

A Simple Aromatherapy Guide



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By Tamar Goldstein and Dr. Roberta Peters

<http://www.aromatherapy4healthyliving.com>

A Quick History

Like acupuncture, aromatherapy, the use of Essential Oils for healing, has been in use for more than 6,000 years. Its origins aren't completely documented, but there is enough evidence to show that aromatic essences have been used for healing over many centuries.

It's possible it all began in Australia with the aborigines over 40,000 years ago, but they weren't known for keeping records. Much of their history has been passed along orally from generation to generation, much like that of the native tribes everywhere, including the native North American Indians, whose history also is rich with the use of fragrant oils for religious and therapeutic purposes.

However, the Egyptians, with their use of stone tablets inscribed with stories of their culture, are generally credited with being the first to establish the use of aromatic or essential oils. Later, the Greeks learned from the Egyptians, and still later, the Romans learned from the Greeks. At the same time, fragrant oils and plant essences were being explored in ancient China.

Meanwhile in India, the traditional practice of medicine, known as Ayurveda practiced for more than 3,000 years, also used essential oils in their therapeutic massage.

By the first century A.D., fragrances were used in religion, health, beauty, "hygiene" and entertainment. Hygiene in those days consisted of bathing in perfume or slathering one's body with fragrant oils. Much later, even Queen Elizabeth I is said to have used such fragrances in her annual bath, "whether she needed it or no."

While it may have been the Egyptians who popularized the uses of fragrances and essences, other cultures were by then using them also.



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Two major changes took place in the late 19th century:

First, the use of fragrances split into two camps: 1. perfumery and cosmetics, and 2. pharmaceuticals.

Second, essential oils suffered a huge setback in understanding as well as acceptance and use, because of the discovery of the ability to formulate synthetic copies of almost any chemical. A copied molecule of a vitamin is not the vitamin. Similarly, a copy of a plant oil is not the same as that plant's essence. No longer, then, could perfumes be used medicinally.

Synthetic copies are mere shadows of the original and usually are weaker and ineffective, or even worse, they can be toxic. Unfortunately, this reputation has flowed on to the authentic essential oils in the modern medical community and so they are regarded as ineffective and inferior to accepted medical formulations, or drugs. Ironically, however, many of today's drugs were originally derived from plant sources.

It wasn't until the 20th century that the use of essential oils began its re-entry into the world of therapeutics. The term "aromatherapy" was coined by French chemist Rene Maurice Gattefoss somewhere between the 1920s and '30s. His interest is reputed to have begun when he burned himself in a laboratory explosion at the family perfumery and he reflexively plunged his arm into a handy vat of lavender oil for relief. Later, he was so amazed at his painless recovery, with no scarring, that he did further experiments with the oil.

Currently, aromatherapy is mostly used by massage therapists as well as alternative health disciplines. Its modern use derives from methods developed in the 1950s by Marguerite (Margaret) Maury, a French biochemist, and an associate, Micheline Arcier (or Archer) who collaborated with Maury as she established clinics in Europe for the use of oils as treatment for specific ailments. Much research was done in Europe before aromatherapy was brought to America.

Aromatherapy was finally introduced in America in the 1980s in California, where it was embraced by health food outlets and alternative health practitioners.

Aromatherapy Disclaimer

The oils derived from plants and used for therapeutic purposes can have amazing, as well as devastating effects, though most results occupy a wide spectrum somewhere between these extremes. There even is a movement to create licensing and standards for aromatherapy practitioners because a proper education in the use of these oils is essential to protect users and those who dispense and recommend them.

It's important to exercise caution and discretion in the use of true aromatic oils and essences, as they have the potential to cause complications due to their complex chemical natures and because they are extremely concentrated and volatile. Always consult with a qualified practitioner and follow accepted safety guidelines.

What Essential Oils Can Do For You

Essential oils act on many different levels.

On a physical level, essential oils are a most potent form of herbal energy. They are antiseptic and immune system stimulants. They are also effective for daily first-aid, e.g., for bites, itches, coughs and cold.

