on my skin.

Scent and aroma: Peppermint has a strong, minty scent.



It has a sharp and clean scent. There are over 30 species of peppermint. Spearmint, *Mentha spicata*, is a member of the mint family. Pennyroyal, *Mentha pulegium* is also a member of the mint family.

Native to and history: Peppermint is cultivated in the USA, Brazil, Argentina, France, Italy, Morocco, China, Poland and Eastern Europe. The USA is the largest producer of peppermint. It is primarily grown in Oregon, Idaho, Indiana, Washington and Wisconsin.

The oldest surviving medical text, the Ebers papyrus was written in 1550 B.C. This 110-page scroll listed 700 formulas and remedies including mint. The Egyptians used mint in their incense ceremonies. Ancient hieroglyphics found in the temple of Edfu in Egypt, listed peppermint as a ritual perfume. The Greeks and Romans used

peppermint for daily hygiene and in the preparation of sauces and wine making. The Greeks and Romans crowned themselves with peppermint leaves on holiday feasts. In Greek mythology, Zeus believed that peppermint stimulated clarity and enhanced a person's intuition.

As early as the 14th century, peppermint was used to whiten teeth and remove tobacco odor. Peppermint essential oil was distilled in England in 1750.

Chemistry: Peppermint's main chemical component is menthol (alcohol). Alcohols are anti-microbial and support the immune system. Peppermint also contains two chemical constituents of the alcohol family called thymol and carvacrol. They are antiseptic, germicidal, anti-bacterial. It also contains esters. The principle ester in peppermint essential oil is menthyl acetate. This gives peppermint its minty aroma. Menthyl acetate is non-toxic and is effective for fungal and yeast infections. Menthol gives peppermint its characteristic cooling taste. Peppermint also contains sesquiterpenes which are sedative, anti-inflammatory and antispasmodic.

Part of the plant: Peppermint is a perennial plant that grows from 11 to 39 inches tall. It has sharp, pointed, toothed lanceolate leaves that are wider in the middle. The plant has white and mauve flowers. The essential oil is extracted from the leaves and stems and flowering tops by steam distillation.

Peppermint may help the body to recover from the following:

Asthma	Bronchitis	Candida	Colds
Colic	Cramps	Depression	Diarrhea
Digestive Aid	Dysmenorrhea	Fainting	Fatigue
Fever	Flatulence	Flu	Heartburn
Hot flashes	Liver	Mental fatigue	Migraines
Nausea	Pneumonia	Shock	
Toothache	Varicose veins	Vertigo	

Body, Mind, Spirit Connection: Body: Peppermint is an adaptogenic essential oil. It will cool the body when someone is hot and warm the body when cold. One of the most impressive qualities is the anesthetic effect on the digestive system in acute conditions. When someone is experiencing diarrhea, constipation, colic, flatulence, nervous stomach, halitosis, gall stones or nausea, it relaxes the stomach muscles. I have had multiple experiences with peppermint. One of my first times teaching in front of a group, I had butterflies in my stomach. I applied peppermint to my stomach and I obtained instant relief. It is remarkable in soothing indigestion. I always carry a bottle of peppermint in my purse. Peppermint is my first choice when I have a headache. I dilute peppermint with a lotion or cream and apply to an area where someone is experiencing pain.

Mind: Peppermint cools and relieves anger, hysteria, nervous trembling, and helplessness. It is also effective for depression and panic attacks. Peppermint stimulates the nerves and brain and enhances concentration. By innervating the brain, the essential oil of peppermint, has the capability to stimulate recall as well as stimulate the ability to memorize and concentrate. Essential oils evoke and enhance intellectual, emotional and physical functions of awareness. When you inhale peppermint essential oil while studying, you recall the same stimulus while taking an exam. You should have smelled my anatomy class during the final exam. The class smelled like a peppermint factory.

Peppermint is a tonic to the heart and mind. It is extremely effective for dizziness, vertigo, fainting and shock. A dear friend of mine was having chemotherapy for cervical cancer. I had her inhale the scent of peppermint and her nauseous disappeared. Peppermint is highly impressive essential oil for general first aid.

Spirit: Peppermint makes a person feel emotionally refreshed and rejuvenated. There is a sense of calmness and self-acceptance when using this essential oil.

Contraindications and Precautions: Peppermint is an adaptogenic essential oil. It can either stimulate or sedate depending on the condition. It must be diluted with a carrier oil or lotion. It may cause an allergic reaction when applied to the neck, mouth or throat area. Do not use in the first trimester of pregnancy or while breast feeding. Use with caution with people having high blood pressure. Refrain from applying on damaged or sensitive skin. Keep away from mucous membranes and the eyes. It is powerful enough to antidote homeopathic remedies.

Avoid storing or mixing peppermint essential oil in plastic bottles. As with all essential oils they extract toxins and

chemicals from the body. In an aromatherapy workshop, I performed an experiment of placing 3 drops of peppermint in a Styrofoam cup of water. At the end of the 7 hour class, the peppermint reacted with the Styrofoam creating a black ring around the rim of the cup.

Peppermint blends with: Basil, cedarwood, cypress, lavender, mandarin, marjoram, melaleuca, pine and rosemary

Essential Oil Recipes:

Migraine Rub

2 tablespoons of your favorite carrier oil
5 drops of cypress
5 drops of Eucalyptus radiata
5 drops of lemon
5 drops of peppermint
Blend the oils and apply to the shoulders, neck and temples.

Reviving Foot Soak

3 drops of peppermint
Add the peppermint essential oil to a large bowl of water. Soak for 10 minutes to relieve tired and swollen feet. I have tried this and it is most effective.

Relief from muscular aches and pains

5 drops of peppermint
5 drops of Eucalyptus radiata
Add peppermint and eucalyptus to your favorite massage oil or lotion. The cooling effects are soothing to achy muscles.

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About the Author: Kathy Padecky is an Aromatherapist and a Holistic Health Practitioner (HHP). She began working in the holistic health field in 1981 and teaches various massage modalities, aromatherapy, and hydrotherapy at the International Professional School of Bodywork (IPSB). Ms. Padecky is also publisher of the "Sacred Scents" Newsletter.

