



## THYME

### Also Known As:

Common Thyme, French Thyme, Garden Thyme, Oil of Thyme, Red Thyme Oil, Rubbed Thyme, Spanish Thyme, Thyme Aetheroleum, Thyme Essential Oil, Thyme Oil, Thymi herba, Van Ajwayan, Vanya Yavani, White Thyme Oil.

CAUTION: See separate listing for Wild Thyme.

### Scientific Name:

*Thymus vulgaris*; *Thymus zygis*.

Family: Lamiaceae/Labiatae.

### People Use This For:

Orally, thyme is used for bronchitis, pertussis, sore throat, colic, arthritis, dyspepsia, gastritis, diarrhea, enuresis, dyspraxia, flatulence, skin disorders, as a diuretic, urinary disinfectant, anthelmintic, and as an appetite stimulant.

Topically, thyme is used for laryngitis, tonsillitis, stomatitis, and halitosis. Thyme oil is used topically as a counterirritant, an antiseptic in mouthwashes and liniments, and for alopecia areata. Thymol, a constituent of thyme, is used with chlorhexidine as a dental varnish to prevent caries.

Otically, thyme oil is used as an antibacterial and antifungal ingredient.

In foods, thyme is used as a flavoring agent.

In manufacturing, red thyme oil is used in perfumes. It is also used in soaps, cosmetics, and toothpastes.

### Safety:

**POSSIBLY SAFE** ...when used orally or topically and appropriately (5177, 13557).

Thyme has been used safely for 10 days (13557). Diluted thyme oil has been used safely for up to 7 months (5177).

There is insufficient reliable information available about the safety of thyme oil when used orally in medicinal doses.

**PREGNANCY AND LACTATION: LIKELY SAFE** ...when used in amounts commonly found in foods. Thyme has Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) status in the US (4912). There is insufficient reliable information available about the safety of thyme when used in medicinal amounts during pregnancy and breast-feeding; avoid using.

### Effectiveness:

#### **INSUFFICIENT RELIABLE EVIDENCE to RATE**

**Alopecia areata.** There is some evidence that topically applying lavender oil in combination with the essential oils from thyme, rosemary, and cedarwood improves hair growth in up to 44% of patients after 7 months of treatment (5177).

**Bronchitis.** Preliminary clinical research suggests thyme, in combination with cowslip (Bronchipret), relieves symptoms of bronchitis such as coughing, fever, and increased production of sputum (13557).

**Dyspraxia.** Taking thyme oil, in combination with evening primrose oil, fish oils, and vitamin

E, seems to improve movement disorders in children with dyspraxia (5708).  
More evidence is needed to rate thyme for these uses.

### **Mechanism of Action:**

The applicable parts of thyme are the leaf, flower, and oil. Thyme contains thymol 30% to 70%, carvacrol 3% to 15%, and several other constituents including borneol, geraniol, linalool, and alpha-pinene. It also contains flavonoids such as apigenin and luteolin, polyphenolic acids such as caffeic acid, triterpene acids such as ursolic and rosmarinic acid, as well as terpinene, tannins, saponins and other constituents (13448, 13463).

Thymol, the primary constituent of thyme is rapidly absorbed in the upper gastrointestinal tract. It's half-life is about 10 hours. It is metabolized to thymol sulfate and thymol glucuronide (13449).

Preliminary research suggests that thyme has antimicrobial activity and modest antibacterial effects (13450, 13451). It also seems to have antiviral activity against influenza A and respiratory syncytial virus (13449). Other preliminary research suggests thyme has activity against fungi such as *Candida albicans* and other *Candida* species. It seems to potentiate the antifungal activity of amphotericin B (13452, 13453). Thymol is active against fungal microorganisms that cause onychomycosis such as *Trichophyton rubrum*, *Trichophyton mentagrophytes*, *Microsporum canis*, *Epidermophyton floccosum*, and *Epidermophyton stockdale* (13447).