On a cellular level, essential oils are good for healing wounds, repairing scars, stimulating tissue and regulating the barrier (between the inside and outside world). They help maintain optimum moisture level in skin and protect it from infection. Geranium and lavender are examples of oils that work on this cellular level.

On an emotional level, they stimulate both conscious and sub conscious memories, basic drives and hormones. They are effective in dealing with depression, grief, low self esteem, improving sleep and stress-related disorders.

On an energy level, they can be applied to acupuncture meridian points, chakras and subtle energy points to help healing.



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Getting sick (or at least pretending to) was sort of fun back in the old da



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On a spiritual level, essential oils have been used by every major culture and society for over 10,000 years. They have been used for ritual, prayer, purification, magic, mysticism, celebration and meditation.

Many people believe that essential oils can bring focus and deeper meaning to our existence.

These days the understanding of their properties and appropriate use has been formalized into a health discipline – aromatherapy – and practitioners are now trained to know how to use them effectively for optimum health and well being.

The mechanism by which essential oils acts is complex and not well understood due to the nature of all the many compounds within each one. Nevertheless, the quality and effect of fragrance or smell, though little understood, is an important part of our human experience and via the many and varied healing properties of essential oils, can enhance our lives and heal our bodies, minds and spirits.

How Essential Oils Work

You've probably noticed that when we humans cut ourselves a red fluid (blood) oozes out! No great news there. Similarly, when you break or injure the parts of plants, they "bleed," too.

Unlike blood, this fluid is clear. It is, in fact, an oil or resin and within it can be found trace elements of nutrients, hormones, enzymes, vitamins, minerals and anti-bodies.

It has a whole range of different properties such as anti-fungal, anti-bacterial, anti-infectious, antiseptic and can stimulate the immune system as well. Oxygen is also found in this resin, bound chemically within other organic molecules such as alcohols, phenols, esters and many other organic molecules, which together make up the essential oil.

This oil is released by the plant to clean the wound, kill the bacteria and start the healing process, and in fact has the same function as blood in humans (and other animals). Like blood, this fluid/oil in plants transports the basic nutrients necessary to feed and support the cells. The essential oil has the ability to permeate or penetrate the plant's cell walls and transport oxygen and nutrients into the cells themselves to support and help their immune system.

Research has shown that, because of these immune stimulating properties, essential oils can support the immune system. So that, for instance, whether applied topically (rubbed on) or inhaled, 70% of people who get a cold or flu will recover faster using essential oils!

During an aromatherapy massage, some of the volatile essential oils are inhaled and absorbed through the nose and mouth. As well, the molecules of these essential oils lock onto receptor cells at the back of the nose. An electrochemical message is sent to the limbic (emotional) area of the brain which appears to trigger memory and emotional responses, which in turn cause messages to be sent to other parts of the brain and body.

In this way, the production of euphoric, relaxing, sedative or stimulating neurochemicals is stimulated. So many beneficial mental and emotional effects are produced via this method.

Essential oils also have many special properties which give them the ability to help us deal with odors and bacteria. They act in several ways:

1. They are able to increase atmospheric oxygen in a closed space as they release oxygenating molecules into the atmosphere. Oils increase ozone and negative ions in the home, which inhibits the growth of bacteria. This prevents and destroys existing odors of cigarettes, mold, animals, etc.
2. They are able to break up the molecular chains of some chemicals in the air, making them non-toxic to us because of their particular attraction to these chemicals.
3. Essential Oils will bond to metals and chemicals within the body and carry these toxic out of the body. They work as natural chelators, i.e. they bond organically, forming new compounds called chelates, so that these toxic substances can't remain in the tissues.

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4. Essential Oils remove dust particles from the air, acting as an air filtration system.

5. Essential Oils are recognized as having a very marked ability to increase cellular oxygen through their normal functioning. When applied to the body by rubbing the feet, they will travel through the body and affect every cell, including the hair, within 20 minutes!

In orthodox medicine, one compound, such as aspirin, is made and its properties are tested and known. However, in nature, in each essential oil, there can be many, many different compounds, all with different therapeutic effects. Each can act synergistically to give the body what it needs. Sometimes it can have opposing effects so it can act as a relaxant or stimulant depending on what's needed.

