Peppermint (Mentha piperita) is one of the most loved essential oils. And no wonder, as it’s incredibly beneficial for so many diverse health problems. Read on to discover different ways to use peppermint essential oil to improve your health (some of which are rather surprising!), along with what research has uncovered about this amazingly healing oil.

Peppermint Through the Ages

It is believed that prehistoric people used peppermint medicinally, but of course there are no records in existence for us to draw upon. Peppermint is one of the world’s oldest medicines though. It has a long history of documented use, going back as far as Roman times when the Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder described its use. Ancient Romans and Greeks used peppermint to flavor food, wine, and sweets. Aristotle mentions peppermint being used as an aphrodisiac! The ancient Egyptians were also known to have grown and used peppermint.

Peppermint begins to be mentioned for therapeutic uses in Europe in the mid-18th century. Traditional herbalists used peppermint mainly for relieving digestive difficulties such as stomach aches, gas, diarrhea, and indigestion. It was also used in the treatment of colds, flu, nervous disorders, cholera, and to ease tension headaches. Peppermint is still being used for many of these complaints today.
How is Peppermint Essential Oil Made?

Peppermint essential oil is steam distilled from the leaves and stems of the plant. The phytochemicals (natural plant-based chemicals) found within a good quality, medicinal grade peppermint essential oil are noteworthy. They include menthol, which is the most abundant phytochemical in peppermint oil, up to 50%. Also important are menthone, menthofuran, menthyl acetate, 1.8-cineole, pulegone, perillyl alcohol, limonene, beta-pinene, and beta-caryophyllene. Many of these phytochemicals are currently being studied for their anti-cancer benefits.

Peppermint also contains flavonoids, primarily eriocitrin, luteolin, and hesperidin. As with many plants, the phytochemical profile of peppermint varies according to the season it is harvested and environmental growing conditions.

13 of the Best Uses (from A-Z) for Peppermint Essential Oil

1. Anti-cancer:

There exists a multitude of research studies on peppermint. Much of the anti-cancer benefits of peppermint are due to its phytochemical content. Limonene, beta-pinene, and beta-caryophyllene are all highly anti-cancer phytochemicals with plenty of anti-cancer research on them. In a 2012 animal study reported in the journal *PloS One*, **peppermint had cytotoxic effects against lung carcinoma, leukemia, and gastric cancer cells**. This same research indicated peppermint was a potent anti-inflammatory, important in cancer because cancer is such a pro-inflammatory process in the body. Researchers also found peppermint to have antioxidant properties.

Another animal study reported in 2014 in the *Journal of Oral Pathology & Medicine* found that peppermint inhibited the initiation and promotion of tongue cancer in mice. It also showed that peppermint has a chemopreventive ("chemo" means cancer) effect.

A 2015 study released in the *American Journal of Cancer Research* found that perillyl alcohol (one of the phytochemicals in peppermint, referred to as "POH" in the study) was effective for those with malignant brain tumors. The study reported that "**clinical trials in Brazil have explored intranasal POH delivery as an alternative to circumvent the toxic limitations of oral administration. In these trials, patients with recurrent malignant gliomas were given comparatively small doses of POH via simple inhalation through the nose. Results from these studies show this type of long-term, daily chemotherapy to be well tolerated and effective.**"

*These researchers agreed that perillyl alcohol had chemopreventive activity, suppressed tumor growth, and had antiangiogenic properties*
(the ability of tumors to develop their own blood supply to feed them) both in animals and humans.

An older 2011 in vitro (test tube) study reported in the Internal Journal of Toxicology indicated that peppermint had cytotoxic (“cyto” means cell) activity. It also had anti-cancer activity against six different cancer cell lines – cervical, breast, acute T-cell leukemia, bladder, pancreatic, and colorectal cancer.

Menthol has also recently been studied for its anti-cancer effects, most notably against prostate cancer cells. Two studies reported in 2012 that menthol influences gene expression, has cytotoxic activity, and inhibits the proliferation (spread) of prostate cancer cells. A study reported in 2009 revealed that menthol enhances the anti-proliferative activity of vitamin D3 in prostate cancer.

