

Healing Art of Aromatherapy

By Janie M. Giles

The healing art of aromatherapy combines essential oils with a carrier oil. A plant's scent is produced by its special oils – called essential oils. The oil has to be extracted in order to be used. The three most common ways of doing this are distillation, cold pressed expression and solvent extraction.

When you practice aromatherapy, the only oils that should be used are all natural and 100% pure essential oils. These oils are extracted from plants that have not been treated with chemical pesticides. Chemical pesticides are not good to inhale or put on your skin for numerous reasons. These oils also need to be free of chemicals to work properly. The essential oil label should say the oils are organic or wildcrafted and 100% pure essential oils. Pure all natural essential oils are the best to use if you want to see true results.

Essential oil has a specific use. Some are used for depression, anxiety, PMS, reducing stress, relaxing tight muscles, lessening pain, aid in sleeping, elevating moods, aid in breathing, improving digestion, aphrodisiacs, relieving fatigue, cleansing the body of toxins, destroying bacteria, viral and fungal infections, heals wounds, tones and moisturizes the skin, stimulates the immune system, aids blood circulation and digestion, reduces inflammation, and energizes ...these are just a few of the many uses of essential oils.

We perceive odors through thousands of olfactory nerves in our nostrils, which contain highly sensitive nerve cells. The aromas are transmitted to the limbic system of the brain for processing, then the molecules of the oils flow into the bloodstream where they can go to specific organs or tissues to help. There have been studies done on using this to help people to stop smoking. A few essential oils are mixed together and when the people inhale the essence, it goes to the limbic system, into the blood stream and helps with the cravings of nicotine. Everyday the craving would get less, until the people eventually would have no craving at all.

The limbic system of the brain perceives and responds to memory, pleasure and emotions. Aromas trigger the limbic system to release brain enhancing neurochemicals that reduce pain, create a feeling of wellness and calms and relaxes. The memory responses to the different aromas can be energizing, relaxing, calming, stimulating, arousing and uplifting.

The Limbic System directly communicates with the hypothalamus and pituitary glands. Through these glands your sense of smell reaches all your various hormones and your immune system. These glands are considered master glands because they regulate so many body functions.

A second way that the essences can work is through the skin. The Integumentary System – the skin – has pores that allow the free passage of the essential oil into the body. It takes about one minute before it starts to absorb through the skin but can take up to twelve hours before the oil is fully absorbed into the skin. After the oil starts to absorb through the skin, it flows directly into the bloodstream and then goes to the specific organ or tissue it needs to help.

You may try this experiment: Take a fresh clove of garlic, peel it and cut it in half. Now take one of the pieces, rub the cut side of the garlic on the bottom of your foot for about a minute. Within thirty minutes, you should be able to taste and smell the garlic on your breath. The reason you will taste and smell it on your breath is because the oil from the garlic was absorbed into your skin and went through your bloodstream.

Some of the systems of the body that essential oils can help are the respiratory system, the heart and circulatory system, the digestive system, the musculo-skeletal system, the nervous system, the female reproductive system and the integumentary system.

The respiratory system is one of the most important systems in the body. The lungs, sinuses, bronchial tubes, nose and trachea are all part of the respiratory system. The function of the respiratory system is to supply the body and organs with oxygen and to expel waste gases like carbon dioxide. The most helpful essential oils would be the ones that have antiseptic, decongestant, expectorant and antiviral properties. The oils with these properties can help if used in a massage oil, salve or compound, and as an inhalation blend for common respiratory complaints.

The heart and circulatory system is another one of the most important systems in the body. The system includes the heart, arteries, and veins. The arteries are what carries the oxygen-rich blood from the heart to other organs in the body. The veins return the oxygen-depleted blood back to the heart to re-oxygenate the blood.

The essential oils that are best for these problems are the ones that have antispasmodic, sedative, hypotensive, hypertensive, and nervine properties. The oils with these properties would work best if made into a massage blend or inhalation blend to help with all of the circulatory complaints and diseases.

The digestive system is complex and includes many body organs. The stomach, intestines, spleen, pancreas, and gall bladder are the main organs. The function of these organs is to ingest, digest, and eliminate waste products. Good digestion consists of proper hygiene and eating proper foods. Halitosis, mouth ulcers and bacterial or fungal infection can be helped by using essential oils that have antibacterial, fungicidal, and cytophylactic - increases white blood cell activity to fight off infection properties. Nausea, indigestion and stomach ulcers are helped by using essential oils that have antispasmodic and calmativie properties.

