

Chamomile



Chamomile Benefits

*The word chamomile actually refers to a range of different daisy-like plants, which are a member of the Asteraceae family. There are many different species of chamomile, the two most commonly being German chamomile (*Marticaria recutita*) and Roman chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*). They have been used since Ancient times for their calming and anti-inflammatory properties, and each offer their own additional health benefits.*

History

Chamomile is an age-old medicinal herb known in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. Chamomile's popularity grew throughout the Middle Ages when people turned to it as a remedy for numerous medical complaints including asthma, colic, fevers, inflammations, nausea, nervous complaints, children's ailments, skin diseases and cancer. As a popular remedy, it may be thought of as the European counterpart of the Chinese tonic [Ginseng](#).

Habitat

Chamomile are native in many countries throughout Europe, and are cultivated in such countries as Germany, Egypt, France, Spain, Italy, Morocco, and parts of Eastern Europe. The various different Chamomile plants are very distinct and require their own set of conditions to grow. For example, Roman chamomile is a perennial plant (meaning it will live more than two years). It grows close to the ground and has smallish blossoming flowers. It tends to be bitter

when used in teas. German chamomile, on the other hand, is a sweeter variety. It is an annual plant and can grow large blossoms up to three feet in height.

Active Ingredients

The plant's healing properties come from its daisy-like flowers, which contain volatile oils (including bisabolol, bisabolol oxides A and B, and matricin) as well as flavonoids (particularly a compound called apigenin) and other therapeutic substances.

Health Benefits

Chamomile has been used for centuries in teas as a mild, relaxing sleep aid, treatment for fevers, colds, stomach ailments, and as an anti-inflammatory, to name only a few therapeutic uses. Chamomile may be used internally or externally. Extensive scientific research over the past 20 years has confirmed many of the traditional uses for the plant and established pharmacological mechanisms for the plant's therapeutic activity, including antipeptic, antispasmodic, antipyretic, antibacterial, antifungal, and anti-allergenic activity.

Recent and on-going research has identified chamomiles specific anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial, muscle relaxant, antispasmodic, anti-allergenic and sedative properties, validating its long-held reputation. This attention appears to have increased the popularity of the herb and nowadays Chamomile is included as a drug in the pharmacopoeia of 26 countries.

Specifically, chamomile may:

- As a tea, be used for lumbago, rheumatic problems and rashes.
- As a salve, be used for hemorrhoids and wounds.
- As a vapor, be used to alleviate cold symptoms or asthma.
- Relieve restlessness, teething problems, and colic in children.
- Relieve allergies, much as an antihistamine would.
- Aid in digestion when taken as a tea after meals.
- Relieve morning sickness during pregnancy.
- Speed healing of skin ulcers, wounds, or burns.
- Treat gastritis and ulcerative colitis.
- Reduce inflammation and facilitate bowel movement without acting directly as a purgative.
- Be used as a wash or compress for skin problems and inflammations, including inflammations of mucous tissue.
- Promote general relaxation and relieve stress.

Animal studies show that chamomile contains substances that act on the same parts of the brain and nervous system as anti-anxiety drugs. Never stop taking prescription medications, however, without consulting your doctor.

- Control insomnia. Chamomiles mildly sedating and muscle-relaxing effects may help those who suffer from insomnia to fall asleep more easily.
- Treat diverticular disease, irritable bowel problems and various gastrointestinal complaints. Chamomiles reported anti-inflammatory and antispasmodic actions relax the smooth muscles lining the stomach and intestine. The herb may therefore help to relieve nausea, heartburn, and stress-related flatulence. It may also be useful in the treatment of diverticular disorders and inflammatory bowel conditions such as Crohn's disease.
- Soothe skin rashes (including eczema), minor burns and sunburn. Used as a lotion or added in oil form to a cool bath, chamomile may ease the itching of eczema and other rashes and reduces skin inflammation. It may also speed healing and prevent bacterial infection.
- Treat eye inflammation and infection. Cooled chamomile tea can be used in a compress to help soothe tired, irritated eyes and it may even help treat conjunctivitis.
- Heal mouth sores and prevent gum disease. A chamomile mouthwash may help soothe mouth inflammations and keep gums healthy.
- Reduce menstrual cramps. Chamomiles believed ability to relax the smooth muscles of the uterus helps ease the discomfort of menstrual cramping.

