



AESTHETICS PRACTITIONERS Journal

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Polyphenols in Olive Leaf Extract

Health and Skin Benefits

by Tina Viney

Most of us probably know olive leaf extract as an immune system booster, but do not know of any benefits that it could offer the skin. However, there is some interesting research that may suggest otherwise.

Helping to improve general wellbeing and boost the immune system should not be scoffed at as being too “generic”. Indeed, anything that supports the immune system will ultimately contribute to better skin and greater vitality, and a product that is more than capable of doing this is Olive Leaf Extract.

The benefits of Olive Leaf Extract have been well known in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries for centuries. This natural medicinal herb is extracted from the actual leaf of the olive tree, although there are also (lesser) benefits from using olive oil as well as olive oil and leaf extract combinations.

A POWERFUL ANTIOXIDANT

Olive Leaf Extract is considered now one of the most sought after natural health supplements in Australia. This powerful antioxidant assists in supporting the maintenance of normal heart function, and of course it is well known in supporting a healthy immune system due to its unusually high levels of polyphenols or flavanoid content. (Hold on to this as we will make reference to it later in this article.)

For its general health benefits Sydney Naturopath and Nutritionist Dr. Karen Bridgman, PhD, MSc(Hons), M Ed (Higher Ed), MAppSci, ND, DBM, Dip Hom, said that research and anecdotal information supports the Olive Leaf Extract as a multi-purpose natural health supplement. “The high level of polyphenols in the Olive Leaf Extract make it a good choice to help with a variety of inflammatory conditions and ailments,” said Dr. Bridgman. “From a clinical perspective, I believe that the fresh plant preparation of the extract also enhances its natural health properties and I recommend it to my patients all the time.”

Scientific studies and anecdotal information indicate that Olive Leaf Extract delivers a range of other significant health benefits including:

- **Metabolic Syndrome:** New research published in *The Journal Of Nutrition* this year suggests that Olive Leaf Extract containing polyphenols such as oleuropein and hydroxytyrosol may help to support normal cardiovascular function when challenged by Metabolic Syndrome, a broad lifestyle-related condition.
- **Super Antioxidant Power:** Research conducted at Australia's Southern Cross University identified the Olive Leaf as the most powerful, radical-scavenging antioxidant of 55 medicinal herbs. This gives further support to earlier research showing that liquid extracts made directly from fresh-picked Olive Leaves have 400% greater antioxidant power than an equivalent amount of Vitamin C - helping to fight off free radicals.
- **Immune System:** The antioxidant properties in the Olive Leaf have traditionally been used for relieving fever and to support the immune system.
- **Heart Health:** Several studies suggest that Olive Leaf Extract may help to support a healthy cardiovascular system

due to its high levels of polyphenols.

- **Cardiovascular Support:** Studies have shown that the Olive Leaf Extract may help maintain a healthy cardiovascular system including normal cholesterol levels.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

While in the past there was very little research conducted on Olive Leaf Extract on humans, there are now hundreds of research studies that report on its effectiveness in numerous clinical trials.

The New York University School of Medicine has completed definitive tests that show that Olive Leaf Extract is able to change the pathways of HIV-type infections and may even reverse these conditions.

The University of Durban-Westville in South Africa has concluded that one of the benefits of Olive Leaf Extract is that it decreases hypertension, especially in cases where the condition is related to salt-sensitivity.

Research has also been done regarding the antioxidant benefits of Olive Leaf Extract and show that it possesses extremely high antioxidative properties. Further research suggested that not only does this herb serve to remove free radicals from the system, but it also helps to add protective qualities for the heart and circulatory system.

Through eliminating free radicals in the system Olive Leaf Extract also helps reduce the productions of micro-toxins in the body that may be the cause of colds, flus and other respiratory conditions.

Female specific benefits of Olive Leaf Extract extend to eliminating yeast and other vaginal infections, as well as helping reduce the symptoms of PMS and migraine headaches.



POLYPHENOLS AND THE SKIN

Polyphenols, or flavonoids, are chemical compounds with larger molecules found in all plant leaves, bark, fruits and flowers. However, they are found more abundantly in Olive Leaf Extract.

Their function is to produce pigment and photo-protection, acting as a defence mechanism against hostile environmental conditions. Photo-protection occurs because the pigment produced by the polyphenols will absorb light. Therefore, polyphenols are considered UV-absorbing compounds (up to 90-99% of ultraviolet radiation), and accumulate mainly in the epidermal cells of plant tissues. These absorption properties can serve as protection against potentially harmful radiation. However, when polyphenol compounds are used in skincare there is a concern.

One thing that all of the different phenolic compounds have in common is that their molecular structure includes a ring of six carbon atoms with at least one -OH group attached. Poly refers to more than one OH attachment. Sometimes you will see "phenyl" as part of a chemical name; this also means the compound contains a phenolic ring. The majority of phenolic compounds found in botanicals can accurately be called polyphenols.

Polyphenols are known powerful antioxidants acting as free radical scavengers by their electron and hydrogen donating capabilities. The flavonoids or polyphenol family of antioxidants accounts for wound healing and anti-inflammatory reaction on the skin. These flavonoids include green tea polyphenols as well as silymarin. Isolation is a process that refers to separating the polyphenols from their source through varying methods, including dehydration, rehydration and centrifuge, then extracting its DNA and synthesising the molecular structure. This can then be labelled as the ingredient Polyphenol Isolate.

Currently most of the botanical extracts added to products are marketed as providing antioxidant power to the skin via the polyphenols they contain.

We know that pretty much every plant contains a range of polyphenols. All the berry fruits, apples, teas, apples, red wine, citrus fruits, chocolate and pomegranate are some of the more common everyday sources that are relatively good polyphenol sources, as does Olive Leaf Extract.

Many polyphenols that are tested in the lab on skin and skin cells are assessed for reducing the harm from UV irradiation, but not necessarily for their direct anti-ageing benefits.

Another consideration with the botanicals added to skin products is

that is not clear whether enough is added to have any effect, and whether the skin product is formulated in a way that allows the polyphenols to penetrate the skin.

Additionally, reactive compounds such as polyphenols are often not very stable, so if the product is not formulated to maintain their stability, a product may have stopped being effective before you have finished it. And here is an important finding. In many studies that show that polyphenols have a positive effect on skin, the polyphenols products **were eaten**, not applied directly to the skin.

It is therefore advisable when it comes to polyphenols to do your research to ensure that the topical formulation has evidence of proven levels of the botanical extracts in the final product if it is going to be effective. Meanwhile, Olive Leaf Extract, when taken internally can

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deliver through its high polyphenol content excellent antioxidant benefits and contributes to supporting the immune system and ultimately defending the skin's immunity as well. **API**

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If you would like to stock Olive Leaf Extract you can contact Olive Leaf Australia on 1300 653 436 or see www.olea.com.au.

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OLIVE LEAF EXTRACT – for a healthy immune system

Olive Leaf Extract is used traditionally to support a healthy immune system, but also assists in the maintenance of normal heart function and cardiovascular health. Olive Leaf, Australia's fresh leaf extract, has 400% more antioxidant power than the equivalent amount of Vitamin C¹ and is available in both delicious Natural and Peppermint flavours, making it easy for the whole family to take. Always read the label. Use only as directed. If symptoms persist, please see your health professional. **For further enquiries and to stock Olive Leaf Extract contact Olive Leaf Australia on 1300 653 436 or see www.olea.com.au.**



¹Stevenson, L., Hunter, D., "Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity of OliveLeaf® Olive Leaf Extracts" Southern Cross University, 2005. Commissioned by Olive Products Australia. CHC 41469-05/10