Key points

1. Mint is an excellent decongestant, acting primarily within the digestive, respiratory and nervous system relieving signs of congestion
2. It reduces discomfort caused by wind, bloating and colic
3. The pain-relieving properties of the essential oil menthol helps to reduce nervous or muscular tension within the body

What conditions would you recommend it for?

- Nervous digestion, flatulence, stomach irritation, bloating, IBS, Crohn’s disease, ulcerative colitis and nausea.
- Coughs, colds, flu, sinusitis, fevers, headaches and migraines.
- Inflammatory skin conditions and allergic itching.
- Stress, anxiety, tension and fatigue.

Sourcing organic practitioner-grade mint

Mint plants can be distinguished easily by the fresh, cleansing scent emitted from their leaves. Peppermint and spearmint were introduced to Britain by the Romans and have now become naturalised throughout Europe.

Sustainable production of field mint has been challenging. In a bid to create a wider diversity of growers, Pukka has been working with our Indian supplier to establish new organic field mint farmers beyond the traditional growing lands in Uttar Pradesh. Cultivating this herb in other regions saves water, reduces the crop’s carbon footprint and increases the yield and production of crops.

How mint works

The mint family contains polyphenols such as rosmarinic acid and a high level of essential oils such as menthol. Menthol gives the plant its distinctive scent and taste, but also most of its medicinal activity. For example, menthol reduces spasms induced as a result of the allergic response and histamine cascades, particularly within the respiratory and digestive systems but also the skin.

Menthol is a volatile aromatic essential oil and when inhaled has demonstrated the ability to decongest but also relieve nervous and muscular tension that may be influencing headaches and migraines. It has a local anaesthetic action via desensitising pain receptors, which has been found to help in migraines, sports injuries and arthritis. When applied to the skin, it increases blood flow, which may help the body to heal. Menthol also displays strong antibacterial and antifungal activity.

Field Mint has the highest levels of menthol.

Mint by body system

- Digestive: Menthol reduces spasms, relieving digestive cramping and pain. The aromatic essential oils can also help to alleviate morning sickness, vomiting and spasms in the gastrointestinal tract.
- Immune: Commonly used as a hot tea to influence diaphoresis (sweating) in colds and flu.
- Nervous: It opens the mind and lifts ‘heaviness’. Menthol also acts as an analgesic, working by ‘freezing’ out pain from the muscles, relieving strain and tension.
- Skin: Cools and soothes skin inflammation, hot flushes and allergic itching.
- Reproductive: Relaxes uterine muscles relieving the spasms that cause dysmenorrhea (painful menstrual cramps).
- Respiratory: The menthol component of the essential oil makes mint excellent at removing excessive catarrh. It works by dilating the airways and blood vessels, easing the symptoms of cold and flu.

Constituents of mint

Flavonoids, bitter principles, tannins, essential oils (menthol, menthone), choline

Research highlights

A systematic review and meta-analysis of clinical trials found that peppermint oil capsules were effective in relieving symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and abdominal pain.

Spearmint tea reduces androgen levels, as well as increasing follicle-stimulating hormone and luteinising hormone in women with polycystic ovarian syndrome. The women also reported reductions in hirsutism. A 16-week study of spearmint tea found significant improvements in stiffness and disability from knee osteoarthritis.
Ayurvedic energetics

- **Taste:** Sweet, pungent with light, dry and penetrating qualities
- **Temperature:** Cooling and heating
- **Constitutional effect:** Reduces all three doshas- its warming pungency dries kapha via diaphoresis, its sweet cooling effect reduces pitta; and its relaxing sweet pungency reduces vata. The stimulating effect of high doses may aggravate vata.
- **Energetic actions:** Calming, strengthening and clearing

From an Ayurvedic perspective, there are different classifications of the various mints as ‘heating’ or ‘cooling’ which can create confusion. Its pungency acts to stimulate sweating, while its sweet and bitter flavour has anti-inflammatory activity. The menthol appears to be both stimulant and anti-inflammatory. The dose and method of taking mint are all important. A low dose is relaxing, benefiting vata dosha stagnated by constriction; a medium dose (preferably taken at a cool temperature) benefits the anti-inflammatory needs of pitta, and a high dose of a hot drink clears kapha. It is all about the person, their individual constitution and condition as well as the dose of the medicinal herb.

Safety, drug interactions & contraindications

- No known herb-drug interactions.
- High essential oil content may aggravate a highly sensitive digestive system.
- Possible caution in gallstones as menthol has been found to stimulate bile production.\(^7\)

Dosage

Pukka teas with mint can be drunk freely during the day

Dried concentrated extracts: 1g -30g daily

Where to find mint at Pukka

**Tea family:**
- Three Mint
- Mint Refresh
- Peppermint and Licorice
- Mint Matcha Green
- Peace

**Supplements family:**
- Clean Greens superblend
- Vitalise Superblend
- Elderberry syrup

Mint at home

**Mint Digestif tea**

**Ingredients**
- 4 g peppermint leaf
- 2 g licorice root
- 2 g hibiscus flower
- 1 g fennel seed
- 1 g coriander seed

**Method**

Put all of the ingredients in a pot. Add 500ml/18fl oz of freshly boiled filtered water. Leave to steep for 5–10 minutes, then strain.

Harvesting mint

---


