



Oil Pulling

Does It Really Work??

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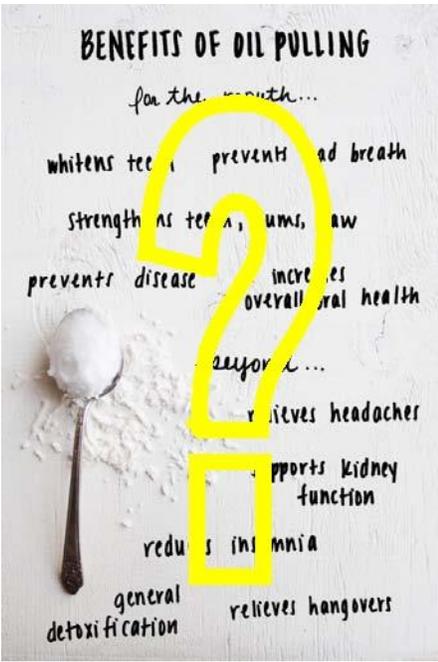
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An article in "People" magazine described Gwyneth Paltrow, the naturopathic, self help maven and other Hollywood celebrities as proponents of the practice of Oil Pulling.

As written in Ecclesiastes, there is truly nothing new under the sun! Oil Pulling stems from an ancient ayurvedic (naturopathic) practice that lately has experienced a 21st century revival. Oil Pulling origins can be traced back over 3,000 year old to Indian-South Asia and has been purported over that same time period to represent an effective treatment for a myriad of ailments including periodontal disease.

Typically, indigenous oils specific to the region where Oil Pulling was practiced were utilized. A widely held ayurvedic belief describes the necessity to "pull" demons from out of the mouth to improve overall health. Over the centuries (long before there existed any knowledge of bacteria) elaborate rituals, ceremonies and recipes evolved surrounding this custom. In certain respects, this custom has similarities to rinsing with salt and water hydrogen peroxide or baking soda. The more things change, the more they stay the same



Oil Pulling, the act of swishing oil in one's mouth, has been purported to prevent disease, purge toxins, whiten teeth, clear up acne, cure migraines and treat gum-periodontal disease. It seems that everywhere one turns, people are jumping on this bandwagon. Despite the lack of supporting science, many in the naturopathic community including **Deepak Chopra** swear by it.

To precisely evaluate the validity of past and present Oil Pulling claims in a dispassionate manner, within this newsletter I comprehensively reviewed the myriad of "Oil Pulling" claims. I combed the scientific literature (limited as it was) regarding this protocol to determine whether there exist statistically significant benefits when individuals follow the practice of Oil Pulling.

Nevertheless, as someone who religiously starts my day with a fresh brewed cup of coffee, I too was initially intrigued by the promise of maintaining whiter teeth. Rather than discount the practice of Oil Pulling offhand, for a week in addition to my twice daily brushing and flossing, I swished with coconut oil (due to its purported anti-

microbial properties) although technically, any oil would do. In addition, in a comprehensive, dispassionate and analytically manner, I investigated the science behind *Oil Pulling*.

"Oil pulling is nothing new," says Dr. David Colbert, a New York-based dermatologist. "The Italians do it three times a day. It's part of the Mediterranean diet and any diet rich in natural healthy oils like olive oil will provide the "pull." Basically, Dr. Colbert suggests, *Oil Pulling* is simply a new take on what human beings have been doing for millennia, essentially incorporating *healthy oils* as part of their regular diet.

Research dating back over the past 50 years supports the significant health benefits that arise from consuming specific mono and poly unsaturated oils. Although there exist only a handful of published clinical trials on *Oil Pulling*, one paper did suggest that *Oil Pulling* may whiten teeth. Closer evaluation of this article revealed that the whitening effect described was primarily due to teeth having a greater reflectivity when coated with oil. The above notwithstanding, the scientific literature is devoid of any other oral health benefits to be gained from the practice of *Oil Pulling*. Although categorical, this statement summarizes the scientific literature. Fortunately or unfortunately dependent on your perspective, no current scientific articles support this practice.

In many of our previous Newsletters we discussed the linkage between oral health and systemic disease. No scientific rationale exists to support *Oil Pulling* as a mono therapy to improve oral or systemic health. On the other hand, even if your teeth are *pearly white*, effective twice daily brushing and flossing have been conclusively shown to improve one's oral-periodontal health and with it, reduce risk factors for an ever increasing number of systemic conditions. In the final analysis, should *Oil Pulling* encourage you to spend more time brushing and flossing, it stands to reason that you would be healthier overall.

