

Cinnamon oils

What you need to know

As my other files on single oils seem so popular I have decided to write about another oil which is hyped like crazy on social media blogs and on some websites.

The first thing to consider is which oil are people referring to when they say "cinnamon oil is good for x,y,z"? Cinnamon trees yield two totally different essential oils, one from the leaves which is similar to clove oil, and one from the bark.

There is a plethora of Latin names declared for "cinnamon" because:

- 1) There are numerous different varieties.
- 2) Even scientific researchers often give incorrect botanical names.

This is very similar to the identification issues over frankincense.

Generally the oil traders accept these classifications:

1. Cinnamon leaf oil: *Cinnamomum verum* J. S. Presl. or *C. zeylanicum* Nees. This is commonly referred to as 'Ceylon cinnamon' and is equivalent to clove leaf oil, but is relatively safe if it is correctly diluted.
2. Cinnamon bark oil: *Cinnamomum verum* J. S. Presl. or *C. zeylanicum* Nees. This is a very dangerous substance. Even when greatly diluted it can burn the mucous membranes in the mouth or intestinal tract. It is a powerful skin sensitizing agent and in my opinion it should never be used on the skin even in tiny amounts. I once got a tiny smear on my nose from sniffing a bottle and regretted it for hours afterwards. Even when cleaned off it continued burning and killed the superficial skin cells resulting in a sore patch for about a week.

Cinnamon bark oil is restricted in all cosmetic products by the IFRA.

In addition to the above, *Cinnamomum cassia* Blume, is commonly referred to as 'Chinese cinnamon'. This is frequently sold as Ceylon cinnamon because it is cheaper. Its properties are similar but its fragrance is not so good.

There are many other varieties of cinnamon trees all of which yield essential oils with a highly variable composition. Therefore, when looking at research papers you must ascertain which variety of tree has been used. Probably the best guide on the likely variety is a provable geographical location from which the raw material has originated.

Due to these differences in composition, you should always ask someone who just states "cinnamon oil" which one do you mean, bark or leaf. I have found that dangerous error on numerous web sites, even those run by leading members of trade organisations. Just to make matters worse you will come across scientific research papers where they just say "cinnamon oil".

Medicinal claims:

Frequently the claims made for cinnamon bark essential oil are exactly the same as the traditional medicine uses of the bark. Indeed cinnamon bark powder taken internally can be fantastic for stomach upsets but the essential oil is far too aggressive for such use.

There are numerous research papers proving that cinnamon bark oil is a powerful anti microbial agent. *Journal of Ethnopharmacology. Volume 67, Issue 3, pp. 269 - 277, 14 October, 1999. Das Manosi et al. Int. J. Pharm. 2013,4 (4). KMITL Sci. Tech. J. Vol. 7 No. 1 Jan. - Jun. 2007.* However, what is rarely mentioned is that it kills organisms by destroying their cell walls. The oil will have exactly the same effect on your skin and it can burn wherever it is applied.

When reading medicinal claims based on research papers one must always look at the research to see what type of extract has been used. Often you will find the research has been done using solvents such as ethanol or water. Such extracts are very different to the essential oil and therefore it is wrong to assume that the same activity will be present in both types of extract.

The agents of multi level companies are notorious for publishing research references to justify their therapeutic claims. When checked you will often find the references are to solvent extracts such as the above. Frequently also they are to lab tests done on isolated cells which can rarely be extrapolated to the same use in humans.

Beware of claims for cinnamon bark oil based on the work by Dr Penoel. He has in the past recommended the use of cinnamon bark oil in rectal 'gellules' equivalent to 29 times the recommended oral maximum safe level of the world health organisation. Almost everyone in aromatherapy that is found to be recommending the internal use of essential oils has based what they say on the work of Penoel and Franchomme. Both these individuals have fabricated therapeutic uses based on the major chemical groups found in essential oils. More on that elsewhere on this site.

More details on the errors on cinnamon oil are in the compilation file 'DoTerra; Young Living; Dr Axe' at the top of the article archive page.

Just to muddy the waters a bit more, the principal flavour chemical in cinnamon bark oil is cinnamic aldehyde. This single chemical is commonly used in the food trade but it can be natural or more often synthetic. However, the volumes used as food flavours are tiny and are considered safe for consumption. The less scrupulous bulk oil traders can add this chemical to cinnamon bark oil to bulk it out and make it more profitable.

The above is where the problems begin for those using essential oils internally. The volumes recommended for internal use found on blog sites are many times higher than those used by the food trade. In that case the person consuming the oil is being exposed to synthetic chemicals in **far higher doses than when safety evaluations were carried out on the chemical**. It is often the case that known dangerous extracts can be used in food and flavour trades at established safe levels of use. However, these should not be used at the far higher levels recommended by numerous social media blogs and by certain con artists involved in promoting quack remedies.

Beware of soap containing cinnamon bark oil. Home producers often have no clue on the safety issues of natural substances. They replicate formulas from old books to produce goods that nowadays would be banned for normal retail. I have seen 'hand crafted' soap that had an overwhelming smell of cinnamon bark oil. That indicated it was added in far too high amounts and was probably unsafe.

Beware of any aftershaves or perfumes made by so called "natural perfumers". Many of their products are fine, but some are not if they are using cinnamon bark oil as well as a few other dangerous oils. Don't forget that artisan producers have rarely had any formal training but instead they pick up the information they want from social media sites. That is asking for trouble.

Lastly never forget that essential oils and water do not mix. I have seen so many people suggesting diluting essential oils in water and drinking the result. If you try that with cinnamon bark oil the tiny droplets are likely to stick to your throat on the way down and cause burning.

Summary

Would I ever use cinnamon bark oil? No never, not even in a diffuser. I have assembled too much safety data to even contemplate using it.

Would I ever use Cinnamon leaf oil? Yes in the appropriate dilution but rarely on the skin. More likely in a diffuser and in a blend rather than alone.

Would I use these oils in food? No never, I would use the dried herbs.