



Tea Tree Oil For Your Body: What You Need To Know

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It seems that an essential oil craze has been sweeping the nation. You can't even mention coconut oil without hearing how many ways women and men use the product to relieve their bodily woes. So if coconut can have all its glory, it's about time we put the spotlight on another formula.

Tea tree oil is somewhat of a mystery to us. Sure, we've heard of it, but what does it really do? We talked to two dermatologists to investigate the good and the bad of the fragrant oil. Read on to find out what we learned.

Tea tree oil actually has antibacterial properties.

The component responsible for tea tree oil's bacteria-fighting abilities is "believed to be terpenes," explains **Aurora DeJuliis, a dermatologist and aesthetician who runs the Aurora DeJuliis, MD European Medical Spa in New Jersey.** "Terpenes is a type of volatile oil that has been shown to destroy bacteria."

Tea tree oil is particularly good for you from the neck up.

If you've heard that this essential oil could help treat acne, you've heard right. "Tea tree oil works on pimples because it has disinfecting and soothing properties," says Dr. DeJuliis. The oil penetrates the blockage between your skin and sebaceous glands and it's also good at "disinfecting the pores, and drying out whiteheads and blackheads," she says.

And get this: You can use tea tree oil in your hair. Dr. DeJuliis says that there are shampoos that have the oil in them to help fight dry and itchy scalps, but it's also able to combat your dandruff. Tea tree oil "is also effective in treating dandruff because of the different moisturizing properties of the oil," she explains.

But watch out, this is a liquid you want to keep far away from your mouth. Tea tree oil "is dangerous if taken by mouth. It can cause serious side effects such as confusion, inability to walk, unsteadiness, rash and coma," says board-certified dermatologist Dr. Janet Prystowsky.

The next time you have athlete's foot, give this oil a try.

Tea tree oil is "useful in treating different fungal infections, such as athlete's foot, or fungal infections of the nail," Dr. DeJuliis says. But just because tea tree oil can work on damaged nails, doesn't mean it works on other kinds of bacterial infections.

Dr. Prystowsky explains that many of tea tree oil's supposed benefits haven't actually been proven: "There is insufficient evidence for rating the effectiveness of tea tree oil for cold sores, allergic reactions in the skin to nickel, yeast infections in the mouth, throat and vaginal infections" or other issues like lice and ringworm, she says.

People with sensitive skin might want to steer clear of tea tree oil.

Both dermatologists point out that the essential oil could be harsh on sensitive skin types -- Dr. Prystowsky adds "anyone with a tendency for eczema should proceed cautiously when using tea tree oil." However, if you do want to try the oil, make sure to remember these key tips:

Make sure to have a diluted solution on hand.

"It is probably best to buy tea tree oil already in the dilution needed rather than mixing it yourself," Dr. Prystowsky advises. But there are some DIY ways that will help you make the oil less severe. "Add a couple drops to aloe vera gel, and then apply the gel to pimples or blemishes. You can also add a couple teaspoons of tea tree oil to raw organic honey." Another mixing oil on the list is jojoba, "because jojoba oil is very similar to the oil produced naturally by the skin."

Dr. DeJuliis even gave us the recipe for one of her favorite DIY face masks. (Because of the tomatoes in the ingredients, this is catered toward those with oilier, acne-prone skin that can handle the acid.)

Dr. DeJuliis's Face Mask

Ingredients:

3 drops of tea tree oil

1 tsp of jojoba oil

½ a finely chopped tomato

Instructions: Mix until you have a smooth paste and apply this mask to your face for 10 minutes. Then wash off.

Or, just use an entirely different formula.

Dr. DeJuliis recommends alternatives like lavender, geranium, manuka and rosemary oils that are gentler on the skin than tea tree, but perform just as well. But, if there is any doubt, Dr. Prystowsky tells us we should consult the professionals. "Consulting your physician/dermatologist would be the best way to determine what accepted medications may be appropriate for your [particular] condition." So if you're using oils or herbs as alternatives to traditional medicine, you should probably do your research.

We agree -- if you are nervous about using alternative remedies that include tea tree oil, try performing a patch test first on your inner arm. And of course, it's always in your best interest to first consult a doctor before starting any new skincare regimens.