Herb Of The Month

May 1, 2000 By Michael Onstott

Peppermint

PARTS: Leaves, flowering tops
FORMS: Fresh or dried, powder, oil, liquid extract, oil capsules
USES: Digestion, poor appetite, colds, sore throat, cough, and inflamed mouth, nasal congestion, muscle soreness, and headache was
DAILY DOISE: Internal: 1 heaping tsp. (leaves), 6-12 drops (oil), 1-3 capsules. Inhaled: 3-4 drops (oil), in hot water. External: 3-4 drops (oil).
MONTHLY COST: $5-10 (bulk herb, oil, or liquid extract) $10-20 (enteric-coated **capsules)**
CAUTION: May reduce iron absorption. Avoid if you have gallstones ort sever liver damage. Never ingest undiluted peppermint oil. Don't place oil in child's nose or mouth.

Peppermint isn't just for your breath, baby. For centuries, Europeans have used it menthol-containing leaves and essential oils to help produce stomach acid and bile while relaxing muscles lining to digestive tract.

This anti-spasmodic effect is why many take pep to erase irritable bowel syndrome, cramping, and flatulence. For this, oil capsules are best, peppermint tea, with varying potency from brand to brand, is milder. Studies have shown that oil relieves inflammation and itching and –at least in test tubes—inhibits such microbes as staph and strep bacteria as well as influenza A and herpes simplex viruses. Because peppermint can reduce pain in the skin and mucous membranes, its essential oils are useful in treating sore muscles, sunburn, coughs, sore throat, and nausea. Applying the oil to the forehead can also help relive headaches, ease anxiety, and kickstart your cognition; inhaling the menthol vapors can reduce nasal sinus and chest congestion. All of this and minty freshness.

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