

Oregano

OTHER NAME: Carvacrol, Dostenkraut, European Oregano, Huile d'Origan, Marjolaine Bâtarde, Marjolaine Sauvage, Marjolaine Vivace, Mediterranean Oregano, Mountain Mint, Oil of Oregano, Oregano Oil, Organy, Origan, Origan Européen, Origan Vulgaris Herba, Origan, Origanum, Origanum vulgare, Phytoprogestin, Thé Sauvage, Thym des Bergers, Wild Marjoram, Winter Marjoram, Wintersweet.



Overview

Oregano is an herb with olive-green leaves and purple flowers. It grows 1-3 feet tall and is closely related to other herbs, including mint, thyme, marjoram, basil, sage, and lavender. The fresh and dry leaves are often used in cooking. It is also sometimes used as a medicine.

People sometimes use oregano for certain [lung](#), [stomach](#), and [skin](#) conditions, but there is no good scientific evidence to support these uses.

In foods and beverages, oregano is used as a spice and preservative.

How does it work ?

Oregano contains chemicals that might help reduce cough and spasms. Oregano also might help digestion by increasing bile flow and fighting against some bacteria, viruses, fungi, intestinal worms, and other parasites.

Uses & Effectiveness

Possibly Effective for

- **High cholesterol.** Clinical research shows that taking oregano after each meal for 3 months can reduce low-density lipoprotein cholesterol and increase high-density lipoprotein cholesterol in people with high cholesterol. However, **total cholesterol** and **triglyceride levels** are not affected.
- **Parasites** in the **intestines**. Taking oil of oregano for 6 weeks can kill the parasites *Blastocystis hominis*, *Entamoeba hartmanni*, and *Endolimax nana*.

Insufficient Evidence for

- Infection of the **intestines** by parasites. Some early research shows that taking oregano leaf oil might help kill certain types of parasites. But these parasites usually do not require medical treatment.
- Wound healing. Early research shows that applying an oregano extract to the skin twice daily for up to 14 days after a minor skin surgery might reduce the risk of infection and improve scars.
- A mild form of **gum disease (gingivitis)**.
- Acne.
- Asthma.
- **Athlete's foot** (*Tinea pedis*).
- **Canker sores**.
- **Common cold**.
- Cough.
- Dandruff.
- Diabetes.

- Flu (influenza).
- Headache.
- [Indigestion \(dyspepsia\)](#).
- Infections of the kidney, bladder, or urethra ([urinary tract infections](#) or UTIs).
- Insect repellent.
- [Joint pain](#).
- [Menstrual cramps](#) (dysmenorrhea).
- [Muscle pain](#).
- Ringworm (Tinea corporis).
- Ringworm of the scalp (Tinea capitis).
- Rough, [scaly skin](#) on the scalp and face ([seborrheic dermatitis](#)).
- Scaly, [itchy skin](#) ([psoriasis](#)).
- Swelling ([inflammation](#)) of the main airways in the lung ([bronchitis](#)).
- Swelling ([inflammation](#)) of the nasal cavity and sinuses (rhinosinusitis).
- [Toothache](#).
- [Varicose veins](#).
- Warts.
- Other conditions.

More evidence is needed to rate oregano for these uses.

Side Effects

When taken by mouth: Oregano leaf and oregano oil are **LIKELY SAFE** when taken in amounts commonly found in food. There isn't enough reliable information to know if oregano is safe to use in amounts greater than those found in food. Mild side effects include stomach upset.

When applied to the skin: There isn't enough reliable information to know if oregano oil is safe to apply to the skin. It may cause irritation when applied in concentrations greater than 1%.

Special Precautions and Warnings

Pregnancy and breast-feeding: Oregano is **POSSIBLY UNSAFE** when taken by mouth in medicinal amounts during pregnancy. There is concern that taking oregano in amounts larger than food amounts might cause miscarriage. There isn't enough reliable information to know if oregano is safe to use when breast-feeding. Stay on the safe side and avoid use.

Allergies: Oregano can cause reactions in people allergic to Lamiaceae family plants, including basil, hyssop, lavender, marjoram, mint, and sage.

Surgery: Oregano might increase the risk of bleeding. People who use large doses of oregano should stop 2 weeks before surgery.

What are the benefits of oregano oil?

Oregano oil is a product made from the oregano plant, *Origanum vulgare*. It contains a higher concentration of the helpful compounds that occur naturally in the plant.

This oil is available to use orally, unlike oregano essential oil, which is much more concentrated and used in aromatherapy. People should not take essential oils by mouth.

Whether a person applies it topically or takes an oral supplement, oregano oil may be helpful for a range of conditions.

Compounds in the oil have effective [antioxidant](#) and antimicrobial properties, which explain many of the benefits.

There are some risks and potential issues to consider before using oregano oil, and it may not be right for everyone. This article covers 10 of the most promising health benefits of oregano oil.



What is oregano oil?

—Oregano oil is a diluted oil that is safe to take orally.

Oregano, or *Origanum vulgare*, is a small, bushy plant that belongs to the [mint](#) family. It is a familiar culinary herb in Italian dishes.

Oregano oil contains high levels of important compounds in its leaves and smaller stems. Oil manufacturers dry the leaves and stems, then steam-distill the plant matter to extract as many compounds as possible.

