

Aromatherapy

What is Aromatherapy?

Aromatherapy uses essential oils from plants to help support emotional, physical or spiritual well-being. Essential oils may help control symptoms such as insomnia, pain, nausea, fatigue, or a loss of appetite.

What are essential oils?

Essential oils are liquids taken from the roots, leaves, seeds, or blossoms of plants. Each oil has its own kind of scent and uses for healing. It is important to use true essential oils for aromatherapy. Do not use perfume or scented flavors for foods. Examples of aromatherapy scents include:

- Lemon – may help you to relax or boost your energy
- Peppermint – may help with nausea, an upset stomach or pain
- Lavender – may help you to relax, help with sleep or reduce anxiety

How does aromatherapy work?

The body's sense of smell is important when using aromatherapy. The smell receptors in your nose connect with different areas of the brain that control emotion and memory. When you breathe in essential oils, it makes the nerves in your nose send messages to the area of the brain that controls emotion and memory.

People who use aromatherapy may use oils in different ways. These may include:

- Breathing in essential oils by using a room diffuser, vaporizer or placing drops of oil on a cloth or tissue.
- Putting essential oils mixed with other products on the skin. This might include using body lotions, creams or oils used during a massage.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

How do I use aromatherapy?

Aromatherapy through breathing can be done by putting 2 to 3 drops of the essential oil onto a cotton ball. The cotton ball can be placed in a sealed plastic bag to keep it clean and from drying out. When you want to do aromatherapy, you can open the plastic bag and gently breathe in the scent for a few seconds. The same cotton ball can be used until it becomes dry or is no longer scented.

Aromatherapy can also be done by putting essential oils into an aromatherapy fan, mister or diffuser. It is important to choose a fan or diffuser that is made for use with essential oils and to follow the directions on the package. A mister or diffuser system that does not use standing water may be easier to keep clean and dry in-between each use.

Important Safety Concerns

It is important to talk with your doctor before you use any alternative therapy or essential oils. Aromatherapy may make certain health conditions or illnesses worse. Here are some important safety concerns when using essential oils.

- Keep oils away from children.
- Keep oils away from your eyes.
- Use only the suggested amount of each oil.
- Read and follow all warnings on packages or bottles.
- **Do not swallow essential oils or put them in food.** It could be dangerous to swallow certain essential oils. Certain medicines could interact with essential oils.
- People with certain health conditions or illnesses should not use aromatherapy. This may include:
 - ▶ Lung conditions, asthma or respiratory disease
 - ▶ Skin allergies
 - ▶ Pregnant women should not use essential oils