Each essential oil contains as many as 100 chemical components, which together have a strong effect on the whole person. Depending on which component is predominating in an oil, it acts differently. For example, some oils are relaxing, some soothe, some relieve pain, etc.

There are oils such as lemon and lavender, which adapt to what the body needs, and adapt to that situation. (These are called "adaptogenic.") The mechanism in which these essential oils act on us is not very well understood. What is understood is that they affect our mind and emotions. They leave no harmful residues. They enter into the body either by absorption (by rubbing them on the skin) or inhalation.

Because Essential Oils are volatile, i.e., they convert into a vapor, they stimulate the powerful sense of smell. It is known that the odors we smell have a great impact on how we feel. In fact, it has been shown that people who have no sense of smell have a higher incidence of psychiatric problems such as anxiety and depression.

We are able to distinguish between 10,000 different smells!

The fine oil particles enter through the nose via cilia (the fine hairs lining the nose) and are absorbed into the blood stream in the lungs. Once they have entered the bloodstream, they change the electrical conductivity and pH right at the spot of entry at the capillary and cause an electrical charge to travel through the body, which explains why it can have such a fast effect at times.

As previously mentioned, one of the major systems affected is the limbic system, the part of the brain that controls our moods, emotions, memory and learning.

There has been research done measuring changes in brain frequency with the use of different essential oil fragrances. For instance, studies with lavender have shown that the alpha brain waves, which are associated with relaxation, increase. On the other hand, studies with jasmine have shown a marked increase of beta waves, which represents alertness! So clearly, different essential oils have different effects.

There are many different essential oils, in fact, as many different oils as there are plants. They are very complex substances containing sometimes up to 100 chemical components which have many different effects, some of which even depend on what the body needs. They can act outside the body, e.g., oxygenating the air and removing pollution or they are absorbed into the body via the nose or the skin and can have multiple significant effects on mood, health and general well-being.

For more information about aromatherapy, this reference guide contains a great deal of information and is a handy book to keep in your personal health library.

Some Common Essential Oils

Eucalyptus -This oil is used most often for respiratory conditions, such as a cough or a cold. It has also been used in the treatment of flu. Other uses have included easing the pain of arthritis and muscular aches and pains. Eucalyptus should be diluted, and avoided during pregnancy.

Geranium -Possible uses for this oil include acne, bruises, burns, cellulitis, poor circulation, cuts, some skin conditions, swelling, hemorrhoids, hormonal imbalances, insomnia, kidney stones, lice, liver congestion, menopause, neuralgia, ringworm, shingles, sore throat, spider veins, stress, and tonsillitis. May cause skin irritation in some; do not use if pregnant or lactating. It also turns out to be a great mosquito repellent.



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Rosemary -This oil has been used in the treatment of acne, arteriosclerosis, asthma, bronchitis, candida, cellulite, poor circulation, colds, colitis, dandruff, dermatitis, dysmenorrhea, digestive upsets, eczema, fatigue, flatulence, flu, fluid retention, gout, hair loss, headache, infections, insect repellent, liver problems, low blood pressure, muscle pain, ovarian problems, palpitations, scalp stimulator, sinusitis, stress, tachycardia, varicose veins, and whooping cough.

Do not use when pregnant, or if there is high blood pressure or epilepsy. It can also be a mild skin irritant. However, it is also very relaxing.

Thyme has been used for abrasions, abscesses, acne, and animal bites, as well as a general antibacterial, antibiotic, anti fungal, and antiparasitic. Some also have found relief for arteriosclerosis, arthritis, athlete's foot, boils, bronchitis, cold sores, colds, constipation, cuts, bladder infections, dandruff, and as a disinfectant.

Thyme oil contains toxic phenols which can irritate the skin and mucous membranes and cause sensitization of the skin to sunlight in some individuals. Use in moderation, highly diluted. Thyme Oil should NEVER be put directly on the skin. It should always be mixed with another oil. Serious burning can occur from direct, concentrated contact.