Chamomile Essential Oil

Chamomile oil is an essential oil extracted from the chamomile flower.

Chamomile essential oil is extracted from the blossom (flowers) of the plant. To extract oil from the plants, most manufacturers use steam distillation. The flowers are placed in a still, where hot steam is then applied. The steam — which must be hot enough to penetrate the plant without burning it — forces the essential oil out of the plant so it can be collected independently. The amount of oil each plant yields depends on the variety - fresh Roman chamomile flowers tend to yield 1.7% essential oil, while German chamomile flowers yield only 0.2–0.4% essential oil.

Relaxation

The oil serves many medicinal purposes, but one of the best-documented uses is for relaxation. The oil has a calming effect on people, and can be used to help induce sleep, ease frayed nerves, and promote a general sense of calmness and well being. It is great for those with nervousness or anxiety problems. Aside from having mental calming properties, chamomile is also good at relaxing sore muscles and tight joints. It can ease menstrual cramps and back aches, as well as relax the digestive system to ease upset stomach or indigestion issues. When applied topically to the skin, it soothes redness and irritation. For this reason, it is a common ingredient in skincare. It also eliminates itchiness and is good for those with allergic reactions. Sometimes chamomile is used on rashes. Because of its anti-inflammatory properties, it can work to take down swelling caused by rashes or skin irritants.

Finally, the oil has antibacterial properties and can help to clean and protect wounds from infections. It is commonly used as an all-natural remedy for dental abscesses, conjunctivitis, and other infections.

Consumption

There are a wide variety of ways in which chamomile essential oil can be ingested or applied on the body, depending on the reason the product is being used. For example, the oil can either be applied topically—when dealing with skin problems, or ingested orally—for upset stomach or other gastrointestinal issues. To ingest the oil, it should be diluted into water, as only a small amount is highly potent. One to two drops in a glass of water should be sufficient for using as a mouthwash or ingesting for stomach problems. To use in a bath as an aromatherapy agent and muscle relaxant, less than 10 drops should still be sufficient.

The scent of the essential oil can be inhaled as a form of aromatherapy. The oil can be vaporized for aromatherapy use. This method works well to soothe nerves and headaches. It can be blended with another oil, such as sesame, mineral, or **olive**, to be used for massaging aching muscles and joints. Finally, the oil can be blended with other cream based lotions to provide relief from rashes and irritated skin.

Other Uses

In addition to medicinal use, chamomile enjoys wide usage, especially in Europe and the U.S., as a refreshing beverage tea and as an ingredient in numerous cosmetic and external preparations. Rob

McCaleb, President of the Herb Research Foundation in Boulder, Colorado estimates that over one million cups of Chamomile tea are ingested worldwide each day, making it probably the most widely consumed herbal tea.

Cautions

While chamomile essential oil is generally quite safely used by people of all ages, it is not recommended for those who are pregnant. Additionally, it is recommended that those with strong allergies to plants such as ragweed do a spot check on a small patch of skin before applying to the whole body. This is because chamomile can, on occasion, cause allergic reactions.

If you suffer from allergies to plants of the Compositae family (a large group including such flowers as daisies, ragweed, asters and chrysanthemums), you may wish to be cautious about using chamomile at first. While there have been isolated reports of allergic reactions, causing skin rashes and bronchial constriction, most people can use this herb with no problem.

Chamomile Herb Notes / Side Effects

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Common Names

Bodegold, Camomile, Chamomile, Common chamomile, German chamomile, Roman Chamomile, Hungarian chamomile, Sweet false chamomile, Wild chamomile

Suggested Properties

Anthelmintic, anti-allergenic, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory, anti-peptic, anti-pyretic, anti-septic, anti-spasmodic, carminative, diaphoretic, emmenagogue, sedative, stomachic

Indicated for

aiding digestion, aiding sleep, allergy relief, asthma, bacterial infections, burns and sunburn, burns (minor), Crohn's disease, colic, colds, conjunctivitis, diverticular disorders, eczema, eye inflammation and infection, facilitate bowel movement, gastritis,

gastrointestinal problems, hemorrhoids, heartburn, inflammation, inflammatory bowel conditions, insomnia, irritable bowel problems, lumbago, menstrual cramps, nausea, nervous complaints, peptic ulcers, rashes, relieving morning sickness, restlessness, rheumatic problems, skin ulcers, stress-related flatulence, stress relief, teething problems, ulcerative colitis, wounds