



EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY
SCIENCE MEDICINES HEALTH

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Thyme oil

Thymus vulgaris L. and *Thymus zygis* L., aetheroleum

This is a summary of the scientific conclusions reached by the Committee on Herbal Medicinal Products (HMPC) on the medicinal uses of thyme oil. The HMPC conclusions are taken into account by EU Member States when evaluating applications for the licensing of herbal medicines containing thyme oil.

This summary is not intended to provide practical advice on how to use medicines containing thyme oil. For practical information about using thyme oil medicines, patients should read the package leaflet that comes with the medicine or contact their doctor or pharmacist.

What is thyme oil?

Thyme oil is the common name for the essential oil of the plants *Thymus vulgaris* L. or *Thymus zygis* L.

The HMPC conclusions only cover thyme oil obtained by steam distillation from the fresh flowering above-ground parts of either species or a mixture of both.

Herbal medicines containing this thyme oil preparation are usually available in liquid forms to be taken by mouth and in liquid or semi-solid forms to be applied to the skin or used as a bath additive.

Thyme oil may also be found in combination with other herbal substances in some herbal medicines. These combinations are not covered in this summary.

What are the HMPC conclusions on its medicinal uses?

The HMPC concluded that, on the basis of its long-standing use, this thyme oil preparation can be used in liquids to be taken by mouth for the treatment of chesty (phlegm-producing) cough associated with colds, and as an application to the skin or as a bath additive for the relief of symptoms of cough and colds.

Thyme oil medicines taken by mouth or applied to the skin should only be used in adults; bath additives may be used in children over the age of 3 years. If symptoms persist for longer than a week or worsen during treatment, or if patients have fever, difficulty breathing, or yellow or green phlegm suggestive of an infection, a doctor or a qualified healthcare practitioner should be consulted. Detailed instructions on how to take thyme oil medicines and who can use them can be found in the package leaflet that comes with the medicine.

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What evidence supports the use of thyme oil medicines?

The HMPC conclusions on the use of these thyme oil medicines for symptoms of coughs and colds are based on their 'traditional use'. This means that, although there is insufficient evidence from clinical trials, the effectiveness of these herbal medicines is plausible and there is evidence that they have been used safely in this way for at least 30 years (including at least 15 years within the EU). Moreover, the intended use does not require medical supervision.

In its assessment, the HMPC considered laboratory studies, including those which looked at the antimicrobial activity of thyme oil as a preservative.

For detailed information on the studies assessed by the HMPC, see the HMPC assessment report.

What are the risks associated with thyme oil medicines?

Allergic reactions and skin irritation have been reported with thyme oil medicines but the frequency of these has not been established.

Thyme oil medicines must not be used in patients who are allergic to thyme oil. Patients with open wounds, extensive skin injuries or acute skin diseases, high fever, severe infection or severe problems with circulation, high blood pressure or heart failure must not have full hot baths with thyme oil medicines. Thyme oil medicines should not be applied to the face.

Further information on the risks associated with these thyme oil medicines, including the appropriate precautions for their safe use, can be found in the monograph which is published on the Agency's website under the section 'Documents': ema.europa.eu/medicines/herbal/thymi-aetheroleum.

How are thyme oil medicines approved in the EU?

Any applications for the licensing of medicines containing thyme oil have to be submitted to the national authorities responsible for medicinal products, which will assess the application for the herbal medicine and take into account the scientific conclusions of the HMPC.

Information on the use and licensing of thyme oil medicines in EU Member States should be obtained from the relevant national authorities.

Other information about thyme oil medicines

Further information on the HMPC assessment of thyme oil medicines, including details of the Committee's conclusions, can be found in the section 'Documents' on the Agency's website: ema.europa.eu/medicines/herbal/thymi-aetheroleum. For more information about treatment with thyme oil medicines, read the package leaflet that comes with the medicine or contact your doctor or pharmacist.