

How to use essential oils

Bath

The easiest and most popular way of using essential oils at home. The therapeutic experience of a bath can be heightened psychologically by the addition of essential oils. Simply add 5-10 drops of a chosen oil to 5-10 ml (2 teaspoons) of milk to ensure an even distribution of the essential oils (or a vegetable oil to moisturise the skin) and add this to the bath when the tub is full. As well as enjoying the aromatic vapours the essential oils enter the body's bloodstream so you can also benefit from their therapeutic properties. Essential oils can be mixed or blended for bathing but take care not to exceed 10 drops altogether. Always check for specific contra-indications before using new oils in the bath to avoid possible irritation.

Atomiser | Sprays

An easy way to scent a room or use as a refreshing face, hair or body spray. Add up 10-20 drops of essential oil to 50 ml water (ideally bottled water) and spray away. You can add a splash of witch hazel to the oil and water mixture to help preserve it, essential oils such as Rosemary and Ylang Ylang are ideal for hair conditioning sprays, citrus oils such as Lime are very uplifting and refreshing body and atmosphere sprays. Experiment with scents!

Oil Burners | Vaporised Oils

A convenient and smoke free way of scenting a room and dispelling unwanted odours. Fragrances add atmosphere to the home and can be used to create a specific mood, experiment! Add oils neat to ribbons to dispel moths and repel insects, use on clothes, pillows, pyjamas or on a hanky. Using essential oils this way is mentally therapeutic and totally safe. Add up to six drops to an oil burner, two drops on a light bulb or on a radiator.

Massage

Whether performed by a qualified therapist or as self massage, aromatherapy is a potent and stress relieving treatment which can be utilised as a means of keeping the mind as well as the body in a healthy condition. Essential oils are mixed with carrier oil (grapeseed, sweet almond, olive) before being applied to the skin. The dilution should be in the region of 1-3% depending upon the type of essential oil used. Psychological complaints generally require a weaker concentration than disorders of a more physical nature.

For example:

25 ml add 8 drops

1 teaspoon add 2-3 drops

Compress

A lavender or chamomile compress is useful as a forehead compress for reducing a fever, it's cooling and soothing and the essential oils are pain relieving. This blend of oils is also useful for burns and scalds or for soothing sunburn and can be reinforced with an ice pack, or use an atomiser which has been chilled in the fridge. A Clary Sage Compress is great for pain relief during labour, but this essential oil should be avoided during pregnancy. Add one drop of essential oil to 100 ml of hot or cold water and ensure the oils are mixed well within the water before immersing the flannel or cloth, simply wring out and apply.

Safety

Essential oils are highly concentrated plant material and should not be taken internally.

Do not apply directly to the skin undiluted. Always patch test a new oil to check for any sensitivity first.

Certain oils are contra-indicated during pregnancy, for high blood pressure and epilepsy. Always check the cautions for specific oil before using or contact a qualified Aromatherapist to blend oils for you if you are unsure.

Babies and children are more sensitive; apply oils in half the amount as for adults.

Store all essential oils out of reach of children. See Baby Aromatherapy leaflet. Store essential oils and any blended products in amber bottles in a cool place away from direct sunlight.

Date each oil upon opening and relegate citrus oils (with the exception of Mandarin) to the oil burner or for cleaning after 6 months.