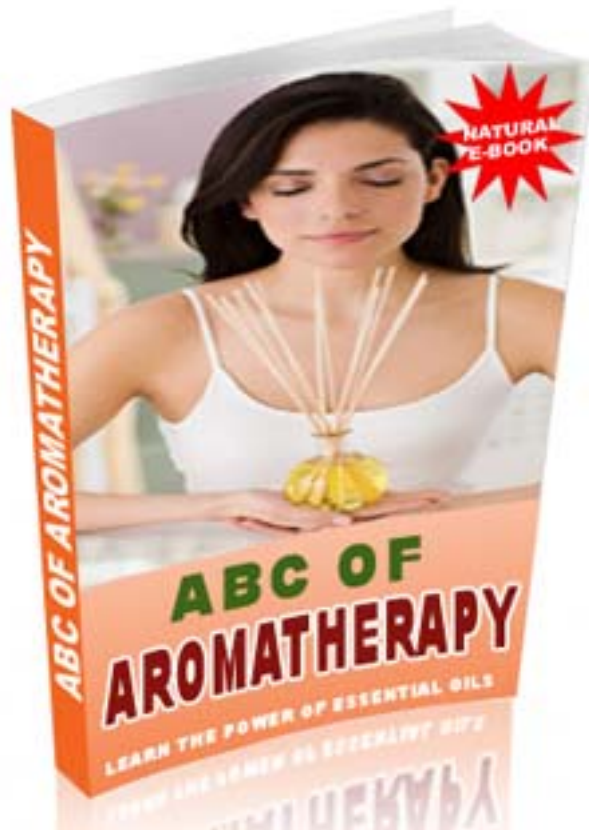


ABC of Aromatherapy



What is Aromatherapy?

The word aroma therapy means 'treatment using scents'. It refers to the use of essential oils in Holistic Healing to improve health and emotional well-being and in restoring balance to the body. Essential oils are aromatic essences extracted from plants, flowers, trees, fruit, bark, grasses and seeds. There are more than 150 types of oils that can be extracted. These oils have distinctive therapeutic, psychological and physiological properties that improve health and prevent illness. All essential oils have unique healing and valuable antiseptic properties. Some oils are antiviral, anti-inflammatory, pain-relieving, antidepressant, stimulating, relaxing, expectorating, support digestion and have diuretic properties too.

Essential oils get absorbed into our body and exert an influence on it. The residue gets dispersed from the body naturally. They can also affect our mind and emotions. They enter the body in three ways: by inhalation, absorption and consumption.

From the chemist's point of view, essential oils are a mixture of organic compounds viz., ketones, terpenes, esters, alcohol, aldehyde and hundreds of other molecules which are extremely difficult to classify, as they are small and complex. The essential oils' molecules are small. They penetrate human skin easily and enter the blood stream directly and finally get flushed out through our elementary system.

A concentrate of essential oils is not greasy; it is more like water in texture and evaporates quickly. Some of them are light liquid insoluble in water and evaporate instantly when exposed to air. It would take 100 kg of lavender to yield 3 kg of lavender oil; one would need 8 million jasmine flowers to yield barely 1 kg of jasmine oil.

Some of these aroma oils are very expensive. They are extracted using maceration. The purification process called enfleurage is employed, and in some cases fat is used instead, of oil. Then this process, called enfleurage, is used for final purification. Some of the common essential oils used in aroma therapy for their versatile application are:

- Clarysage (Salvia Scaerea)
- Eucalyptus (Eucalyptus Globulus)
- Geranium (Pel;ugonium Graveolens)
- Lavender (Lavendula Vera Officinals)
- Lemon (Citrus Limonem)
- Peppermint (Mentha Piperita)
- Petitgrain (Citus Aurantium Leaves)
- Rosemary (Rosmarinus Officinals)
- Tea-tree (Melaleuca Alternifolia)
- Ylang Ylang (Cananga Odorata)

Origin of Aroma Therapy

The oldest use of aroma oils is known to be as old as 6000 years back when Egyptian physician, Imhotep, the then God of Medicine and Healing recommended fragrant oils for bathing and massaging. In 4,500 B.C. Egyptians used myrrh and cedar wood oils for embalming their dead and 6,500 years later the preserved mummies prove the fact discovered by the modern researchers that the cedar wood contains natural fixative and strong antibacterial and antiseptic properties.

Hippocrates, the Greek father of medicine, recommended regular aroma therapy baths and scented massages. This is what he effectively used to ward off plague from Athens. Romans utilized essential oils for pleasure and to cure pain and also for their popular perfumed baths and massages. Emperor Nero being indulgent in orgies, feasts and fragrances employed rose oil frequently to cure his headaches, indigestion and to maintain his high spirits while enjoying amusements.

During the great plague in London in 1665, people burnt bundles of lavender, cedar wood and cypress in the streets and carried posies of the same plants as their only defence to combat infectious diseases.

Aroma Therapy received a wider acceptance in the early twentieth century. In 1930s Rene-Maurice-Gatte Fosse, a French chemist, dipped his burnt hand in lavender oil. To his surprise the wound healed very quickly without any infection or scarring. He did considerable research on various oils and their therapeutic and psychotherapeutic properties.

Dr Jean Volnet, French army surgeon extensively used essential oils in World War II. It was Madame Morquerite Murry who gave the holistic approach to aroma oils by experimenting with them for individual problems.

Today, research has proved the multiple use of aroma oils. Medical research in the recent years has uncovered the fact that the odours we smell have a significant impact on the way we feel. Smells act directly on the brain like a drug according to scientific research. For instance smelling lavender increases alpha wave frequency in the back of the head and this state is associated with relaxation.

