

BE WELL

Tea Tree to the Rescue

By Debbie DeAngelo
September 2024

Of my handful of essential oils, tea tree tops the list of must-haves. Made from the leaves of the *Melaleuca alternifolia* tree, which is native to Australia, it has been used as a traditional remedy for centuries. It's mainly been coveted for skin healing along with its germicidal properties. Tea tree has been documented in medical research for the ability to arrest many strains of bacteria, viruses, and fungi.

Tea tree's healing properties are attributed to a classification of compounds referred to as terpenes. When purchasing the essential oil, which is an extract from parts of the plant using steam or pressure, be sure to reach for one that is 100% pure, and preferably organic. As with many essential oils, it's beneficial to mix a few drops with a carrier oil, such as coconut, olive, or jojoba, so that it's less likely to irritate your skin. Also know that tea tree isn't sweet-smelling like lavender or lemon. It's more pungent and medicinal; however, you may certainly add a fragrant oil to it. Overall, tea tree is considered safe, but prior to using it for the first time, apply one drop to your skin and observe for a reaction for 24 hours. Some people may be sensitive or allergic to it. Since there are essential oils deemed toxic to pets, be sure to check with your veterinarian prior to using it on your body or in your home.

Everyday Uses

Due to the antiseptic and disinfectant properties, tea tree is added to a variety of personal care and cleaning products, as well as skin creams. You can purchase products that include it, or you can add it yourself. Here are five daily uses for tea tree.

Hand sanitizer. Even though washing your hands with soap and water reigns supreme, sometimes hand sanitizer is a convenient option. A small 2021 randomized, controlled trial published in the *International Journal of Clinical Practice* demonstrated the antimicrobial effects of tea tree oil when used for hand hygiene. Most commercial brands of tea tree hand sanitizer contain other ingredients that kill germs along with the oil. Alcohol-based gels and sprays need a minimum of 60% alcohol to work. You can give a boost to your regular hand sanitizer by adding a few drops of tea tree or purchasing a brand that has it.

Acne control. Since some types of acne are triggered by bacteria on the skin, tea tree is commonly added to over-the-counter acne creams. The antibacterial activity may help reduce and manage this skin disorder.

Dandruff relief. Those unwelcome, dry flakes on the scalp are often due to fungus. According to a 2002 study in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, when comparing 5% tea tree oil shampoo to a placebo, there was a 41% improvement with the tea tree as opposed to an 11% improvement with the placebo after four weeks. Add a few drops of the essential oil to a dollop of shampoo when washing your hair or buy a shampoo that contains it.

Deodorant. When it comes to body odor, the bacteria on your skin are the culprits. By mixing a few drops of tea tree to one tablespoon of coconut oil, you'll have your own low cost, chemical-free deodorant. To counteract the pungent smell of tea tree, add a drop or two of a more fragrant essential oil, such as lavender or grapefruit, which also kills germs. Adding a pinch of cornstarch or baking soda will combat moisture.

Household cleaner. When consulting most resources for "recipes" of homemade all-purpose and bathroom cleaners, you will notice that tea tree is frequently featured. The germicidal properties make it the perfect go-to. Additional ingredients usually include a combination of liquid castile soap, vinegar, borax, and other nose-pleasing essential oils like lemon or geranium.

DIY All-Purpose Cleaner

(University of Arkansas System, Division of Agriculture)

- 1/4 c. vinegar
- 12-20 drops of essential oil (my note: at least half should come from tea tree and the remainder may be from a more aromatic oil)
- 1 t. liquid castile soap
- 2 c. boiled or distilled water, cooled

Fill cleaning spray bottle with water, add all other ingredients, and shake well.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Debbie DeAngelo, RNC, BSN, is a holistic health coach, health correspondent for JET-TV and FOX 66 in Erie, Pennsylvania, and author of "Sudden Menopause." Debbie can be reached at debbie@healthonheels.com.

Subscribe to JES Publications
Emails!

Support JES | Donate

In Case You Missed It

[Too Many Erie Infants, Toddlers Lack Child Care: Profound Opportunity Awaits in Solving Enduring Problem](#) written by **Michelle Harkins**

[The Wider World | Fragile States and Global Resilience](#) written by
President of DC Analytics **Diane Chido**

[Truth in Love | Life Without Voice: Constitution and Amendments Did Not Change White Minds or Hearts](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Parris J. Baker**

[Be Well | Magnesium Matters](#) written by health and wellness expert
Debbie DeAngelo

[Classic Book Notes #111 | 1968/2022: The Seeds of Our Discontents \(Last of 9 Parts\): The Fusion Thread](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Andrew Roth**

[On the Waterfront | What Were They Thinking? St. Lawrence Seaway Was Big News in 1950s](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. David Frew**