Nearly everyone knows the Bible story about the three wise men who took gifts of frankincense, gold, and myrrh to baby Jesus. For many, the story is our earliest memory of (and sometimes only reference to) the word “myrrh.” Not many understand the particular significance of these gifts. This article will explain why myrrh essential oil in particular was such a valuable gift, as well as some of the wonderful healing qualities myrrh has to offer.

How Myrrh Essential Oil is Created

Myrrh and frankincense both come from the plant family known as Burseraceae. They are trees which tend to grow best in the poor soil conditions of Somalia, Ethiopia, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia, although they also grow in other parts of the world. To create myrrh essential oil, first the bark of the tree is cut. The tear-shaped droplets of resin that leak out are given time to harden and then scraped off the trunk of the tree. Once harvested, the resin is then steam-distilled to create myrrh essential oil.

Although frankincense and myrrh are often mentioned together (and they do come from the same plant family), they have quite different aromas. The aroma of myrrh, for someone who has never experienced it, can be described as earthy. More medicinal than frankincense, with hints of bitter, spicy, and musty notes all combined.
There are dozens of species of myrrh, but only a few have been studied for their therapeutic properties. Most commonly used are *Commiphora myrrha* (also known as *Commiphora molmol*), *Commiphora guidotti*, and *Commophora wightii* (also known as “guggul” in the traditional medicine of India).

**Historical Use of Myrrh**

Myrrh is mentioned many times in one of the oldest known medical texts, the *Ebers Papyrus*. The text dates back to the 16th century B.C. and is a treasure trove of ancient Egyptian prescriptions and recipes. The Egyptians even used myrrh as part of the embalming process. **Myrrh was mentioned more frequently than any other plant in Hippocrates’ medical writings** in the fourth and third centuries B.C. Both the Old and New Testaments mention myrrh frequently.

Hildegard von Bingen, the famous German abbess and herbalist (1098-1179), used myrrh in some of her healing medicines.

The people of the Middle East and North Africa have a long tradition of myrrh use. For nearly five millennia, myrrh has been utilized as incense, perfume, an insect repellent, and in healing salves for sores and wounds that won’t heal. It has also been used in rejuvenating skin treatments (it’s great for wrinkles), for indigestion, bad breath (the resin is chewed like gum), bronchial infections, and even hemorrhoids.

Myrrh has been used from ancient times right up to the present day in traditional Chinese medicine for many and varied health concerns. **It was worth more than gold in ancient times!**

**Why Did Myrrh Fall Out of Favor?**

Despite the wonderful healing qualities of myrrh and frankincense, they both fell out of favor when the Roman Empire fell, and with the rise of Christianity. The burning of incense was forbidden in the early years of Christianity because of its association with pagan worship. This destroyed a thriving trade in both frankincense and myrrh that had developed over hundreds of years. Later, some denominations (particularly the Catholic Church), resumed the burning of these aromatic resins during specific rites. Recently, so much research has been carried out on both frankincense and myrrh, it is doubtful that we will ever ignore their amazing therapeutic benefits again.
The Many Healing Benefits of Myrrh Essential Oil

The scientific studies that have been carried out on myrrh have proven it has antioxidant, astringent, anti-tumoral, anti-inflammatory, anti-fungal, anti-parasitic, antiviral, and analgesic (pain relieving) benefits.

Without getting too heavily into the chemistry of essential oils, two of the most active compounds found in myrrh are known as terpenoids and sesquiterpenes. Inside the body these two compounds have some vastly interesting functions. **They are highly anti-inflammatory, and potent antiseptics.**

Sesquiterpenes also have one more wonderful quality – they have the ability to cross through the **blood-brain barrier**. This means they can influence the brain by passing from the blood into the brain. The blood-brain barrier is an extremely secure and selective tissue barrier. It protects the fragile tissues of the brain and central nervous system.

The blood-brain barrier only allows certain compounds to pass through it – things that are necessary for brain function. Research has demonstrated that certain sesquiterpenes in essential oils can cross the blood-brain barrier because of their small molecular size. They stimulate the limbic system of the brain, which is the center of emotions and memory. They also stimulate the hypothalamus (known as the master gland), pineal, and pituitary glands. Sesquiterpenes have a wonderfully calming and balancing effect on our emotions and nervous system.

**Significant Research on Myrrh’s Healing Abilities:**

**Inflammatory Bowel Disease** – Saudi research published in the *Journal of Experimental and Therapeutic Medicine* in August 2016 investigated the effects of myrrh on mice with ulcerative colitis, an inflammatory bowel disease. The myrrh worked as well as a commonly used drug, mesalazine, due to its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Myrrh also helped to protect against ulcerative colitis.

**Anti-Bacterial, Wound Healing** – Joint research performed by Indian and Malaysian scientists, published in May 2016 in the *Open Dentistry Journal* found that myrrh was a potent anti-bacterial. Researchers stated that myrrh worked as well for eliminating oral bacteria as chlorhexidine, a much-used antibacterial agent, in the treatment of dental bacteria. Myrrh also worked better than licorice or neem, the other two substances studied. The problem with chlorhexidine is that research indicates it increases the risk of heart attack, raises blood pressure, and kills off the good bacteria that help blood vessels relax. The use of myrrh is not associated with these risks.

Joint Sudanese and Malaysian research on myrrh published in 2009 found that it had antibacterial activity against several strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* and MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *S. aureus*), two virulent strains of bacteria which are defeating modern antibiotics.
British research reported in the journal *Phytotherapy Research* in October 2008 found that myrrh made the commonly-used antibiotic drugs ciprofloxacin and tetracycline more effective against *Staphylococcus aureus*, several Salmonella strains, and several other bacterial strains.

