

Med Mycol. 2000 Oct;38(5):355-62.

**Melaleuca alternifolia (tea tree) oil inhibits germ tube formation by *Candida albicans*.**

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The effect of tea tree oil (TTO) on the formation of germ tubes by *Candida albicans* was examined. Two isolates were tested for germ tube formation (GTF) in the presence of TTO concentrations (% v/v) ranging from 0.25% (1/2 minimum inhibitory concentration [MIC]) to 0.004% (1/128 MIC). GTF at 4 h in the presence of 0.004 and 0.008% (both isolates) and 0.016% (one isolate) TTO did not differ significantly ( $P > 0.05$ ) from controls. At all other concentrations at 4 h, GTF differed significantly from controls ( $P < 0.01$ ). A further eight isolates were tested for GTF in the presence of 0.031% TTO, and at 4h the mean GTF for all 10 isolates ranged 10.0-68.5%. Two isolates were examined for their ability to form germ tubes after 1 h of pre-exposure to several concentrations of TTO, prior to induction of germ tubes in horse serum. Cells pre-exposed to 0.125 and 0.25% TTO formed significantly fewer germ tubes than control cells at 1 h ( $P < 0.05$ ), but only those cells pre-exposed to 0.25% differed significantly from control cells at later time points ( $P < 0.01$ ). GTF by *C. albicans* is affected by the presence of, or pre-exposure to, sub-inhibitory concentrations of TTO. This may have therapeutic implications.

PMID: 11092382 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]