2. Antimicrobial:

There are a number of studies attesting to the antimicrobial properties of peppermint, making it great for wound healing, respiratory infections, tonsillitis, bronchitis, laryngitis. One particular study found peppermint oil to be potent against E. coli. It also inhibited bacteria exhibiting resistance to antibiotic drugs, Shigella sonei, Staphylococcus aureus, and Micrococcus flavus. Hospitals, take note!

3. Digestive Aid:

Peppermint oil is amazingly healing for the digestive tract. There are many studies on peppermint oil and its ability to relieve the symptoms of IBS (irritable bowel syndrome). A 2007 Italian study reported in the Journal of Digestive Liver Disease found a 50% reduction in the symptoms of IBS for 75 percent of patients who used peppermint oil. That is truly significant! Peppermint has powerful antispasmodic properties, which is probably why it works so well. It is effective for stomach aches, flatulence, and diarrhea.

4. Fever Reduction:

While it isn’t a good idea to break a fever at its very onset (a fever is the body’s way of killing invading microbes), there are times when you may need to step in and reduce it. Peppermint oil works very well for this. See “Tips for Using” below for more on how it works.

5. Fungal Infections:

Fungal infections are problematic and can be difficult to eradicate. Candida albicans is especially hard to get rid of. Recent research (2015) indicated the phytochemicals within peppermint oil exerted powerful anti-fungal activity and was quite effective against candida.

6. Headaches & Migraines:

A 2016 research study in Germany found that topical treatment with peppermint oil was significantly more effective in treatment of tension
headaches than a placebo. It was also comparable to the efficacy of acetylsalicylic acid (Aspirin) and paracetamol (Tylenol). Peppermint oil helps to relieve migraines as well. A 2010 Iranian study on menthol found that pain, nausea, and the other symptoms associated with migraines were much improved by applying menthol to the forehead and temples of 35 patients with migraines.

7. Nausea:

Peppermint has long been used as a treatment for nausea. It is also effective, however, for chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting. A 2013 study found that both peppermint and spearmint reduced the intensity and frequency of nausea associated with chemotherapy.

8. Pain Relief:

Due in large part to its menthol content, peppermint oil is wonderful for pain relief. Peppermint is good for sore muscles, achy joints, neuralgia, cold sores, fibromyalgia, and many other painful conditions. It appears to work not only by interrupting the pain signal from the sore place to the brain, but also helps to ease pain due to its anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties.

9. Promotes Hair Regrowth:

A Chinese animal study reported in 2014 in Toxicological Research demonstrated that peppermint essential oil may be helpful for hair loss. Animals were divided into four groups, and saline, jojoba oil, minoxidil and peppermint oil were applied to the skin of shaved mice for 4 weeks. Only the peppermint oil group exhibited a significant increase in skin thickness, hair follicle numbers, depth of hair follicles and hair regrowth. The researchers said that at week three, the peppermint oil "remarkably promoted hair growth." In fact, the growth was better than saline and jojoba and even greater than the minoxidil (Rogaine), a popular hair regrowth drug. Further, they reported that at week four the peppermint oil showed hair regrowth at about 92%, whereas minoxidil about only at 55%.

10. Radioprotective / Neuroprotective:

2010 research reported in the Journal of Cancer Research and Therapeutics admitted that radiation-induced damage to normal tissues "restricts the therapeutic doses of radiation that can be delivered to tumors and thereby limits the effectiveness of the treatment." Researchers found that peppermint protected the testes, gastrointestinal tract, and hematopoietic stem cells in mice. In addition, 2013 research on mice published in Cytotechnology found that peppermint played a significant role in protecting neurons from radiation damage.

11. Respiratory Problems:

Peppermint oil contains vitamins C and A, omega-3 fatty acids, and minerals such as phosphorus, magnesium, calcium, and potassium – all of which are useful for any condition where mucus is present. It is the menthol content,
however, which makes peppermint oil so helpful for respiratory problems. It is a natural decongestant (it dissolves mucus). It has natural anti-histamine properties and will not cause sleepiness.

