

The Amazing Properties of Tea Tree Oil

Melaleuca alternifolia, or Australian "tea tree oil" (as it is more commonly known), is a native Australian plant with many remarkable properties. When crushed and distilled, the leaves of this plant yield a 100% natural oil which is an antiseptic, a fungicide, a mild solvent, and much, much more. Tea tree oil is in fact one of the most versatile natural products there is. Here are some of the uses of this completely natural product:

* Antiseptic

Bactericidal, fungicidal, and virucidal. Tea tree oil is effective against all three and is one of the strongest natural antiseptics known to man, that is safe to use. So much so, that it is a required item in the medical supply kit of every member of the Australian army.

* Soothing

Like cocaine, tea tree oil has nerve-deadening properties which stop pain, stinging, and itching in dermatitis, wounds, rashes, and bites.

* Penetrating

Tea tree oil carries its therapeutic benefits far below the top layers of skin, making it an effective remedy for arthritic conditions, abscesses, sore muscles, and irritating bite wounds.

* Aromatic

Tea tree oil's soothing, therapeutic aroma can be used in vaporizers to relieve respiratory distress, infection, bronchitis, and even pneumonia.

* Noncaustic

Tea tree oil's mild nature will not harshly affect most skin types.

* Natural Solvent

Tea tree oil dissolves residue and acts as a natural cleanser and disinfectant, and is used in many environmentally-friendly household cleaners and soaps.

* Insect Repellent

Tea tree oil's permeating, clean fragrance will repel most insects, fleas, and mosquitoes.

Because of its veratility, a burgeoning market has been created utilizing the remarkable oils of the ***Melaleuca alternifolia*** (or tea tree) plant. This oil has been a key ingredient in the following products: mouth washes; muscle relaxants/creams; creams for the treatment of genital/oral herpes; antiperspirants; oral applications for gingivitis and periodontal disease; creams for the prevention/treatment of sunburns; creams and gels to heal/relieve actual burns by fire; household disinfectants/detergents/personal soaps; bee and insect repellants as well as for the relief of actual bites/stings; headache

relief; fungus treatment (jock itch/athlete's foot/ringworm); a whole host of therapeutic skin care creams, shampoos, etc/; as well as many other uses. And all of these products have U.S. Patents affixed to them! It can safely be said that there are very few natural herbal products as useful as ***Melaleuca alternifolia***.



Belonging to the same family of plants as the eucalyptus tree, the ***Melaleuca alternifolia*** plant was discovered in the 1770s by Captain James Cook when he witnessed native Australians brewing tea from its leaves. Hence the name "tea tree." Growing 20 feet high, the tree really resembles more of a shrub, and it is readily grown and harvested by man. The tree's leaves are collected twice a year and passed through a distillation process in order to expel the oil.



The active ingredients of tea tree oil are **terpinen** and **cineole**. Terpinen is the ingredient responsible for the healing and medicinal properties. Cineole contributes to the disinfectant properties as well, but unfortunately cineole can be caustic to human tissue. In order to obtain the best results from using tea tree oil, the percentage of terpinen must be between 35 and 60 percent, and the percentage of cineole must be below 10 percent to ensure skin safety during usage.

In 1920, Dr. A. Penfold officially tested the oil's properties for the first time. He discovered that Melaleuca oil was 12 times more potent than the accepted antiseptic at the

time, carbolic acid. Dr. Penfold's research prompted further testing in the following decades, contributing to tea tree oil's increasing use by the public. Australian physicians were astounded by the oil's ease in sterilizing wounds and preventing infections resulting from surgery. In the late 1940s, the introduction of antibiotics such as penicillin caused a drop in the use of tea tree oil. However, by 1980, the increasing growth of immunity to antibiotics by so many bacteria, combined with improved tea tree harvesting procedures, created a whole new demand for this amazing oil.

Even today, when compared to standard antibiotics and antiseptics, tea tree oil displays unique characteristics, unparalleled by anything manmade. For instance, in contrast to betadine and hydrogen peroxide, two commonly-accepted antiseptics, properly-distilled tea tree oil does not harm human tissue. The oil also kills germs upon application and prevents their growth for *days* afterward, not mere hours. Betadine, peroxide, and even Nolvasan's antibacterial properties only last for a few hours, not days. Melaleuca's oily nature is responsible for this longevity - which also is responsible for its concurrent healing abilities *as* it disinfects. These other products only disinfect and only for a much more limited time frame; they do not concurrently heal, as does tea tree oil.

It is this synergy of being a disinfectant, a healing agent, and deeply penetrating that sets tea tree oil apart from everything else! Its only limitation is that it cannot be ingested.

As an alternative to traditional antibiotics, tea tree oil's complex chemical composition also makes it extremely difficult for susceptible bacteria to develop resistance to it. Traditional antibiotics possess simpler chemical structures to which many bacteria can easily develop immunity. Not so with this wonder oil, because its complex and oily nature are not easily bridged. *The healing nature also aids in the reduction of noticeable scarring.*

Because this oil is active against all three categories of infectious organisms: bacteria, viruses and fungi, it can be used for almost any superficial skin infection. In fact, concerning fungi, *Malassezia* yeasts are commonly found all over the skin, where sebum excretion is highest. This can cause itching, flakiness, and general discomfort. There is no man-made remedy yet that is as effective for treating these yeasts as tea tree oil, because not only does it kill them, its penetrating qualities gets below the surface, its nerve-numbing properties relieves the itching, and its healing properties promotes regeneration. Tea tree oil is also effective for many other skin conditions, besides yeasts. For instance, it is effective against ringworm, as well as all kinds of *Staph* infections.

