

CERTIFIED HOLISTIC HEALTH COACH

LARA  
ADLER

& ENVIRONMENTAL TOXINS EXPERT



Helping you change the things you *can* control  
so you can *worry less* about the things you can't

## ESSENTIAL OILS AS CLEANERS DO THEY REALLY WORK?

---

We are kind of obsessed with things being 99.99% germ free: We pull out the bleach after every piece of raw chicken hits your cutting boards, we whip out the bleach to kill bacteria in our toilets, shower stalls, and bathroom sinks. Out come the “sanitizing” wipes when anyone in the house has a cold - doorknobs, light switches, tv remotes all get treated. Consumers, through slick marketing and media stories, have become fearful of things like *E.coli* outbreaks, drug-resistant germs and quick spreading viruses, and are in turn stocking their homes full of chemically treated products in an attempt to keep themselves safe.

But is this really necessary? And can there be downsides?

Short answer is usually no, and definitely yes!

To answer the “is this really necessary question” I want to offer up the “Hygiene Hypothesis” which puts forth that when we grow up in environments that are too clean (ie, overly sanitized) we have much higher rates of allergies and immune problems than those who grow up having to face and defend themselves against germs in the environment. For example, children growing up on farms, who are exposed to all kinds of allergens, dirt and bacteria, actually have lower rates of asthma and allergies than children growing up in cities where they typically don't have exposure to these kinds of things.

In order for our bodies to build up resistance to germs and bacteria, we need to have a certain level of exposure to them - a totally sterile environment doesn't give us the chance to allow that to happen, resulting in an immune system that has no point of reference against these potential threats.

And what about the downsides?

Most household disinfectants use bleach and a primary ingredient. Bleach is incredibly caustic and can cause immediate harm to skin, eyes, and airways, causing respiratory problems and things like headaches, dizziness, and nausea. Many household cleaners, even if they aren't categorized as a disinfectant can contain bleach, alcohol, and/or triclosan as active ingredients - these are overkill and unnecessary most of the time. Many household cleaners also contain

heavy synthetic fragrances that contain hormone disrupting compounds... some contain neurotoxins, thyroid disruptors, and even carcinogens.

If you're not keen on using harsh chemicals, and want to shift towards using more natural cleaning products, you can rely on certain plant derived essential oils to do the job for you!

Before I go into the benefits of essential oils as cleaning agents, let's clarify some terms:

**ANTIMICROBIAL:** A product or ingredient that kills or inhibits bacteria, viruses or molds.

**ANTIBACTERIAL:** A product or ingredient that kills only bacteria

**DISINFECTANT:** A product or ingredient that kills micro-organisms, typically both bacteria and viruses on hard surfaces only (like toilet seats or countertops).

A number of essential oils have clinically been shown to have antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties, including clove oil, tea tree oil, thyme oil, oregano oil, rosemary oil, eucalyptus, lemon-grass, and cinnamon oils. Some oils are more effective against bacteria, while others are more effective against viruses, so combinations can be more effective than just using one oil on it's own.

These essential oils have been shown to be effective at eliminating or reducing the following types of bacteria, viruses, and fungi:

**Staphylococcus** (gastroenteritis, pneumonia, meningitis, endocarditis, sepsis...)  
**Salmonella** (diarrhea, fever, vomiting...)  
**Enterococcus** (urinary tract infections, meningitis...)  
**Listeria** (fever, chills, vomiting...)  
**Candida albicans** (bloating, gas, acid reflux, anxiety, yeast infections, athletes foot, sinus infections...)  
**Streptococcus** (pneumonia, meningitis, endocarditis, sepsis...)  
**Shigella** (dysentery, diarrhea, vomiting, fever...)  
**Escherichia coli** (diarrhea, abdominal cramps, kidney failure...)

Those are all the big ones that we're really looking to avoid so we don't get sick. So how can you swap out the bleach, Clorox Wipes, and heavy duty toilet bowl cleaners while still effectively keeping your house free from those nasties? You can buy, or easily make your own all purpose household cleaner that uses essential oils as a primary ingredient.

[Young Living Essential Oils](#), make a product called Thieves Oil, which is a blend of clove oil, lemon oil, cinnamon oil, eucalyptus oil, and rosemary oil in a pure grain alcohol base - some of the most potent antibacterial, antifungal, and antiviral oils available! They sell this either as an essential oil concentrate, as a



household cleaner, or in a small travel sized 1oz spray bottle. (While you can get some of these products on Amazon.com, you may need to find a local distributor, which you can do through their website.)

Thieves Oil supposedly gets it's name from a legend of four men who were robbing the graves of victims of the bubonic plague. They supposedly never got sick because they used a special recipe of aromatic herbs including clove, rosemary and garlic before committing their crimes!

Not sure if this story is true, but it sure as a nice touch to the name "Thieves Oil"!!

