

Don't Skip the Mint

Mint may be one of the oldest and most widely used herbal remedies known to man. The Egyptians cultivated it in 1000 B.C. and its medicinal usage is documented in the Icelandic pharmacopoeia of the thirteenth century. Over the centuries it has been used as a tea to settle nausea and upset stomachs, to improve digestion, to relieve coughs and it flavors a multitude of foods.

Mint has found its way into almost every corner of our lives. The tea remains one of the most popular herbal drinks. Mint flavors everything from mouthwash, toothpaste, and breath fresheners to after dinner chocolates. It is available in tincture form, as dried herb and the essential oil is one of the most recognizable to everyone. Mints are cultivated commercially, planted in home gardens and they grow wild throughout most of the world.

Mint has been used in homeopathic medicine since the 1850's primarily for the treatment of gastrointestinal and respiratory symptoms. Though, some users of homeopathy have always given mint a wide berth, shying away from it for fear of inactivating their homeopathic medications. And along the way, unexpectedly restrictive rules cause potential users to wonder, 'If I use homeopathy, do I have to give up using my mint toothpaste, stop drinking my peppermint tea, or avoid using the herb at all?'

This questionable reputation of mint has been based on the belief that it counteracts the use of homeopathic medicines and that homeopathy's founder, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, forbade its use. It has been believed for over 150 years that Hahnemann forbade peppermint, coffee, and other strong smelling substances during any homeopathic treatment. Yet, new research in the original language of his writings shows that this was, in fact, not the case and that Hahnemann firmly did not approve of making a patient's diet difficult or restrictive.

There has been no scientific study, which shows the use of peppermint adversely impacts a homeopathic treatment. A few homeopaths have claimed that homeopathic treatments have been totally inactivated by coffee, peppermint, or garlic when the medication was taken too soon after contact with these foods or other spices with strong smells or tastes. It is more likely is that the lingering taste of foods or flavors interferes with the adequate absorption of homeopathic medicines through the mouth's mucous membranes; therefore, the homeopathic medicines do not reach the blood stream properly and their effects are lost. The other possibility is the subtle effects of some homeopathic medicine are being overwhelmed by caffeine or menthol, which possess strong physiological action of their own.

It is always best to take your homeopathic medicines in a clean mouth free for food or flavor. Waiting 10-15 minutes after eating or brushing teeth is wise. And if flavors linger, rinse the mouth with water before taking a homeopathic. Other medicines, herbs, supplements can be taken at a different time so that the maximum benefit can be had from both these and your homeopathic remedy. Of course, always follow the

manufacturer's label or your health practitioners' instructions when taking any homeopathic medication.

So, don't skip the mint! Drink mint tea for a refreshing lift, brush your teeth, and even use a minted soap or shampoo. Grow it in your garden or on a windowsill to add it to iced tea or salads. And never, never pass it up in the presence of chocolate. But—remember homeopathic medicines can be very subtle: give them a chance to begin their healing action; then you can enjoy aroma-therapy, garlic, spices, herbs and teas and gain the full benefit of all.

References:

Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States

Weiner, M.; *Weiner's Herbal*, Quantum Books, USA, 1991, pp.151-152.

Murphy, R., *Lotus Materia Medica*, Donnelly and Sons, 1995, pp.1085-1086.

Rembges, Dr.H.: *Journal for Anthroposophical Medicine* , Vol. 7, No. 2 (1990)
Homeopathy and Peppermint, PAAM, Portland, OR. pp. 46-48.

Klunker, W. In *Zeitschrift fuer Klassische Hoemopathie*, 32 (1988) 135.

Hahnemann, S.: *Organon der Heilkunst*, 5. Aufl 1833 pp 260, [Organon of Healing]; see also Keller, G.V.: In *Allgemeine Hoemeopatische Zeitung* 232 (1987) 118.