Lemon -uses of this oil include treatment of acne, anemia, anxiety, arthritis, asthma, boils, brittle nails, bruises, bronchitis, colds, corns and cuts, It also has been found effective in dealing with insect bites, intestinal parasites, mouth ulcers, nosebleeds, tonsillitis, varicose veins, and warts. Avoid sunlight following application, as it may cause skin irritation in some individuals. It is not for babies or young children.

Basil -Possible uses include treatment of stress related headaches, migraines and allergies. It has been used for asthma, bronchitis and sinus infections. It can also be effective in some cases of constipation, nausea, vomiting, cramps, and other menstrual problems.

It may relieve gout, arthritis, and may help to control acne.

In general, it refreshes the skin and can also be used on insect bites. Although basil oil usually stimulates, in excess it can have a stupefying effect and should not be used during pregnancy or on children under 16. Since it can irritate sensitive skin, it must be used with care on people with sensitive skin, and also must be avoided during pregnancy.

Peppermint may be used for antibiotic, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, and antispasmodic effects, as well as for bronchitis, colds, constipation, dermatitis, indigestion, relief of diverticulosis, dysmenorrhea, flatulence, gingivitis, hay fever, headaches, heartburn, heatstroke, hemorrhoids, insect repellent, itching, jet lag, muscular aches, nausea, rheumatoid arthritis, ringworm, scabies, sinusitis, sunburns, tendonitis, toothaches, upper abdominal pain, varicose veins, vomiting, and water retention.

The oil is nontoxic but may sensitize the skin to sunlight. It also may be an irritant in higher concentrations. It should never be put directly on the skin. Always mix it with another oil. Serious burning can occur from direct concentrated contact.

Aromatherapy Massage

One of the most pleasant, relaxing and therapeutic ways of experiencing aromatherapy, is through aromatherapy massage.

When stress and depression are a major cause of a health imbalance, a full aromatherapy body massage is the best complementary therapy treatment available. It is also an excellent preventative treatment to ensure continuation of good health.

Massage therapy itself has been shown to be highly effective in relieving tension and stress. It can affect the involuntary nervous system, and calm the fight or flight response, thereby reducing the level of harmful stress hormones in the body. It stimulates the blood circulation, increasing the supply of nutrients and oxygen to cells. Massage also stimulates lymphatic flow, thus improving tissue drainage and the immune system. Therefore massaging using essential oils increases the effectiveness of the massage.

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Many studies have shown that high, prolonged stress levels can increase the likelihood of contracting various diseases, and reduce recovery time when we do become ill. Stress can cause and aggravate many chronic conditions such as hypertension, migraines, digestive problems, and PMS. Using aromatherapy massage the level of stress can be reduced as the person becomes more relaxed and many chronic conditions can also be reduced.

Aromatherapy can be utilized in conjunction with other techniques for specific areas used to reduce chronic and acute muscular tension and pain by helping to lengthen and release shortened and contracted muscles. These techniques may include stretching, deep tissue, sports massage, neuromuscular, Rolfing, myofascial release and aromatherapy gives an added benefit to these techniques.

Massage therapy has long been recognized as an important part of athletic training and together with aromatherapy is used by most serious athletes.

What to Expect During an Aromatherapy Massage

Aromatherapy massage therapists will first request a new client to provide some personal information relating to their current physical state. It is also helpful to find out whether or not the client has any current illnesses or injuries that may affect the aromatherapy massage treatment.

Practitioners of aromatherapy massage will generally have a long list of questions and areas of discussion. A holistic practitioner considers the client as a "whole" -body, mind and spirit. They will generally help the client think of what factors in their lives may be affecting them. For example, someone who suffers from insomnia may have family worries, stresses at work, indigestion, or simply a noisy environment: any disturbing factor which could affect their sleep patterns.

When the personal history and consultation are finished, and when other suggestions and referrals have been made, the aromatherapist will select several essential oils, most suited to the client's needs at this time. The oils are then blended into a massage oil or lotion. Sometimes particular carrier oil will be used. This blend with essential oils will then be used to give the massage.

