

# Pharmacological Activities and Cosmetic Uses of Babassu (*Orbignya phalerata*)

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## INTRODUCTION

Babassu is the generic name given to palm trees belonging to the *Palmae* family and members of *Orbignya* and *Attalea* genres. The first genus includes predominantly native species of northern Brazil (Maranhão, Piauí, Pará and Ceará), such as: *Orbignya phalerata* Mart, *Orbignya eichleri* Drude, *Orbignya teixeirana* Bondar and *Orbignya microcarpa* Martius. The *Orbignya phalerata* is the species most widely distributed of greater morphological variation and greater economic importance. This species occupies areas extensive in Brazil, Bolivia and Suriname. Babassu is native of the transition zone between savanna and forest in the southern Amazon<sup>1,2</sup>.

## THE USE OF BABASSU (*Orbignya phalerata*)

The fruit of the Babassu is the part most commonly used as a food resource by man and animals, especially the babassu almonds<sup>3</sup>.

The fruit of the Babassu have widespread use mainly as a food item at the same time generate income as a commercial product for the oil, which is extracted from babassu almonds<sup>3</sup>.

In the work of Pereira et al.<sup>3</sup> only 7% of respondents recognize the medicinal activity of babassu. The respondents used almond oil extracted in wound healing, in treating fungal infections and as a laxative. The popular uses of babassu use include the treatment of obesity, colitis, arthritis, leukemia, rheumatism, ulcerations, inflammations and tumors of the uterus and ovaries<sup>4</sup>.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT



## ANTI-INFLAMMATORY AND HEALING ACTIVITY OF BABASSU

The topical use of aqueous extract of Babassu mesocarp caused the wound healing in rats. It has been observed that treatment with babassu induced macrophage activation leading to increased nitric oxide production and the release of histamine, stimulating phagocytic activity<sup>5</sup>.

The activation of macrophages during early stage of wound healing is partly provided by the nitric oxide, which acts by stimulating the natural antimicrobial properties. Some studies show that inhibition of nitric oxide synthesis in mice affects wound healing<sup>6</sup>.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE USE OF BABASSU OIL IN COSMETICS

The importance of using babassu oil in cosmetics is due to the presence of compounds such as myristic, palmitic and oleic acids. Babassu oil is an emollient oil that can be used in various formulations for the care of skin and hair. It can be employed in cosmetic formulations, such as face creams, cleansing emulsions and creams for body. In formulations for hair care, babassu oil can be useful because the lauric fatty acids and unsaponifiables present may help in lipid replenishment and elasticity of the hair fiber<sup>7</sup>.

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