Oregano oil contains:

- **carvacrol**, the main active compound in oregano oil and a type of antioxidant called a phenol
- **thymol**, which may help protect against toxins and fight fungal infections

While oregano oil contains a significant amount, the compound thymol occurs most abundantly in thyme.

1. Fighting bacteria

Thanks to the high levels of carvacrol, oregano oil may help fight certain types of bacteria.

For instance, *Staphylococcus* is a common type of bacteria that causes staph infection. Some strains occur naturally in the body, but when the bacteria grow too quickly, it can cause bothersome symptoms.

[ResearchTrusted Source](#) shows that carvacrol is effective in eliminating the bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Staphylococcus epidermidis*, two common causes of infection.

Taking oregano oil supplements or rubbing it on the skin may help a person make use of these antibacterial effects.

Researchers are also exploring the use of oregano oil for antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The authors of a study in *Frontiers in Microbiology*[Trusted Source](#) found that a combination of oregano oil and silver nanoparticles effectively eliminated all the bacteria they tested.

2. Treating small intestine bacterial overgrowth (SIBO)

Oregano oil may help treat chronic bacterial issues, such as SIBO. People with SIBO experience gastrointestinal problems due to an overgrowth of certain bacteria in their intestines.

A [2014 studyTrusted Source](#) found that herbal remedies, including one that contained high levels of both carvacrol and thymol, were effective tools in treating SIBO.

Exploring the individual effects of each compound will require more research, but these initial findings may be promising.

3. Treating fungal infections

Oregano oil also appears to be a potent antifungal agent thanks to high levels of thymol.

[Research from 2015 Trusted Source](#) found thymol to be an effective treatment for common *Candida* fungal infections.

Candida causes several types of infections, including:

- [oral thrush](#)
- yeast infections
- infected toenails or fingernails
- athlete's foot

The research was conducted in test tubes, however, and determining oregano oil's effectiveness will require more studies in humans.

4. Providing antioxidants

Oregano oil is also a potent antioxidant. Antioxidants help protect the body from damage caused by oxidative [stress](#) and free radicals.

Oxidative stress [may lead to increased DNA damage and cell death Trusted Source](#). Oxidation may also play a role in other issues, such as [arthritis](#), [atherosclerosis](#), and some [cancers](#).

Thymol and carvacrol are powerful antioxidants that may help reduce oxidation. The researchers suggested that further studies explore safe doses for regular use.

5. Reducing inflammation

—Oregano may have anti-inflammatory properties.

Some sources claim that oregano oil may help reduce [inflammation](#). The compound carvacrol shows anti-inflammatory effects in both animal models and in vitro studies.

[Research from 2017Trusted Source](#) looked at a variety of investigations into carvacrol's anti-inflammatory effects.

In one study on mice, the compound prevented [obesity](#) by affecting the genes involved in inflammation. In another animal study, the compound reduced swelling.

While the results show promise, the researchers have called for more tests on humans to determine a safe dosage.

6. Healing wounds

Applying diluted oregano oil to the skin may help protect smaller cuts and scrapes on the skin as they heal.

Compounds such as thymol and carvacrol could protect these types of wound from bacterial infections.

7. Repelling insects

Both carvacrol and thymol may be effective insect-repellents. In 2017, [researchers found](#) that these compounds repelled some ticks and mosquitos. The research included test tube studies and those with human participants.

More research will help confirm this potential benefit, but rubbing diluted oregano oil on the skin may be a natural way to help repel insects.

8. Relieving pain

There is some evidence that oregano may be an effective pain reliever. An [animal study](#)[Trusted Source](#) found that an extract of oregano provided pain relief.

These results were dose-dependent — the more the animals took, the more pain relief they felt.

Importantly, the researchers used a water-based extract, so the oil may not provide the same results. More research in humans could help determine an appropriate dose.

9. Aiding weight loss

Oregano oil may also be a helpful tool for people looking to lose weight. [Researchers](#)[Trusted Source](#) have found that carvacrol, the main compound in oregano oil, disrupts part of the process that leads to the creation and accumulation of fat tissue.

More direct research may help provide additional evidence for these claims.

10. Fighting cancer

Some sources claim that oregano oil may help fight some cancers. [One review](#)[Trusted Source](#) notes that the essential oil from oregano helps prevent some types of [colon cancer](#) and [breast cancer](#) from growing in test tubes.

The oil also appeared to inhibit the growth of some [lung cancer](#) and [prostate cancer](#) cells. Much of the research in cancer comes from test tubes or animal models, so people should view the results with caution and never use oils as a replacement for medical treatment.

How to use

Oregano oil comes in capsules and as a liquid. It is available for purchase in most health food stores and [online](#).

The strength of each oil may vary, so it is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions or work with a qualified healthcare practitioner to determine the safest dose.

People who do not enjoy the taste of oregano should choose the capsules, which they can swallow without tasting the oil.

To use oregano oil topically for skin issues, dilute one or two drops in a carrier oil. A person can then apply this mixture directly to the skin.

Risks and considerations

...A person should use oregano oil in moderation, as it is potent.

Be sure not to take too much oregano oil, as it is very potent. It is best to use it sparingly under the guidance of a healthcare practitioner.

There is significant risk of burning internal tissue if a person takes the oil orally. Always follow the manufacturer's guidelines.

Do not use oregano oil on children or infants. Pregnant or breastfeeding women and people with [diabetes](#) should also refrain from using it.

Oregano oil can interfere with some medications, including lithium and diuretics. Also, it is possible to be allergic to the oil.