

Basil

Ocimum basilicum



Basil Benefits

Basil (Ocimum basilicum) is a popular kitchen herb used for flavouring food. It is also widely regarded for its health-enhancing properties. Basil has been a staple of medicine for generations and the herb has been used to treat a variety of different conditions, from inflammation to bug bites.

Health Benefits

Basil has long been considered an **anti-depressant**. It makes an excellent tea that acts on the adrenal cortex, and it can help the body stimulate hormones that regulate the body's natural response to stress. For this reason, many people believe that basil has uplifting properties. Basil may also be able to **improve memory**, and it is often utilized to overcome the effects of jet lag. Basil has been commonly found in a variety of treatments for diarrhea, intestinal parasites, fevers, and skin infections. It is also thought to imitate estrogen, and may help **regulate the menstrual cycle**. In addition, basil may **stimulate the immune system** and lower the uric acid content that is responsible for arthritis and gout. Basil can also be used to treat the pain and inflammation of arthritis.

Active Ingredients

Basil contains large quantities of E-Beta-Caryophyllene (BCP) which may be **useful in treating arthritis or bowel diseases**. BCP is one of the only products that naturally stimulates the body's

cannabinoid receptors, and it can block the signals that lead to inflammation associated with arthritis. Basil also contains eugenol, cintronellol, linalool, and myrcene.

Using Basil Leaves

Basil can be used in a variety of ways. The fresh leaves can be made into a poultice, or the seeds can be ground and added to meals. Basil also has **antiseptic properties**, and when the leaves are rubbed onto bug bites they can help **reduce itching**. Another outstanding use of basil is as an **insect repellent**. The herb is often made into tinctures, and because basil is an expectorant, it can help **fight bronchitis and coughs**. Basil is good for a wide variety of lung ailments, and when it is combined with elecampane and hyssop, it can be brewed into a tea that helps fight head colds. When consumed as a hot tea, basil can either be taken internally or inhaled, and the herb is often found in a variety of **aromatherapy** products.

The Benefits of Basil Essential Oil

Basil essential oil is a type of [essential oil](#) commonly used in [aromatherapy](#). Sourced from the *Ocimum basilicum* plant, basil essential oil is said to offer a variety of health benefits.

Basil essential oil contains a number of compounds thought to enhance health. These compounds include linalool, a substance also found in lavender that's been shown to reduce stress in several scientific studies.

How Does It Work?

In aromatherapy, inhaling the aroma of basil essential oil (or absorbing basil essential oil through the skin) is thought to transmit messages to a brain region involved in controlling emotions.

Known as the limbic system, this brain region also influences the nervous system. Aromatherapy proponents suggest that essential oils may affect a number of biological factors, including heart rate, stress levels, blood pressure, breathing, and [immune function](#).

Uses

In alternative medicine, basil essential oil is typically used for the following health problems:

- [acne](#)
- [anxiety](#)
- [bronchitis](#)
- [colds](#)
- [coughs](#)
- [depression](#)
- fatigue
- [gout](#)
- [indigestion](#)
- [sinusitis](#)

In addition, basil essential oil is said to enhance mood, improve digestion, increase alertness, and soothe muscle aches.

Basil essential oil is also sometimes used as an [insect repellent](#).

Health Benefits

Preliminary research suggests that basil essential oil may offer certain health benefits. For example, several laboratory studies published in 2003 to 2012 indicate that basil essential oil may possess anti-cancer,² anti-fungal,³ and antibacterial properties.⁴ However, it's important to note these studies did not involve humans.

In addition, a study published in the journal *Biomedica* suggests that basil essential oil may aid in the treatment of acne.⁵

For the study, 28 people with acne were assigned to eight weeks of treatment with one of four formulations:

- A blend of orange and basil essential oils
- Essential oils mixed with acetic acid (a compound sometimes used as an ingredient in skincare products)
- Keratolytic medication (a type of medicine designed to remove lesions from the skin)
- Keratolytic medication with acetic acid

By the study's end, all groups showed improvements in acne. The greatest improvements were seen in patients treated with the acetic acid mixtures.

It's important to note that none of these studies tested the aromatherapeutic use of basil essential oil and that more research is

needed before basil essential oil can be recommended in the treatment of any health condition.

How to Use It

When combined with a [carrier oil](#) (such as [jojoba](#), sweet almond, or avocado), basil essential oil can be applied directly to the skin or added to baths.

Basil essential oil also can be inhaled after sprinkling a few drops of the oil onto a cloth or tissue or through use of an aromatherapy diffuser or vaporizer.

Caveats

Basil essential oil should not be taken internally without the supervision of a health professional. Internal use of basil essential oil may have toxic effects.

In addition, some individuals may experience irritation when applying essential oils to the skin. A skin patch test should be done before using any new essential oil.

The oil should not be applied at full-strength to the skin or used in excessive amounts.

Pregnant women and children should consult their primary health care providers prior to using essential oils.

Alternatives

A number of essential oils may possess health effects similar to the purported benefits of basil essential oil. For example, the following oils have all been found to promote relaxation in scientific studies:

- [Bergamot essential oil](#)
- Lavender essential oil
- [Rose essential oil](#)

Using It for Health

Due to the limited research, it's too soon to recommend basil essential oil as a treatment for any condition. It's also important to note that self-treating a chronic condition with basil essential oil and

avoiding or delaying standard care may have serious consequences.

If you're considering using basil essential oil for any health purpose, make sure to consult your physician first.

Culinary Uses

Basil is often used in tomato dishes, and it forms a crucial part of **pesto**. It is also said to complement the flavour of peaches very nicely. Just a few fresh leaves, or a sprinkling of dried leaves, are all that is needed to add a distinct flavor to any type of dish.