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### AROMATHERAPY

A few deep inhales of essential oils can have an impact on your breath, mood, and energy level.

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# Essential Oils

By Emily Englert, Certified Holistic Nutritionist

*The information here is not intended to cure, treat, or prevent any disease. These comments have not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration and are not to be used as a substitute for medical care or medical advice. Consult your licensed medical professional before trying any product.*

## INTRODUCTION

Have you ever walked into a spa or hotel lobby and felt an almost immediate sense of calm? Or entered a store in the mall and instantly felt the need to just walk around and browse? Chances are, they are diffusing essential oils.

Essential oils are increasingly popular as people look for alternatives or natural remedies for their symptoms. Surprisingly, the pure oils extracted from plants have more than relaxing or invigorating aromatic properties. In pure form, they have been used for centuries as natural therapy for mental, emotional, and physical health. Oils can be uplifting, invigorating, and activating; waking up your mind and energizing your body to think, move, and create. Other oils have the opposite effect: they provide calm, relaxation, restfulness, stress relief, or sleep. The effects of natural, pure, and carefully harvested essential oils are being studied and promoted for a number of health benefits, including anti-bacterial, anti-viral, and anti-inflammatory effects depending on the origin of the extract.

Essential oils contain volatile organic compounds that exert a pharmacological effect by entering the body through the skin (aromatherapy massage or topical application), oral and mucous membranes (eating or inhaling), and olfactory administration (inhalation aromatherapy).

The classification of essential oils is based on the botanical classification of the plant from which the essential oils are extracted. The use of chemotypes is another classification of essential oils which describes the main compound within the essential oil in chemical terms.

## DILUTION AND DOSAGE

Frequently, essential oils are used at different concentrations depending on the route of administration:

1. For aromatherapy massage, 1-5% essential oil is used.
2. For oral administration, 8-50% essential oil is used.



3. Concentrated essential oil is used in inhalation aromatherapy.

However, the dosage and dilution of essential oils chosen have not been standardized in practice. More research needs to be done to determine the best dosage, use, and dilution of which oils, and for what benefit. The lack of standardization has not slowed the growth of this industry. People are experimenting with essential oils in a variety of ways, looking for a broad spectrum of benefits.

### **HOW AROMATHERAPY WORKS ON THE BRAIN**

Aromatherapy is the most common use of essential oils. It is a simple and affordable way to use essential oils for general well-being.

In inhalation aromatherapy, the inhaled air containing essential oils reaches the circulation system via the blood capillary network in the nose and the bronchi in the lungs and also stimulates brain areas directly via the olfactory epithelium. Essential oils trigger mechanisms in the brain via the olfactory system. The mechanism of action of oils administered by inhalation involves stimulation of the olfactory receptor cells in the nasal epithelium, about 25 million cells, connected to the olfactory bulb. After stimulation, the signal is transmitted to the limbic system and hypothalamus in the brain through the olfactory bulb and olfactory tract. Once the signals reach the olfactory cortex, release of neurotransmitters, for example, serotonin, takes place, which results in the expected effect on emotions related to essential oil use. Increasing popularity of aromatherapy has been reported worldwide and is one of the most commonly used CAM therapies.

### **HOW ARE THEY USED?**

Essential oils may be used in several different ways. People are most familiar with the fragrance of oils, and their pleasant aroma can be diffused or inhaled, applied topically to the skin, or ingested. Electric diffusers can be purchased at every pharmacy now, along with essential oils that can be added to water and introduced to the air to fill a room with fragrance beyond what lighting a fragranced candle can do. Not only does it smell wonderful, but even if you cannot smell it, you may feel the relaxing or rejuvenating effect of inhaling the natural essential oil.

For a more direct application, the essential oil can be inhaled, usually by putting a few drops in your

hands, rubbing them together, and inhaling while cupping your hands over your nose and mouth. A few slow, deep breaths can have an impact on your breath, your mood, and your energy level.

The most potent and effective way to experience essential oils is through oral administration in which the components of the essential oil reach the bloodstream. Since essential oils are lipophilic, they can easily be carried to all organs in the body. Ingesting essential oils is a way to receive the beneficial properties internally. Some oils can be given by dropfuls directly in the mouth, and others must be taken indirectly. By placing several drops of oils in an empty gelatin capsule, the oil can be used to treat the gut, or be absorbed through the gut for a more systemic effect. More and more people are ingesting essential oils to help with symptoms from digestive issues, intestinal irritation, inflammation, or pain.



### **COMMON ESSENTIAL OILS**

Lavender and peppermint are two of the most common and most studied essential oils, each having a surprising number of health benefits.

Peppermint has proven to be a beneficial stimulant when inhaled. By activating the autonomic nervous system when inhaled, peppermint oil causes constriction of blood vessels, pain relief, a feeling of warmth, reduction of respiratory mucus and relief from symptoms of cough and cold.