The therapist will leave the room, allowing the client to undress as far as they are comfortable, usually leaving their underpants on, and lay down on a padded massage table. Often, to aid in relaxation, relaxing music will be playing too. For warmth and modesty, the client will be covered with a sheet or blanket, which the aromatherapist will pull back to work on each specific part of the body. If the client feels uncomfortable at any time, or if a specific technique hurts, they should let the practitioner know.

Clear communication, understanding and consent are very important. Depending on the client's needs and the practitioner's individual skills and training, different styles of body work may be used.

The massage usually lasts for an hour, but may be longer or shorter, depending on client needs. At the end of the session, the practitioner will leave the room, allowing the client a few minutes to gently "come back to themselves," and get dressed.

After the session, many aromatherapists will also suggest the use of a blend that the client can use at home between sessions. The practitioner will put together a blend of oils and give instructions for use to the client.

Future sessions should also be agreed on. These sessions will depend on client needs, and financial situation. Many clients find that a weekly session is most beneficial, particularly in the beginning. Some clients receive monthly sessions.

Aromatherapy massage is an excellent "maintenance tool," and should not just be used to "fix a problem," but should be regular part of life if possible.

Hippocrates stated that "a daily aromatic bath and scented massage are the way to health." It would be wonderful if we could all follow that suggestion!

Training and Referrals to Aromatherapists

Those who are looking for an aromatherapy practitioner should take the time to find someone with appropriate training. Most masseurs are trained to use aromatherapy so massage schools would be a good place to start looking.

A personal referral from a friend is good. In the USA, the National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy or the American Alliance of Aromatherapy may be able to suggest some aromatherapists who practice massage therapy in your area.

There is at present no standard in the USA as well as many other countries for training in aromatherapy, although this is being discussed and developed by the industry. It is therefore important to ask questions:

- with whom and where did the aromatherapist train?
- how long was the training and what subjects did it cover?
- how long have they been in practice?

Most countries have Massage Therapy Associations which can provide referrals to a massage therapist in your area. Since massage therapy is regulated differently in each country, it is impossible to list all regulations here. Some countries require licensing and statutory training, some do not. Take advantage of the resources on the Internet to explore the professions of aroma-therapy, massage, and the uses of essential oils in the health care industry.

The Benefits of Aromatherapy Massage in Palliative Care

Aromatherapy is increasingly being used for palliative treatment. This is treatment that offers relief but does not cure. It is used to improve the quality of life of patients who have terminal diseases such as cancer..

Research conducted at the Marie Curie Cancer Care, in London, England, provides new clinical evidence of the benefits that these combined and complementary therapies offer cancer patients.

Researchers assessed the effects of massage and aromatherapy on 103 cancer patients in a palliative care setting. The patients were randomly allocated to receive massage using oil only or massage using an oil plus Roman Chamomile essential oil.

Results indicated that there was a statistically significant reduction in anxiety and stress after each massage and the patients who received aromatherapy massage also noted improvements in their disposition, physical comfort and their quality of life. The report concluded that massage with or without essential oils appeared to reduce levels of anxiety. The benefits are clearly enhanced by the addition of Roman Chamomile essential oil. The aromatherapy massage treatment seemed to help improve physical and psychological symptoms, as well as the patients' quality of life.

How Essential Oils Are Delivered and the Accessories Used

There are many different ways of using the essential oils.

They can be dissolved in an oil base and applied by hand, i.e., they can be rubbed onto the skin during massage or applied to particular parts of the body by aromatherapy practitioners to alleviate headaches or other ailments.

A few drops can be put on a handkerchief or tissue to help people sleep. Others are formulated into bath salts, gels, etc. which can be dissolved into running bath water to give a relaxing fragrance.

A few drops of your favorite relaxing Essential Oil such as lavender or rosemary

can be put directly into the bath. The best time to do this is after you've finished running the bath. You put in

around 3 drops, give it a few minutes to form a surface on top of the bath water before you get in and then RELAX! When you emerge, you'll find that it stays on your skin, moisturizing it, and of course you have the lingering reminder of it on your body for hours afterwards! Fabulous!