The musculo-skeletal system includes over 650 muscles and 206 bones. All of the muscles are responsible for the movement of our body. Muscles are anchored to our bones by fibrous tissues called tendons and ligaments.

The most common complaints are sore overworked muscles, muscle spasms, muscle cramping, bursitis and tendonitis. The musculo-skeletal system also includes the joints, which can also be damaged by overuse. Arthritis, bursitis and tendonitis are just a few of the conditions that come from over use of the joints. All of these conditions can be helped with essential oils that have anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, antirheumatic, depuratives – detoxifies, and relaxant properties. The best way to use these oils for the conditions listed above are in salves, ointments, creams and massage oils. However if your muscles or joints are swollen, you should not massage the area, because this could irritate the area more. Just lightly rub the area instead.

The central nervous system is very complex. This system contains the brain and spinal cord, plus billions of neurons - nerve cells. The system is responsible for controlling movement and body reflexes. It is also responsible for maintaining proper internal body functions. The brain is responsible for multiple functions in the body. It regulates all thought processes, heart functions, respiration, muscle movement, feelings, senses and the endocrine system. The spinal cord is attached to the base of the brain by the brain stem. Leading from the spinal cord are multiple nerve fibers running to all parts of the body.

These fibers are what make our brain distinguish between hot and cold, sense of touch, pain and pressure. There are many problems that can arise from the brain or spinal cord. Some of these problems include traumatic brain injuries, mental fatigue, insomnia, headaches, depression, stress, anxiety, nervous exhaustion, or “burn-out”, multiple sclerosis and neuralgia.

The essential oils that can help with these problems are the ones with these properties, antidepressant, nervine, normalizing, stimulating, hypnotic, sedative, and adrenal stimulants. These oils can be blended together to make inhalation blends or massage oils.

The integumental system is the largest sensory organ that the body has. The function of the integumental system, or the skin, is to protect underlying tissues, prevent dehydration, regulate body temperature and eliminate toxic waste. It also produces vitamin D. The integumental system works closely with the nervous system for sensory perception. There are sensory receptors in the skin that send messages to the brain. The skin can have multiple problems including eczema, acne, bacterial and fungal infections, contact dermatitis, boils, warts, athlete's foot, chilblains, cold sores and psoriasis. These skin conditions can be helped by using essential oils with antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, fungicidal, parasiticides and cicatrisant – stimulates new and healthy skin cell growth, - properties. These essential oils would work best for these conditions used in creams, massage oils, sprays, and all natural talc free powders.

The female reproductive system consists of the ovaries, cervix, fallopian tubes, uterus and vagina. During the female life-cycle a woman can go through multiple disease and/ or disorders. Every woman will go through a menstrual cycle once a month for at least half of her life. A lot of

women have a very hard time during this cycle. Pain and cramping is a big complaint from most women. There are a lot of other diseases and disorders of the female reproductive system, including amenorrhoea – loss of menstrual flow-, dysmenorrhoea – painful menstruation, menorrhagia – heavy menstrual flow, PMS – premenstrual syndrome, vaginal thrush, sexually transmitted diseases, vaginal infections, cancer of the uterus or ovaries, endometriosis and childbirth complications.

The essential oils that work best for female problems have antispasmodic, hormone influencing, uterine tonic and emmenagogues – normalizes menstrual flow,- properties. The best way to use the essential oils for these problems would be in creams, massage oils, vaginal bolus – suppository, and ointments.

Always use essential oils safely, because they can be dangerous if not used correctly. Essential oils are highly concentrated and should be respected. They possess potent medicinal and cosmetic properties. Essential oils should always be diluted by a carrier oil – vegetable oil – if to be used on the skin. They should never be taken orally. Some oils can be neurotoxic, phototoxic and skin irritants. There are oils that can not be used during pregnancy or on children. Only specific essential oils should be used for babies, children and during pregnancy and lactating. Some oils can cause abortions, stimulate contractions and can also be passed to the baby through your bloodstream when pregnant. If nursing your baby, it can also be passed through the milk and can harm the baby. It is best not to use any during this time.

Remember to always use essential oils responsibly and to respect their strength, no matter what you use them for. Some oils are even too strong for the adult body to handle. Be cautious and read about the essential oils you wish to use to find out all the information you can before using them.

Aromatherapy is an aromatic way to incorporate natural health into your life. We hope you use and enjoy aromatherapy as much as we have.
