

by Eric Foxman and Mary Beth Watkins

Mint Not Contraindicated With Homeopathy

Peppermint is one of the oldest and most widely used herbal remedies. The Egyptians cultivated it 3,000 years ago; the Icelandic pharmacopoeia of the 13th century documents its medical usage. Over the centuries, peppermint tea has settled nausea and upset stomachs, improved digestion and relieved coughs.

Your customers find mint in almost every corner of their lives. Mint flavors everything from mouthwash, toothpaste and breath fresheners to after dinner chocolates. It is sold in tincture form, as dried herb and in the essential oil that is one of the most recognizable around. Mints are cultivated commercially, planted in home gardens and grow wild around the globe. The tea remains one of the world's most popular herbal drinks.

In homeopathy, mint has been used since the 1850s primarily for the treatment of gastrointestinal and respiratory symptoms. However, some of your customers may give mint a wide berth, shying away from it for fear of inactivating their homeopathic medications. And restrictive dictums, repeated over the years, may cause potential users to wonder, "If I use homeopathic medicines, do I have to give up using my mint toothpaste, stop drinking my peppermint tea, or avoid using the herb at all?"




This unfair notoriety of mint comes from an inference that it counteracts homeopathic medicines and that Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, forbade its use. It has been assumed for more than 150 years that Hahnemann forbade peppermint, coffee, and other strong smelling substances during any homeopathic treatment. Yet, you can tell your customers that new research in the original language of his writings shows that this was, in fact, not the case. Further, Hahnemann strongly disapproved of making a patient's diet difficult or restrictive.

There has never been a scientific study showing peppermint adversely impacting a homeopathic treatment. A few homeopaths have alleged that homeopathic treatments have been inactivated by coffee, peppermint or garlic when the medication was taken too soon after eating these foods or other spices with strong smells or tastes. It is more likely is that the lingering foods or flavors interfere with the adequate absorption of homeopathic medicines through the mouth's mucous membranes; therefore, the homeopathic medicines are hindered from reaching the blood stream properly and their effects are lost. The other

possibility is that the subtle effects of some homeopathic medicines are overwhelmed by caffeine or menthol, which possess strong physiological actions of their own.

Ideally, customers should take homeopathic medicines in a clean mouth free of food or flavor. It is a good idea to wait 10 to 15 minutes after eating or brushing teeth. If the food flavors linger, customers using homeopathic remedies should rinse their mouth with water before taking the dosage. Also, customers should be advised to take other medicines, herbs or supplements at a different time to realize maximum benefit of both these products and the homeopathic remedy. As homeopathic remedies do carry specific dosage instructions, customers should be advised to follow the manufacturer's label or their health practitioners' instructions when taking any homeopathic medication.

But don't let customers miss out on the mint. Encourage them to drink mint tea for a refreshing lift, to brush their teeth with a mint toothpaste, or even use a minted soap or shampoo. Growing peppermint in the garden or on a window sill makes a wonderful addition to iced tea or salads. Just remind your customers that homeopathic medicines can be very subtle: give the remedies a chance to begin their healing action; then they can enjoy aromatherapy, garlic, spices, herbs and teas and gain the full benefit of all their chosen products. 

Eric L. Foxman, B.S.Pharm., R.Ph., is secretary of the American Association of Homeopathic Pharmacists (AAHP) and a consultant to complementary pharmaceutical manufacturers. Mary Beth Watkins, B.S.Chem., M.S. BioChem., is AAHP's first vice president and director of research and development at Botanical Laboratories Inc.

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