Thyme and its constituents thymol and carvacrol might have antioxidant effects and DNA protective effects (13450, 13454, 13455). The antioxidant effect of thyme might increase the production of nitric oxide and improve atherosclerosis and endothelial dysfunction, according to preliminary research (13460).

Other preliminary research suggests thyme has antispasmodic, antiplatelet, anti-inflammatory, and antiallergic activity (13456, 13457, 13458, 13459). Additionally, thyme might improve wound healing (13461). Other preliminary research suggests the thyme constituent, alpha-terpinene, might be an effective mosquito repellent (13462).

It's not clear how thyme oil works in alopecia areata (5177); however, it may be related to its effects as a counterirritant.

Thyme seems to affect phase I and phase II xenobiotic metabolizing enzymes. In an animal model, thyme seems to induce the phase I enzyme 7-ethoxycoumarin-O-deethylase (ECOD) enzyme. Thyme also seems to induce the phase II enzymes glutathione-S-transferase (GST) and quinine reductase (QR). Thymol and carvacrol are thought to be responsible for these effects (13164).

### **Adverse Reactions:**

Orally, thyme is generally well tolerated. Gastrointestinal adverse effects occur occasionally (13557). It can cause allergic reactions; however, this is uncommon (13463). Allergic reactions to thyme might be more common in people who are also allergic to oregano and other Lamiaceae species (3808).

Topically, thyme can cause skin irritation and contact dermatitis. Toothpastes containing thymol has been associated with cheilitis and glossitis (13463).

By inhalation, occupational exposure to thyme dust can cause acute airway obstruction (13464).

### **Interactions with Herbs & Supplements:**

**ANTICOAGULANT/ANTIPLATELET HERBS AND SUPPLEMENTS:** Concomitant use of herbs that affect platelet aggregation might increase the risk of bleeding. These herbs include angelica, anise, arnica, asafoetida, bogbean, boldo, capsicum, celery, chamomile, clove, fenugreek, feverfew, garlic, ginger, ginkgo, *Panax ginseng*, horse chestnut, horseradish, licorice, meadowsweet, onion, prickly ash, papain, passionflower, poplar, quassia, red clover, turmeric, wild carrot, wild lettuce, willow, and others (13457).

## Interactions with Drugs:

### ANTICOAGULANT/ANTIPLATELET DRUGS

Interaction Rating = **Moderate** Be cautious with this combination  
Severity = High • Occurrence = Possible • Level of Evidence = D

Theoretically, thyme might have additive effects with anticoagulant or antiplatelet drugs and possibly increase the risk of bleeding. Some anticoagulant and antiplatelet drugs include aspirin, clopidogrel (Plavix), dalteparin (Fragmin), enoxaparin (Lovenox), heparin, ticlopidine (Ticlid), warfarin (Coumadin), and others (13457).

## Interactions with Foods:

None known.

## Interactions with Lab Tests:

None known.

## Interactions with Diseases or Conditions:

**CROSS-ALLERGENICITY:** Cross-reactivity to oregano and other Lamiaceae species has been reported in an individual allergic to thyme (3808).

**SURGERY:** Thyme has antiplatelet effects. Thyme might cause excessive bleeding if used perioperatively. Tell patients to discontinue thyme at least 2 weeks before elective surgical procedures.

## Dosage/Administration:

**ORAL:** For the treatment of bronchitis, a combination of thyme 160 mg and cowslip 60 mg (Bronchipret) has been used three times daily (13557).

**TOPICAL:** For the treatment of alopecia areata, a combination of the essential oils including thyme 2 drops or 88 mg, rosemary 3 drops or 114 mg, lavender 3 drops or 108 mg, and cedarwood 2 drops or 94 mg, all mixed with 3 mL jojoba oil and 20 mL grapeseed oil has been used. Each night, the mixture is massaged into the scalp for 2 minutes with a warm towel placed around the head to increase absorption (5177).

## Editor's Comments:

None.

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