**Anti-Fungal** – Iranian research published in Pharmaceutical Biology in October 2015 found myrrh to be helpful for fungal skin infections.

Serbian researchers also discovered that myrrh (along with frankincense and elemi essential oils) is a potent antifungal agent. The research, published in May 2016 in the *Experimental and Clinical Services Journal*, found that the phytochemicals (natural plant chemicals) in these oils had strong effects against *Candida albicans*, as well as 60 other fungal strains. Since an overgrowth of fungus in the body can often be a prelude to cancer and other diseases, this is great news.

**Anti-Tumoral** – Welsh researchers, in a study published in *Phytotherapy Research* in March 2016, found that a phytochemical from myrrh known as beta-bisabolene showed cytotoxic (this means toxic against cancer cells) activity against four lines of human breast cancer cells. Amongst these are **triple negative and HER2 positive breast cancers**, both of which tend to be more aggressive forms of breast cancer.

Research reported in March 2015 in *Oncology Reports* by Chinese researchers found that a phytochemical extracted from myrrh resin had cytotoxic effects on prostate cancer cells. It induced cell cycle arrest and apoptosis (programmed cell death, a feature which is lacking in cancer cells). Indeed, older Chinese research published in 2011 in the journal *Acta Pharmacologica Sinica* found that the sesquiterpenes from myrrh inhibited androgen receptor signalling in human prostate cancer cells. The researchers said that sesquiterpenoids “could be developed as novel therapeutic agents for treating prostate cancer.”

American research published in the *Journal of Natural Products* in November 2001 discovered six sesquiterpenoids in myrrh resin, one of which had cytotoxic activity against MCF-7 breast cancer cells. This line of cells is estrogen-receptor positive (ER+) and progesterone-receptor positive (PR+), infiltrating ductal carcinoma with metastases. This same cell line was investigated in Chinese research reported in October 2013 in the journal *Oncology Letters*. These researchers found that myrrh worked better than frankincense on MCF-7 cancer cells. They deduced it was the phytochemical beta-elemene in myrrh that induced apoptosis and provided anti-tumor activity in these cells.

Saudi research on mice, appearing in the *Chemotherapy Journal* in September 1994, found that the antitumor effect of myrrh was comparable to the standard cancer drug cyclophosphamide.

Research reported in the *Journal of Medicinal Plants Research* in April 2011 found that myrrh reduced the proliferation (this describes the ability of a cancer cell to grow and spread) of human cancer cells in eight different cancer cell lines, particularly gynecological cancers.
**Antiparasitic** – A small study reported in August 2001 in the *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* investigated seven patients who were passing Fasciola eggs in their stools. These patients were treated with a “drug” formulation that consisted of eight parts resin and three-and-a-half parts volatile oils, all extracted from myrrh. The Fasciola eggs were no longer detectable in the feces three weeks after treatment. Researchers concluded that the formulation was safe, well tolerated, and effective for treating fascioliasis.

**Analgesic, Anti-inflammatory, Anti-hyperlipidemic** – It is known that myrrh has been used for thousands of years for its excellent pain relieving and anti-inflammatory benefits. Egyptian researchers found it did all that and one more great thing. An Egyptian animal study published in 2014 in the *Journal of Intercultural Ethnopharmacology* found that myrrh had significant pain relieving and anti-inflammatory actions. Interestingly, myrrh also normalized high levels of blood lipids in obese rats!

### 3 Ways to Receive the Benefits of Myrrh Essential Oil

1. **Inhalation.** Myrrh provides wonderful relief for upper respiratory infections. Just place a few drops of oil into your hands and place them over your nose and mouth (being cautious to avoid the eyes). Breathe in deeply for a couple of minutes. This method is one of the best ways to get the essential oil into your bloodstream and working. You can also diffuse several drops of myrrh into the room where you are sitting by using a cool mist ultrasonic diffuser. It is best not to heat essential oils as this can ruin some of their therapeutic benefits.

2. **External Application.** Using an organic carrier oil (e.g. almond, jojoba, hemp, coconut), dilute and massage myrrh oil into the skin. You can also add a drop or two of myrrh to your favorite organic cosmetic and personal care products such as body wash, cleanser, moisturizer, toner, shampoo, or conditioner. Additionally, you can enjoy a healing bath by placing a few drops of myrrh into one cup of Epsom salts. Dissolve this mixture into a hot bath and soak.

3. **Internal Application.** Myrrh essential oil has been deemed to be safe for human consumption by the United States Food & Drug Administration (USFDA). To take internally, put a drop or two of oil in three to four ounces (about 100 ml) of liquid such as almond or rice milk. It can also be placed into a teaspoon of honey. Be sure to read “Precautions for Using Myrrh” below before using internally.
Precautions for Using Myrrh Essential Oil

Use of myrrh essential oil is not recommended for:

- Pregnant and nursing women
- Children under age five. In older children, be sure to dilute heavily.
- Diabetics should avoid myrrh as it may have an interaction with diabetes medications.
- People undergoing surgery – it is best to stop using myrrh at least two weeks prior to surgery.
- Anyone taking anti-coagulants such as Warfarin because myrrh may have an interaction with this medication.
• Taking high doses can have possible side effects so it is unwise to do this unless you are working with a knowledgeable healthcare practitioner.

• It is not advisable to use any essential oil as the sole treatment for cancer, or for any of the other health issues mentioned in this article. When used in conjunction with other conventional and alternative medical treatments, however, essential oils can be effective in helping the body heal.

Source file: https://thetruthaboutcancer.com/myrrh-essential-oil/