Another alternative is to make your own all purpose cleaner using essential oil. While this might be more costly at the outset, due to the cost of the essential oil, it will over time, save you money as you'll no longer be spending \$4-5 each on different bottles of household cleaners.

### **Here's what you'll need to make your own version of a "Thieves Oil"**

- 1 plastic spray bottle (new, not previously used for anything else) at least 16 ounces.
- 1 measuring cup
- 1 cup filtered water
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 2 teaspoons rubbing alcohol (optional - this helps with evaporation)
- 8-10 drops of essential oils of choice: (thyme, clove, rosemary, oregano, tea tree, cinnamon - one is good, a mixture is better!)

Mix all these together and pour into your clean spray bottle. Shake before using and you're good to go! This all purpose cleaner is good for counter tops (not marble sadly - at least not this mixture), floors, toilets, shower stalls, you name it!

Companies that make conventional household cleaners do a good job of convincing you through slick marketing that you need everything in your house to be totally germ free (and that your a bad mom/wife - gasp! - if you don't). You just need it to be safe, and you're certainly not getting that with the chemicals they pack in there. You can effectively clean, and disinfect when necessary using less toxic ingredients. I say "less toxic" because although essential oils are natural, they are highly concentrated and still should be used with caution. Some essential oils are totally fine with direct skin contact, while others, like citrus oils can be irritating.

If you're bookish, like reading references or just want to see for yourself how effective these essential oils are, below are a number of studies that show the antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties of many of the essential oils mentioned here.

Chaieb K, Hajlaoui H, Zmantar T, Kahla-Nakbi AB, Rouabhia M, Mahdouani K, Bakhrouf A. **“The chemical composition and biological activity of clove essential oil, *Eugenia caryophyllata* (*Syzygium aromaticum* L. Myrtaceae): a short review.”** *Phytother Res.* 2007 Jun;21(6):501-6.

Astani A., Reichling J., Schnitzler P., **“Comparative study on the antiviral activity of selected monoterpenes derived from essential oils”** *Phytotherapy Research* May 2010 Volume 24, Issue 5, pages 673–679, DOI: 10.1002/ptr.2955

Sue C. Chao, D. Gary Young, Craig J. Oberg, **“Screening for Inhibitory Activity of Essential Oils on Selected Bacteria, Fungi and Viruses”** *Journal of Essential Oil Research*, 2000 Volume 12, Issue 5, DOI: 10.1080/10412905.2000.9712177

K. A. Hammer, C. F. Carson, T. V. Riley, **“Antimicrobial activity of essential oils and other plant extracts”**, *Journal of Applied Microbiology*, June 1999, Volume 86, Issue 6, pages 985–990, DOI: 10.1046/j.1365-2672.1999.00780.x

Laila El Bouzidi, Abdelaziz Abbad, Lahcen Hassani, et al, **“Essential Oil Composition and Antimicrobial Activity of Wild and Cultivated Moroccan *Achillea ageratum* L.: a Rare and Threatened Medicinal Species”** *Chemistry & Biodiversity*, March 2012, Volume 9, Issue 3, pages 598–605, DOI: 10.1002/cbdv.201100115

Burt, S., **“Essential oils: their antibacterial properties and potential applications in foods—a review”** *International Journal of Food Microbiology*, 1 August 2004, Volume 94, Issue 3, Pages 223–253

Gislene G. F. Nascimento, Juliana Locatelli, Paulo C. Freitas, Giuliana L. Silva, **“Antibacterial Activity Of Plant Extracts And Phytochemicals On Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria”** *Braz. J. Microbiol.* Oct./Dec. 2000, vol.31 no. 4 São Paulo <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1517-83822000000400003>

Monika Sienkiewicz, Monika Łysakowska, Paweł Denys, and Edward Kowalczyk., **“The Antimicrobial Activity of Thyme Essential Oil Against Multidrug Resistant Clinical Bacterial Strains”** *Microbial Drug Resistance*. April 2012, 18(2): 137-148. doi:10.1089/mdr.2011.0080.

Geíza Alves de Azerêdo, Tânia Lúcia Montenegro Stamford, Regina Celia Bressan Queiroz de Figueiredo, and Evandro Leite de Souza. **“The Cytotoxic Effect of Essential Oils from *Origanum vulgare* L. and/or *Rosmarinus officinalis* L. on *Aeromonas hydrophila*”** *Foodborne Pathogens and Disease*. April 2012, 9(4): 298-304. doi:10.1089/fpd.2011.1047

Fortino Solórzano-Santos, Maria Guadalupe Miranda-Novales **“Essential oils from aromatic herbs as antimicrobial agents”** *Current Opinion in Biotechnology*, April 2012, Volume 23, Issue 2, Pages 136–141 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.copbio.2011.08.005>