

## GARLIC



Because of Garlic's reputation for unsavoury smelliness, it surprises many people to find it listed as an aromatherapy oil, for they think of these as being predominantly sweet-scented! However, it is one of the most powerful of all antiseptic oils known, and if this were its only property it would be enough to make it a valuable oil; but it has many other important actions, particularly in decongesting and detoxifying, and in its effect on the blood and circulation. It should be admitted, though, that because of the smell this oil is very little used in external treatments, and is most often used in the form of capsules or 'perles' for internal treatment.

The active principles of Garlic (*Allium Sativum*) include alliin, allinase, allicin, alithiamin (a form of Vitamin B) antibiotic allista-tines, garlicine, nicotinamidc (another B vitamin) organic iodine, organic sulphur, Vitamin A and numerous trace elements. As with many other plants, the history of its use goes back many thousands of years - in this case

at least to the Babylonians of 4,000 years ago. It is one of the most widely used plants throughout the world, both for medicinal and culinary purposes. There is a great deal of overlap, as we should realise that those civilisations which have always included a high proportion of garlic-flavoured dishes in their regular diet, consistently show lower levels of heart disease, high blood pressure and circulatory problems, intestinal disorders and bronchitis. There is increasing evidence that cancers are less common, too, but there are still a lot of questions to be asked on this topic, such as whether the life-style in general, or the environment, are factors in addition to the diet.

From folk medicine. Garlic has found its way into the folklore of many lands - for example, any Transylvanian will tell you it keeps the vampires at bay! However, these beliefs are nothing like as silly as they might appear at first, and modern laboratory testing has vindicated some of the apparently naive methods of use. It is a highly volatile oil - i.e., it releases its properties very easily into the air - and is very quickly and efficiently absorbed through the skin as well as the nose; and when we learn that in controlled tests, Garlic oil rubbed on the sole of a man's feet was detectable on his breath ten minutes later, then hanging a clove of garlic round a child's neck, or nailing slices of garlic to your doorpost or putting them in your shoes, no longer seems so laughable. Garlic's reputation as a protection against the 'evil eye' can be understood, too, when we know that it is wonderful preventive measure against many of the minor ailments which were often believed to be brought about by the evil eye. If it kept at bay the coughs and colds, winter ills, stomach upsets, rheumatism and intestinal worms, then Garlic would have appeared to have been doing a very good job of warding off the powers of evil.

In present-day society. Garlic is being increasingly recognised as a preventative of high blood-pressure and heart disease, whether eaten fresh as part of the diet or taken in the form of oil in capsules. It is very effective at reducing high cholesterol levels (though obviously we must also make sure that any changes needed in the diet are made).

It is an effective decongestant and antiseptic - of immense value in treating catarrh, sinusitis and bronchitis (especially chronic bronchitis) and is probably best known to the lay person in this capacity. Many people take one or more capsules daily throughout the winter as a preventive measure against colds, etc. For acute bronchitis, Garlic should be used in conjunction



with other oils to combat the infection relieve coughing and reduce fever.

Its antiseptic, bactericidal and detoxifying properties make Garlic very valuable in treating acne. It would be unrealistic to expect the (usually young) patient to accept the use of oil of garlic in direct application to the skin, {though it would be extremely effective if they would}, but they should be encouraged to use Garlic perles daily to help clear the body of toxins. An odourless form of capsule is now available, which should give greater confidence to any young person who is worried about what his/her peers will think of possibly smelly breath, though there is a possibility that in removing the odour, some of the most valuable properties of the oil are lost.

Garlic has been used for thousands of years to prevent infestation with intestinal worms, both in people and in animals, and it is also effective against certain other parasites. It is used internally as capsules or fresh Garlic in the treatment of scabies, along with Lavender, Peppermint, and possibly other oils, applied externally.

It is one of the best treatments for gastro-intestinal infections, and can be used as a preventive measure, especially when travelling abroad to areas where stomach upsets are feared; though eating the local food, which is probably rich in garlic, as opposed to that specifically offered to tourists, is perhaps the best safeguard. The widespread use of Garlic in the diet of many peasant communities undoubtedly protects them from infections, in conditions in which rapidly-proliferating bacteria would otherwise be very dangerous. The Garlic also increases the individual's resistance to infection.



It was shown in laboratory tests in 1969 that Garlic is highly effective against the E-coli bacteria that cause urinary infections. These bacteria, of the escherichia genus, inhabit the large intestine and are normally harmless, but if they stray outside the gut they can be dangerous, giving rise to bladder and kidney infections. As an antibiotic. Garlic has the advantage of not killing off the beneficial flora of the intestine as the synthetic antibiotics do. Well before these facts were established though. Garlic was known to be an effective treatment for cystitis, and a good preventative for people who are prone to repeated attacks.

There is little to be said about the method of use, since none of the forms of external treatment which should always be the first choice in aromatherapy are appropriate in this instance. Treatment will nearly always be in the

form of capsules taken internally: 1 to 3, taken 3 times daily in acute conditions, or once, preferably at night, for chronic conditions, or as a preventative. However, there is one other highly effective method of use in certain conditions, and this is to use the capsules in the manner of a suppository. One or more capsules should be inserted as high in the rectum as possible, immediately after a bowel movement (plastic Disposa-gloves can be bought at chemists for this purpose). This method is particularly valuable in treating cystitis, all intestinal disorders and worms, and for the very few people who find that Garlic irritates the stomach.