In dogs, you can easily see how these applications, and this broad coverage, can be of value. Tea tree oil can soothe bites, bee stings, and be applied liberally to all

kinds of hot spots, ringworm, as well as superficial cuts and abrasions. It can also be used as a pad healer, both for cracked and worn pads as well as infected pads. If there are mouth wounds or sores, tea tree oil is a superb remedy as well. Add it to your favorite dog shampoo, and tea tree oil helps control unpleasant aroma on the dog, as well as disinfect the entire surface of the animal. Not only does such a shampoo repel against fungus, but its penetrating properties will soothe any itchy/flaky skin the animal may have, while it heals. Tea tree oil can be applied in sprayers as a kennel disinfectant as well. You can even use it to brush a dog's teeth!

For wound management, the antimicrobial activity of tea tree oil can be applied directly to the injury. It has been demonstrated to be effective against several common bacterial and fungal pathogens. It is especially interesting that even penicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria were still very much susceptible to tea tree oil, which means it would be an effective remedy for *pyoderma*.

So, yes, as you might expect, tea tree oil is at its most effective in treating skin diseases, but it is also effective for treating respiratory illnesses. For instance, if a dog has severe kennel cough, placing the animal in a crate inside a room with a vaporizer, with tea tree oil added, will speed up the recovery process remarkably, as inhaling the fumes allows the deep medicinal penetration of the oil into the alveoli, which in turn kills the bacteria/virus that infect the sinuses and lungs. Similar to eucalyptus oil, tea tree oil also opens clogged respiratory passages to allow better oxygenation.

Tea tree oil is also an excellent insect repellent and can be used to repel ticks, fleas, and mosquitoes, and it can soothe sunburns by reducing inflammation. Applying the oil to insect bites reduces swelling and disinfects the area.

You can buy 2 oz of tea tree oil at any Walmart, or any healthfood store, for less than \$10.00. Two ounces of oil doesn't sound like a lot, but it lasts a good while. For wounds and pads, I simply take a Q-Tip and dip it in the oil, and apply to the infected area. If I am going to shampoo a dog, I just add a capful to the shampoo in my palm and lather up the animal. There is even a whole company, called "Melaleuca," that has an entire product line based on this oil, including laundry detergent!

I think the more dogmen seriously consider the many uses to which they can put this amazing oil, the more they will have it in their medicine chest. I know I have it in mine, and I have for many years. Try tea tree oil out for yourself (and even *on* yourself), and I will bet you will continue to use it from that point forward.

~ California Jack

Active Manuka Honey

Another amazing product from "Down Under" is Manuka Honey. In recent years honey has begun to enjoy something of a renaissance in its use as a treatment for persistent skin infections and wounds. This is thanks to a proliferation in research into Active Manuka Honey, together with positive results from hospital trials investigating its usefulness.

Honey is an ancient traditional wound dressing that has been used by many cultures throughout history which include the native Maoris of New Zealand. It is only in the last decade that the world's medical establishment has begun to take more seriously the clinical benefits of Active Manuka Honey and consider it as a first line treatment for wounds, burns, and ulcers. Because of its unique antibacterial properties, Active Manuka Honey has many more medical uses - for example it also provides an effective treatment of digestive conditions and eye infections. Previously, this valuable natural resource has been relegated (by the medical establishment) to the same perception level as other 'traditional' and homeopathic remedies.

Much of the credit for the advancement in our understanding must be given to Dr. Peter Molan of the Honey Research Unit at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. Dr Molan has been involved in studying and cataloguing the effects of honey on the healing process leading to a fuller appreciation of the factors at play in the treatment of a persistent bacterial skin infection.



Dr. Peter Molan has been studying the fascinating therapeutic effects of honey for years.

All honey has some level of the antibacterial chemical **hydrogen peroxide**, which is produced by enzymes in the honey. These enzymes are easily destroyed by exposure to heat and light and also by contact with bodily fluids. It is now understood that some rare honeys have an antibacterial action that is separate to the peroxide effect, resulting in a much more persistent and stable

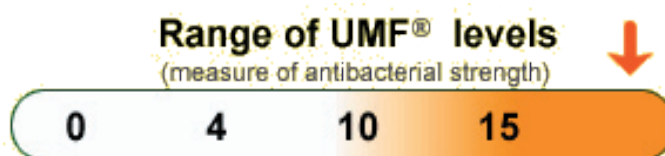
antibacterial action. Such valuable honeys are resistant to losing their antibacterial activity when used in wound treatment and even have strong activity when heavily diluted by body fluids in a wound dressing. Furthermore, such honeys are now known to have a synergistic antibacterial effect with the hydrogen peroxide activity in the honey, producing a very powerful weapon against bacterial conditions.



Varying Quality of Honey

Since 1991 it has been recognised that not all honey is effective in its non-peroxide anti-bacterial action and in its promotion of healing; in fact the variability between different batches of honey can be as much as a hundred-fold. In 1996 an organization called TradeNZ, in conjunction with the Honey Research Unit, set about to establish a standard for the classification of antibacterial honey activity. This led to the creation of the UMF® industry standard - UMF standing for Unique Manuka Factor. The Honey Research Unit developed a procedure for rating honeys which has now been in place for some time.

Tested batches of Manuka Honey are given a UMF® rating, depending on their tested antibacterial activity. A UMF® rating of 10 is the minimum activity to gain the UMF rating and thus be considered useful in wound treatment. Honey achieving this rating is commonly referred to as Active Manuka Honey. While Manuka honey is fairly widely available, it is considered that only honeys which carries the UMF® registered trademark should be chosen if the intended use is for therapeutic purposes. The Active Manuka Honey that you can order at the Manuka web site has a UMF rating of 16.



UMF rated Active Manuka Honey is produced by honey bees from the flowers of the manuka bush (*leptospermum scoparium*). As a result of extensive screening it is now known that honey produced from