

Spearmint tea -- A possible treatment for mild hirsutism

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Women with hirsutism grow hair on their faces, breasts and stomachs. This can cause great distress. The hair grows because they have abnormally high levels of the ‘masculinising’ androgen hormones. Androgens travel around the body in the blood stream, and a key way of treating hirsutism is to reduce the level of these androgens.

Data just published in *Phytotherapy Research* shows that drinking two cups of spearmint tea a day for five days could reduce the level of androgens in women with hirsutism.

"Current therapies use either oral contraceptives to suppress androgen production, or medications such as spironolactone that prevent the body responding to androgen – but this study shows that spearmint could be a good natural alternative for women who have mild symptoms," says researcher Mehmet Numan Tamer who acts as spokesperson for the research team. The research was carried out at the Suleyman Demirel University, Isparta, Turkey.

In the trials the herbal tea was made by pouring a cup (250ml) of boiling water over 1 heaped teaspoon (5g) of dried leaves, and leaving it for 5 to 10 mins.

The team decided to study the effects of spearmint on hirsutism because of previous reports that extracts of the spearmint plant (*Mentha spicata* Labiatae) could reduce libido in men. A possible reason for this reduced libido could have been that spearmint was reducing their androgen level.

Other research had shown that these extracts reduced androgen levels in rats.

"We now need to do further studies to test the reliability of this finding, and to see the extent to which the reduced androgens do help women with mild hirsutism," says Professor Tamer.

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