

# AROMATHERAPY



Reinvent: Time

ESSENTIAL WISDOM

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## Introduction to Aromatherapy

You have probably heard the term Aromatherapy and wondered what exactly that word, 'aromatherapy' actually means. *It is the use of plant oils in their most essential form to promote both mental and physical well being.* The use of the word *aroma* implies the process of inhaling the scents from these oils into your lungs for therapeutic benefit.

If you have ever used a vapor rub for a cough then you have tried aromatherapy, although not in its purest form. As a matter of fact, you probably have been using aromatherapy on yourself and your family for many years without realizing it through vapor rubs or electric vaporizers.

Vicks or other brands of vapor rub use eucalyptus or menthol to clear out stuffy chests and noses. Imagine if you used the undiluted essential oil of eucalyptus how clear your lungs would feel.

The term aromatherapy is generally new, greater awareness and use began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the practice has been around for thousands of years. It is believed that the Chinese were one of the first cultures to use the scents of plants to promote health through the burning of incense. Ancient Egyptians used distilled cedarwood oil mixed with clove, cinnamon, nutmeg, and myrrh to embalm the deceased. The Egyptians also used oils to perfume both men and women.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century when the bubonic plague hit, killing thousands of people, aromas were used to ward off the deadly disease. There is even discussion that

## Aromatherapy: Essential Wisdom

the popular nursery rhyme, "Ring Around the Roses" refers to aromatherapy. The lines, "a pocket full of posies" allegedly refers to keeping the flower in ones pocket in an attempt to keep the illness away.

Moving forward through later centuries a growth in books about the use of oils in healing grew.

The Greek alchemist, Paracelcus, used the term "essence" and focused study on the use of plants for healing purposes.

While the use of essential oils for perfume continued to grow throughout the ages its' use for medicinal purposes waned slightly until around 1928.

It was at that time that a French chemist named Rene-Maurice Gattefosse accidentally discovered the use of lavender essential oil to heal wounds.

The story is told that he burned his forearm and reflexively placed it in the closest liquid he saw, which was lavender essential oil. He was surprised to find that the burn healed rapidly and left no scar. It was then that he began using the term aromatherapy and wrote about the powers of essential oils.

Today, many people are trying to get back to nature. People have seen firsthand the dangerous effects of synthetic chemicals and processed medications.

The use of all natural essential oils for medicinal, cosmetic and therapy purposes continues to grow. Many people have found the results of using aromatherapy to be far greater then manmade medications and with far fewer negative side effects.

## Aromatherapy: Essential Wisdom

Aromatherapy can be used by itself or in conjunction with typical medical treatments. For example, you may use aromatherapy to ease pain after a surgical procedure. You still get the benefit of the surgery but do not have to take the powerful and often dangerous pain medications that a doctor prescribes.

### **Quality and Safety Control**

Essential oils that are used in aromatherapy are not always easy to find. The Food and Drug Administration does not regulate essential oils so you, the consumer, will have to carefully read the ingredients of any oil you purchase to make sure that it is in its purest form.

In order to get the most benefit from aromatherapy, oils in their purest form should be used.

### ***Finding the Best Essential Oils***

Try to avoid synthetic oils. Essential oils are the only way to get therapeutic benefit from aromatherapy. They will not be cheap nor should many different kinds of oils be priced the same as the process of distilling them is varied.

Light exposure decreases the ability of an essential oil to work, so only buy oils that are sold in dark bottles.

The term “oil” is often a misnomer as many of them are not at all oily. To test how distilled an oil is try dropping it on a piece of paper to see if it dissolves quickly and does not leave an oil spot.

If you have a health store in your area shop there instead of a perfume store. It is more likely that they will have real essential oils for sale.

### *Safety when using Essential Oils*

Essential oils are very powerful when they are not diluted. In order to make them safe you should dilute them with a carrier oil. Ask at your local health store which carrier oils they have available as there are many from which to choose.

Follow the instructions carefully when making any essential oil compound. If a recipe says one drop, use only one drop. Anyone who has a nut allergy should also avoid carrier oils derived from nuts.

Oils should be stored out of children’s reach; if accidental ingestion occurs, contact poison control immediately. Pregnant women should consult their physician before partaking in any kind of aromatherapy. If you plan to use aromatherapy on infants or the elderly it is recommended that you use lesser amounts of oil in your recipe. Check with your physician to ensure that it is safe to use on a particular age group.