Essential Oils can be used to keep clothes smelling nice. They can be added to dried petals as in potpourri, which can be put in sachets and put in drawers, or just left out in bowls. The most popular way to use Essentials Oils is to put them in devices that allow the smell to diffuse into the air. This can be for various purposes:

- To make the environment relaxing, calm, or even sensual!
- To help with stress management (e.g., in a doctor's surgery, in offices!)
- To creating a peaceful atmosphere for meditating.
- To help people who have congested chests breathe easily.
- To protect people from biting insects.

A common method of enjoying the benefits and advantages of essential oils is through the use of a diffuser.

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Getting & Staying Healthy - Naturally!

The human body is a highly complex mechanism. Body or physical health refers to the overall condition of that system. We say that **optimal physical health** is achieved when the body is free from disease, abnormality and injury, and is able to function well.

However, often the body does not function well when it is attacked by environmental elements, genetic malfunction, injury, and biological intrusions. These factors can result in a multitude of ailments that affect the thyroid and adrenal glands, as well as the liver and pancreas. They can cause damage to the respiratory system (bronchitis, asthma, etc), hinder digestive processes, and even cause cancer.

Whether you're a parent or child, man or woman, young or old, staying healthy is very important. **Maintaining an individual's overall wellbeing** can involve treating everything from colds and flu, to cuts and scrapes, and sometimes even embarrassing conditions like bad breath, hemorrhoids, or body odor.

Keeping the right tools on hand (both treatments and information) will **prevent frustration and help in the time of crisis**; even if the crisis is just a bruised knee from a bicycle fall, a sore elbow from too much tennis, the sniffles, or a quick immunity boost in hopes of avoiding the seasonal cold.

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We use the **Full Spectrum Method** of extraction to create our products. Many *so-called natural remedies* are manufactured using standardized extractions which – although often cited as being more scientific method – is not approved by the manufacturers of holistic medicines.

To us, it makes little sense for companies to go the natural route, while being unable to guarantee that their product is free of contamination with chemicals known to be harmful to health! Using the Full Spectrum Method helps us to maintain the integrity, balance and therapeutic effect of herbs with the least risk of side effects or harm to your health!

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We utilize a unique **dual-modality approach** to complete holistic wellness because we know that natural medicine works best in combination (herbal, homeopathic, flower essences and tissue salts) for fast relief and long-term care. Our approach provides a complete solution by offering OTC homeopathic remedies for relief of symptoms as well as compound herbal remedies for complete support of your physical, emotional and mental well-being.

While each of our natural remedies works well on its own to address a specific body function or relieve a particular symptom, we believe that by combining our herbal and homeopathic remedies you will find a complete solution that is safe and highly effective.

Read more about the our [*Dual-Modality Approach*](#) »

The importance of Omega-3 fatty acids

Scientists have established the effectiveness of [Omega 3](#) in a number of health areas, including your Heart, Brain, Joints, Skin, Immune system, Vision, and Digestion. Like any product on the market today there are 'good [fish oils](#)' and there are 'bad fish oil'!

With a bad one you may be unwittingly introducing substances into your body that you DO NOT want... such as Mercury and PCB's for example. We impose tougher standards on the purity of our [fish oil](#) than any other known manufacturer. [DHA](#) is the most important fatty acid in the human brain.

High in [DHA](#) and proven to be pure and free of contaminants the [Xtend-Life](#) brand is considered to be the 'Rolls Royce' of concentrated [Omega 3 fish oils](#) at an affordable cost and has been enjoyed by thousands of customers in more than 40 countries for the last eight years.

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[Xtend-Life Multi-Xtra](#) is a natural multi vitamin/supplement using only the finest natural vitamins available on the market today. Some manufacturers call the vitamins they use in their products '[whole food](#)' vitamins, but that is somewhat misleading.

They are natural but they are grown using bio-technology and are not extracted directly from plants. What is important is that we do NOT use [vitamins](#) which are derived from petrochemicals. [Multi-Xtra](#) contains 48 bio-available ingredients.

Unlike a 'normal' multi it contains much more than just a basic vitamin/mineral mix. [Multi-Xtra](#) is probably the best multi vitamin/mineral supplement in the world and undoubtedly provides the best value for money available anywhere.