Lavender is well known for its relaxing floral fragrance, and it has proven benefits of relaxation. This is why more and more hotels are putting lavender oil or lotion at the bedside as part of their turn-down service to provide a pleasant and



<b>COMMON ESSENTIAL OILS</b>
Lavender
Peppermint
Basil
Rosemary
Wild Orange
Copaiba
Frankincense
Cilantro
Celery Seed
Clary Sage
Eucaplyptus
Ginger
Helichrysum
Melaleuca "Tea Tree"
Melissa
Oregano
Turmeric

relaxing sleep experience for their guests. Ginger, rosemary, peppermint, turmeric, basil..... sounds like we are getting ready to follow a recipe! Yes, essential oils can be used in food preparation, and the internet has websites dedicated to teaching people how to use essential oils in their cooking. Recipes have been adapted to help people know how to measure precisely, because these undiluted extracts are much stronger than the typical cooking extracts available at the grocery store.

Orange scented soaps, or lavender scented detergents have been around a long time, but using high-grade essential oils mixed with other natural cleaners may be a safe and earth-friendly way to clean your house.

Companies that produce the purest essential oils have their own lines of household cleaning products as well. Simple recipes can be found online to show you how to use drops of essential oils to make your own cleaning products. Many people who like the aromatic properties of the oils like to use the cleaning products, and many others are trying to move toward more natural products in the home.

Some essential oils, like rosemary, eucalyptus, and ginger have been shown to have analgesic (pain-relieving) and anti-inflammatory benefits when rubbed on the skin. Useful in conditions like arthritis or joint inflammation, oils can be delivered through the skin either alone or when mixed with another oil that acts as a carrier. Many popular arthritis creams or pain-relieving gels contain essential oils. Read the label of your favorite topical cream to see what essential oils it contains.

**ARE THERE ESSENTIAL OILS SPECIFICALLY FOR VESTIBULAR PROBLEMS?**

Patients with vestibular issues may benefit from essential oils just like anyone else, to enhance mood, relieve anxiety, or improve sleep. There are a few manufacturers who have marketed products specifically for people with vertigo, nausea, and other vestibular symptoms, but these have not been independently tested for efficacy or usefulness in patients with vestibular disorders. In fact, some of these blends have been shown to be unsafe for pregnant women, infants, and children.

**ARE THERE DIFFERENT QUALITIES OF OILS? WHICH ONE SHOULD I BUY?**

With increasing demand for essential oils, and the rising popularity of Complementary and



Alternative Medicine (CAM), new products are hitting the store shelves daily. The internet also provides countless ways to order products with essential oils.

Regardless of claims made, many oils are synthetic or nature-identical oils. While these may smell good and have the fragrance of the oil you are looking for, they have no therapeutic effect and may cause harm.

Only natural, organic oils that are certified and meet standard testing guidelines should be used. These oils are distilled, therapeutic-quality essential oils that retain all of the important therapeutic compounds necessary to provide health benefits. They are often labeled as medicinal quality or genuine essential oils.

### **WARNINGS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS**

Some of the essential oils mentioned here may be unsafe if used incorrectly.

This information is meant to be an introduction to the topic of essential oils and is not meant to be specific enough to suggest treatment or use in any way for any symptom or health benefit. While essential oils are generally safe and are increasingly being found to have real, scientific evidence to support their use for overall health, they are not without risks or side effects.

Some oils are toxic if ingested, unsafe for pregnant women, infants, children, or pets, or may interact with other medications. Due to the pure, concentrated nature of the extracted oils, some may cause irritation or burning of the skin, or result in sun-sensitivity where the skin can burn easily with sun exposure.

As research advances in this exploding area of complementary medicine, more information will become available to direct safe and effective use of these products. But remember, anything that has a real beneficial effect on the way one person feels can have an adverse effect on another person. The reality is, there just is not enough strong research to suggest that the claims you may read about online are correct. So, as with anything, be careful where you get your information, do your research, and discuss your plan with a licensed medical professional to make sure that you do not introduce anything that may be harmful for you into your treatment plan. In many cases, when there is no published research to direct your practitioner, proceed with caution, follow manufacturer's

directions, watch for adverse side effects, and discontinue immediately if any negative side effects occur.

Not all essential oils can be ingested. In fact, some are toxic.

### **TEST FOR SKIN IRRITATION**

Eighty essential oils, including peppermint, lemon grass, sandalwood, ylang-ylang, lavender and jasmine, can cause skin irritation. If not diluted, some oils can burn the skin of children or others with thin or sensitive skin. All manufacturers recommend testing your skin tolerance to any essential oil with a skin patch test. In a skin patch test, you rub a drop of the oil on a small area of your inner forearm, cover it with a bandage, and examine it after 24 hours.

Also, essential oils are to be used on intact skin, in an area that does not have any breaks in the skin, or where you are using another topical medication. And be sure to keep it out of your eyes!

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