Some oils can be toxic if ingested even in small amounts. In general, **unless specified for oral use, essential oils should not be ingested.**

Essential oils stored in a cool dry place, and tightly capped will last six to twelve months. It is important to keep as little oxygen in contact with the oils as possible, so you will want to store them in full bottles, stepping down the bottle size as needed.

Essential oils should never be put on your skin in their undiluted form. They can irritate your skin quickly and cause a chain reaction that will make you sensitive to that oil for a lifetime.

Persons with asthma, epilepsy, or other serious health conditions should contact their physician before using aromatherapy.

To avoid an allergic reaction, place a small amount of diluted oil on a patch of your skin. Cover the spot with a band aid and wait a full day to see if irritation occurs. This can avoid a potentially large allergic reaction to essential oils. Essential oils should be kept away from open flame or fire hazards as they are all flammable. Never use any sort of oil near your eyes. Wash your hands thoroughly after handling essential oils to avoid contact with eyes or mouth.



## Hazardous Essential Oils

Some essential oils are very dangerous. These oils should not be sold at all, but can still be purchased over the internet or at less reputable shops.

Others may be safe in some instances, but can be rather dangerous if used in certain circumstances. Before you take on an aromatherapy plan, take time to understand which oils are safe. Keep in mind that just because something is all natural does not necessarily mean that it is not hazardous to your health.

- 🌿 Rosemary, common sage, hyssop, and thyme should never be used if you have high blood pressure.
- 🌿 Sweet fennel, hyssop, sage, and rosemary should be avoided if you have epilepsy.
- 🌿 Diabetics should not use angelica.
- 🌿 Those who suffer from hypoglycaemia should stay away from geranium
- 🌿 Sufferers of kidney problems should be cautious if they use juniper, sandalwood, or coriander.

- 🌻 Expectant mothers should especially avoid juniper, hyssop, clary sage, peppermint, lemon, fennel, lemon verbena, rosemary, and wintergreen.
- 🌻 Clary sage should not be used while drinking as it will intensify the effects of the alcohol causing it to act like a narcotic.
- 🌻 Chamomile and marjoram should not be used while driving because they cause drowsiness.
- 🌻 Some oils can cause allergies, such as citronella, clary sage, ylang ylang, and verbana oils.
- 🌻 Oils that are believed to be carcinogens are calamus and saffron, should be avoided by everyone.
- 🌻 Methyl salicylate is the active ingredient in aspirin and sweet birch essential oil. If you use aspirin for medicinal purposes you should avoid it due to the risk of overdose. It should also be kept away from children as it smells sweet and is equally dangerous to them.

While the list above are oils that can be dangerous in certain situations there are other oils that should not be used in aromatherapy at all. These oils can be caustic if inhaled and should be avoided at all costs. This is not a comprehensive list, you should do research on any oil you plan to use before you purchase it.

### *Oils that Should Not be used in Aromatherapy*

- 🌸 Almond - Contains cyanide which even in small amounts can be lethal.
- 🌸 Aniseed - Skin irritant.
- 🌸 Arnica - Can cause dizziness and heart irregularities
- 🌸 Bergamot - Phototoxic, severe sunburn could occur if it is exposed to sunlight.
- 🌸 Boldo Leaf - Produces convulsions even in small quantities.
- 🌸 Calamus - Has carcinogenic (cancer causing) properties and can cause kidney and liver damage.
- 🌸 Camphor - Oral ingestion can be toxic.
- 🌸 Cassia - Skin and mucus membrane irritant.

- 🌿 Cinnamon Bark - Skin irritant.
- 🌿 Costus - Skin irritant.
- 🌿 Elecampane - Classified as a serious skin irritant.
- 🌿 Fennel - Can cause epileptic episodes.
- 🌿 Horseradish - Eye, skin, nose, and mucus membrane irritant.
- 🌿 Jaborandi Leaf - Oral toxin, skin irritant.
- 🌿 Mustard - Skin and mucus membrane irritant.
- 🌿 Spanish Origanum - Skin and mucus membrane irritant
- 🌿 Dwarf Pine - Skin irritant.
- 🌿 Brazilian Sassafras - Banned by the FDA as a carcinogen and can be toxic even in small amounts.
- 🌿 Savin - Skin irritant.
- 🌿 Southernwood - Toxic to the skin and if taken orally.
- 🌿 Tansy - Can cause convulsions, vomiting, uterine bleeding, and death as a result of organ or respiratory failure.

