

# Humble thyme plant can kill the MRSA bug

by **SIOBHAN RYAN**  
Health Reporter

SCIENTISTS have had a major breakthrough in the fight against the potentially fatal MRSA bug.

They discovered that essential oils derived from thyme plants normally used in aromatherapy can destroy the bug within two hours.

The study was carried out at the University of Brighton using a small selection of oils scientists believed could provide an answer to the growing MRSA problem.

The deadly bug is rampant in many hospitals but can also be found in the wider community. It is resistant to antibiotics, making it difficult to treat.

It is hoped the new discovery will provide another form of treatment to tackle MRSA.

The bacteria is often carried on the skin or in the nostrils of healthy people. When a carrier enters hospital for any procedure that punctures the skin, the bacteria can enter the body and cause serious medical problems.

Each year up to 5,000 people die as a result of MRSA. There were more than 50 cases reported across Sussex between April 2009 and the end of March, compared with more than 100 the year before. Brighton and Sussex

University Hospitals NHS Trust recorded 24 cases, Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust had 20 and East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust had eight.

The thyme research, published in the International Journal of Essential Oil Therapeutics, was carried out by a team of microbiologists led by Professor Geoff Hanlon of the school of pharmacy and biomolecular sciences.

Jonathan Caplin, who was part of the team, said: "These are very promising results. We have shown at least in the laboratory that this blend of thyme has a very strong killing effect on MRSA. Now further work is needed to ascertain its effect in real cases."

The Brighton study was triggered when Maggie Tisserand, director of Crawley-based company Benchmark Oils, asked the university to conduct laboratory research oils.

She said: "The thyme oil we use is food grade and in preliminary company trials shows no adverse effects on intact skin."

siobhan.ryan  
@theargus.co.uk





**ESSENTIAL RESEARCH:** Scientists at the University of Brighton have had a breakthrough using thyme plants