Peppermint also relaxes the muscles of the respiratory tract – it is a natural bronchodilator. All of these things, combined with its antibacterial and antiviral benefits, make it excellent for colds, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), exercise-induced asthma, allergies, bronchitis, sinusitis, and flu.

12. Skin Complaints:

Due to its anti-inflammatory properties, peppermint essential oil eases skin conditions such as dermatitis, eczema, and psoriasis. It can ease the pain of sunburn and is excellent for chapped lips. Because of its ability to inhibit bacterial growth and reduce inflammation, it’s also wonderful for acne.

13. Weight Loss:

Inhaling peppermint essential oil can stave off the munchies and help you feel full a little more quickly. A 1994 study reported that inhaling peppermint oil affected the satiety center in the hypothalamus. This was a 6-month study with over 3,000 people, during which time the average weight loss experienced was 30 pounds (13.6 kilograms).
5 Tips For Using Peppermint Essential Oil

1. **For Pain Relief** – Massage peppermint oil directly into affected areas. Applied to the skin (transdermally), essential oils are easily absorbed by the body within approximately 20 minutes. See information on dilution in precautions below.

2. **For Respiratory Problems** – You can try one of the following techniques:

   (a) Diffuse the oil into the room using a cool mist or ultrasonic diffuser. Do not heat essential oils as it diminishes their therapeutic benefits.

   (b) Place a drop or two of peppermint oil into the palms of the hands and breathe in deeply. It will be absorbed into the bloodstream rapidly through the lungs and sinuses. Be careful to avoid the eyes.

   (c) For congested sinuses, place one drop of peppermint oil in the palm of your hand, lick it off with your tongue, and then place your tongue on the soft palate (the roof of your mouth). Breathe in. Instant relief!

3. **For Reducing a Fever** – in a bowl, put one teaspoon of an organic carrier oil (eg. olive, coconut, or almond), add 1 drop of peppermint essential oil. Mix it and apply the oil to the bottoms of the feet and back of the neck. Check your temperature again in 30 minutes or so – it should be reduced by one or two degrees. See precautions below if working with a child.

4. **For Indigestion or Stomach Ache** – rub one drop of peppermint oil across the stomach. You can also take it internally in a capsule with a glass of water. Or simply put one drop in a glass of water and mix it (no, oil and water don’t combine well, but the oil will disperse to a degree) and drink the water.

5. **For Hair Regrowth** – do a skin test first on a small patch of skin to ensure your scalp is not overly sensitive to peppermint oil. Wait 30 minutes or so – if no irritation occurs, proceed. In a small glass bowl add two drops of peppermint oil to one tablespoon of a good organic carrier oil such as jojoba or coconut.Massage the oil into the scalp and leave for at least half an hour. Remember the research study above showed the best results after week four, so be persistent. Be sure no oil gets in the eyes.

Precautions When Working With Peppermint Essential Oil

If you intend to use peppermint essential oil medicinally, it’s important that your essential oil supplier knows what they are doing when growing and distilling the herb. Only buy from a trusted source and organic is best.
Be aware that peppermint essential oil is extremely condensed. **One drop of peppermint oil has the menthol content of over 20 cups of peppermint tea.** Be extremely cautious when using peppermint on or near the face, especially with children. Never apply essential oils anywhere near eyes or ears. Be sure to dilute with an organic carrier oil if you have sensitive skin.

Always dilute peppermint for children. It is recommended to avoid using peppermint oil with children under two unless you absolutely need to (for instance, for reducing fever). From six months up to six years of age, use one drop of peppermint essential oil to 4 teaspoons of carrier oil. For children over six years, elderly adults, or pregnant women, use 1 drop of peppermint oil per teaspoon of carrier oil.

It is not recommended to use any essential oil as a stand-alone treatment for cancer or the other disorders mentioned in this article. However, when used in combination with other therapies, both natural and conventional, essential oils can play a wonderful role in the healing process.

**Source file:**
https://thetruthaboutcancer.com/peppermint-essential-oil/