🌿 Cedarleaf Thuja

🌿 Thuja Plicata - Can be a neurotoxin.

🌿 Wintergreen - Can be a skin irritant, especially to those with an aspirin sensitivity. The oil itself is poisonous.

🌿 Wormseed - Toxic to the liver and kidneys, suppresses heart function.

🌿 Wormwood - Consumption can cause visual and auditory hallucinations and addiction. It can also cause convulsions and be a neurotoxin.

There are some essential oils that are highly toxic and should never be used in any circumstance.

### *Essential Oils to Completely Avoid*

🌿 Mugwort

🌿 Pennyroyal

🌿 Rue

🌿 Sage

## Your Basic Care Kit

If you're just beginning your journey with essential oils and aromatherapies there are a few oils that will help you get started. These are some of the easiest to find yet versatile essential oils. Not only are they used for therapeutic purposes but can also be used in many other applications.

Some of these include making natural cleaning products and gardening. In addition to the oils you will need some way to get them into your lungs. An aroma diffuser is a good way to do this.

An aroma diffuser puts the essential oils into the air quickly and spreads them about the room which allows you to get your therapy by just relaxing and breathing deeply. They come in all different shapes and styles so you can purchase one that matches the décor in each room of your home.

Some run with the use of an open flame while others are powered by electricity. You can even get aromatherapy diffusers that work in your car.

## *Lavender*

Lavender is a non toxic and non irritant essential oil. It is extracted through steam distillation from flowering tops of the lavender plant. Lavender has long been a folk remedy used to calm an upset stomach. Lavender has both soothing and reviving properties.

Lavender oil should be clear to pale yellow in will smell sweet with floral and woody undertones. It blends well with other floral and citrus essential oils.

As aromatherapy it has a variety of health benefits. It's pleasant and calming scent makes it helpful in treating nerves and headaches, anxiety, depression, and emotional stress. It also increases mental stamina and calms exhaustion.

Lavender essential oil is often recommended to treat insomnia as its scent can induce sleep. Massage with lavender oil can remedy all types of soreness and pain even when it is deep in the joints.

The vapor form of lavender oil is used to treat all sorts of respiratory problems including, colds, flu, chest congestions, whooping cough, sinus congestion, and asthma. Lavender has been used to promote good blood circulation and stimulate the production for gastric fluids to treat stomach ailments.

## *Tea Tree*

Tea Tree essential oil is also a non toxic and non irritant but can cause sensitization in some people. This oil is extracted through steam distillation from the leaves and twigs of the Tea Tree.

Tea Tree has long been used by the aboriginal people in Australia and is named for their use of it as an herbal tea. The oil should be a pale-yellow green or water white color. Tea Tree blends well with lavender, clary sage, rosemary, and many spice oils.

Tea Tree oil is known for being anti bacterial, anti microbial, anti septic, and anti viral. In short, it can almost be called a cure-all because it has so many properties to ward off disease and germs. In Australia it is found in nearly every household because of these properties.

Tea tree oil can be used as an anti bacterial to cure all sorts of bacterial infections including the treatment of wounds. As aromatherapy it can be used to treat coughs, colds, congestion and bronchitis. It can also keep fungal infections at bay and even cure dermatitis and athlete's foot. Tea tree can be used as a stimulant to hormones and circulation and to boost ones immune system. Tea tree oil can help remove toxins by opening pores and promoting sweating which removes uric acid and excess salt and water from your body.



## *Peppermint*

Peppermint essential oil is non toxic and when diluted is a not irritant. It can cause some skin irritation because of the menthol properties it holds and should be used with temperance.

The use of Peppermint has been seen as far back as Egyptian tombs from 1000 BC. It also has a history of use in China and Japan since the earliest times to treat all sorts of health anomalies.

Peppermint essential oil should be pale yellow or greenish in color. It has a strong grassy mint scent. Peppermint works well with other mint scents like eucalyptus as well as rosemary and lavender.

Peppermint has been studied in the science community and its health benefits proven. Because of this peppermint oil is available in pill form. It contains many minerals and nutrients like iron, magnesium, calcium, omega-3 fatty acids, and Vitamins A and C.

Peppermint is an excellent remedy for respiratory problems and is widely used as and expectorant to remove nasal and respiratory congestion. As an aromatherapy it can be used to treat nausea, headaches, depression, and stress. It has also been known to treat irritable bowel syndrome. As a skin care product peppermint oil can improve oily skin and replenish dull skin.

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