

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

Peppermint

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by Dr. Christopher
from the 100 Herb Syllabus

Peppermint is classed as a stimulant herb, the most pungent of all the mints. Dr. Christopher also recommended it as a marvelous antispasmodic, which can give tone to the entire body as well. It is a soothing sedative for nervous and restless people of all ages, promoting relaxation and sleep--a wonderful combination of characteristics. On top of all that, it is a very delicious and welcome tea.



HOME REMEDY

Peppermint is used for most of the minor ailments that plague people. It is a prime remedy for colds and flu. The classic formula for these ailments, which is said to break a fever quickly, is a combination of equal parts of peppermint and elder flowers. This is made in a tea and given hot to the sick person, who goes to bed and keeps warm until he begins to sweat. Sweating always breaks the fever (and that is why we hurry to make the patient sweat; dry fever kills, but a moist, sweating fever kills germs and brings the patient to better health than he was before the illness). You can also make hot cups of tea, as strong as you like, for the same purpose, without the elder flowers. The formula is soothing for restlessness and nervousness that often accompany the onset of illness; it can be used to calm people of any age no matter what reason their nervousness.

In place of aspirin or other inorganic, harmful painkilling drugs, take a cup of strong peppermint tea, lying down for a little while. It should relieve the pain quickly; if need be, take two or three cups. This strengthens the nerves instead of weakening them as so many of the drugs do. Furthermore, it has been shown that aspirin destroys some of the bacteria-resistant protection in man; peppermint tea, on the other hand, only strengthens the person against disease.

For severe pain, Shook recommended a strong decoction of peppermint. This was made by mixing 3 ounces of peppermint leaves, cut, in 1 quart of hot distilled water. This was covered and let stand for two hours. Bring to a boil, then simmer slowly for five minutes. Add 4 ounces glycerine and again simmer for five minutes. Strain, cool, and bottle. This is given when a person suffers pains and feelings of discomfort in the stomach and abdominal region without knowing the cause.

This brings us to the other most common use of peppermint, the relief of gas in the system. Many people, because they lack sufficient enzymes, or do not chew their food properly, or eat improper

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combinations of foods or improper foods, suffer from flatulence. Some foods, such as the legumes, contain chemicals which cause gas formation in the system (although certain methods of cooking them can reduce the gas considerably). However, many people take a cup of Peppermint tea after meals as insurance against flatulence. Taken with meals, it will assist digestion generally and is much a preferable beverage for everyday use instead of coffee or tea, which hinder proper digestion and cause health problems generally. The mint will get rid of a queasy stomach and nausea; for this purpose it is often mixed with chamomile, which has pain reducing and relaxing properties as well. Many of us have experienced sudden, sharp pains in the abdomen, which are often caused by pockets of gas cramping in the system. Peppermint relieves these almost immediately; it is therefore a good remedy for colic in infants. The leaves can be slightly warmed and bound on the infant's abdomen, which is a good method especially in cases of small infants who cannot tolerate the proper amount of tea.

Peppermint is a powerful stimulant, and will bring the body to its natural warmth, helping in cases of sudden dizzy or fainting spells, with extreme coldness and a pale countenance.

It is given in cases of diarrhea, and some doctors consider that it is one of the surest, as well as the simplest, remedies for this complaint. As soon as the diarrhea appears, drop 15 drops of essence of Peppermint in a cup of hot water, and sip with a spoon as hot as can be borne. Repeat every three hours until cured. The essence of Peppermint is also valuable in a nervous sick headache, such as a migraine. To a cupful of water add one teaspoonful of the essence; saturate a cloth with it and apply to the head and temples. For many persons this gives quick relief. As soon as the cloth becomes dry, wet the cloth again. This is one of the few herbs that the oil and essence are used without danger of overdosing, although they should always be mixed with water for internal use.

The oil of Peppermint can be applied, straight, to an aching tooth while awaiting a trip to the dentist. It works, like oil of Cloves, to relieve the pain.

To make an excellent liniment for reducing the pains of rheumatism, sciatica, lumbago, stiff and swollen joints, congestion of the chest, sore throat, and so on, including sores, even purulent sores and gangrene, Dr. Shook recommended making Liniment of Peppermint. To do so, heat 1 pint of pure olive oil, and add to it 1 dram (teaspoonful) of oil of Peppermint, 1 dram, menthol crystals, and 1 dram of flowers of camphor. Mix in a warm jar or bottle, shaking until dissolved. Let stand until cool, then keep in a cool place. This can also be used to reduce varicose veins, clear up acne, boils, abscesses, eczema, etc.

Of course, one of the nicest uses of Peppermint is culinary. Euell Gibbons pointed out that to him Peppermint wasn't a medicine, but a delightful food. He had samples of wild mint analyzed for vitamins A and C and found that the freshly picked plant, had, on the average, approximately as much vitamin C as the same weight of oranges, and more carotene, or provitamin A, than do carrots, making this herb an excellent source of both vitamins (Gibbons:74). Instead of just an occasional garnish or flavoring you can use mint freely in your diet. In the near East, it is the main ingredient of salads, some of the best Gibbons has ever eaten, he said. Add a quantity of

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finely-chopped mint to almost any tossed salad, for it seemed (to him) to combine well with all salad materials. It must be chopped very fine, and the salad must be thoroughly tossed, but don't be afraid to add enough mint. When it is tempered by oil and vinegar and mingled with the flavors of other greens, it takes at least a half-cupful of chopped mint to properly flavor a big bowl of salad.

Peppermint vinegar is made by filling a bottle with clean, freshly picked peppermint. Cover with apple cider vinegar and let steep for two weeks; strain off the vinegar. A small fresh sprig of mint can be added to the final bottles for beauty and quick identification. In small, decorative bottles, this is a lovely Christmas gift.

A good beverage is made by mixing cold Peppermint tea with apple juice and chilling. Mint ice cubes, frozen with a small sprig of mint in the center, make this a party drink.

Some people add cold Peppermint tea to their pie crusts instead of using Ice water. It makes a good flavor, subtle but pleasant.

Finely-chopped mint is wonderful added to fresh-fruit salads. You can garnish the combination with a few mint leaves.

Next week we will cover cultivation, collection and preparation of peppermint.