Essential oils like spiritual healing (Reiki, Pranic, Magnetized), homeopathic, herbal and flower remedies have a life force that vibrates within the body and the benefit exerted is too subtle to evaluate.

How Does Aroma Oil Work?

Dr Alan Huch, a neurologist, psychiatrist and also the director of Smell and Taste Research Centre in Chicago says, "Smell acts directly on the brain, like a drug." Our nose has the capacity to distinguish 1,00,000 different smells, (many of which) affect us without our knowing about the same.

The aroma enters our nose and comes in contact with the cilia, the fine hair inside the nose lining. The receptors in the cilia are linked to the olfactory bulb which is at the end of the smell tract. The end of the tract is in turn connected to the brain itself. Smells are converted by cilia into electrical impulses that are transmitted to the brain through olfactory system. All the impulses reach the limbic system. Limbic system is that part of the brain which is associated with our moods, emotions, memory and learning. All the smell that reaches the limbic system has a direct chemical effect on our moods.

For example smelling lavender increases alpha waves in the brain and it is this wave that helps us to relax. A whiff of jasmine increases beta waves in the brain and this wave is associated with an increased agile and alert state.

Limbic system is also a storehouse of millions of remembered smells. That is why the mere fragrance of haystack takes us back to childhood.

The molecular size of the essential oils is very tiny and ,they can easily penetrate through the skin and get into the blood stream. It takes anything between a few seconds to two hours for the essential oils to enter the skin and within four hours the toxins get out of the body ,through urine, perspiration and excreta.

Aroma oils work like magic for stress-related problems, psychosomatic disorders, skin infections, hair loss, inflammations, pains arising from muscular or skeletal disorders to name some. Actually essential oils have innumerable applications.

In Bristol, lavender oil was used on 28 patients who had undergone bypass surgery. 24 of them reported reduced breathing rates, lower blood pressure and anxiety levels.

In Paris, in 1985, 28 women were given treatment for thrush using essential oils. After 90 days the clinical examination showed that 21 of them had been cured completely.

Essential oils are safe to use. The only caution being they should never be used directly because some oils may irritate sensitive skin or cause photosensitivity. They should be blended in adequate proportion with the carrier oils. A patch test is necessary to rule out any reactions.

How to Use Aroma Oils?

Essential oils can be used in a variety of ways at home and place of work. Some of the common ways are:

Inhalation:

Add 2-3 drops of essential oil depending on which oil you have selected to the hot boiling water and inhale the steam by covering your head with a towel to stop the steam from escaping. Steaming also helps open the pores of the skin and thus more oil is absorbed giving the additional benefit of a facial. The bowl which has the hot water add the aroma oil could be left under the bed so that the room is enveloped in aromatic fragrance. This could be done with the same bowl of hot steaming water and essential

oil which had been used earlier for inhalation. A drop or two sprinkled on a handkerchief can give a lasting benefit of the aroma oil. For a very peaceful and relaxed sleep one or two drops of essential oils on a tissue kept inside the pillow or cushion could be used.

Diffusers and Vaporizers:

Diffusers are generally made of ceramic or clay. The diffuser has a cave-like opening to house small candles or earthen oil lamps and the top is shaped like a curved cup to hold a little water and few drops of aroma oil. Fill the top cup with water, add a few drops of essential oils depending on the oil chosen then light the candle or the lamp. For the oil lamp to last for a long duration, add castor oil to the earthen lamp because castor oil burns for a very long time as compared to the other oils used to light a lamp. Once the water and oil heat up, evaporation takes place and the whole atmosphere is filled with the aromatic scent. The process of evaporation continues for nearly five to six hours. This is ideal for presenting a conducive ambience during a gathering or even in bedrooms, hotels, living-rooms, etc., or any place where scented air is required. One can get instant relief from pain, a relaxed and positive feeling prevails when the right oil is used. One needs to be careful in choosing the right essential oil.

Vaporizers are the insect repellents used normally in the form of mats or other types of vaporizers kept for repelling insects. One could reuse the used mats by adding 2-3 drops of essential oil of your own choice and keeping them lit (electrically). Slowly the smell will get released and the area would be filled with soothing aroma. Lemon or rosemary are beneficial for offices, lavender for bedroom, antiseptic tea-tree for disinfecting a sick room and citronella for repelling the insects.

Massage:

The most common form of treatment is massage because the dual benefits of touch therapy and scent therapy are simultaneously enjoyed. Massage improves the

circulation of the blood, tones the muscles, detoxify toxins, releases trapped energy from tense muscles. The fragrance triggers a sense of pleasure and well-being. The penetration of essential oil through the skin during massages is high. Generally carrier oils like sunflower, coconut, olive, sweet almond, sesame and vegetable oils are mixed with aroma oils. The aroma oils should not be used for massages directly without dilution. About 10 drops or 1 teaspoon of essential oil can be mixed to about 30 ml of carrier oil. This makes a very rejuvenating massage oil.

Baths:

This is an easy way to relax using essential oils. Add the selected oil to your bathtub, stir the water well and spend 20 minutes in the tub. The aroma oil enters the body through the skin to give lasting benefits. Just a few drops are required to be added to the bathtub. The essential oils can also be added to a bucket of water instead of a bathtub. Mix the oil in the water properly, as some of the aroma oils are insoluble in water.

Foot Bath:

You can immerse your feet in a bowl of lukewarm water to which 2-3 drops of essential oil is added. This is a very refreshing experience after a hard days work and if you have sweaty and smelly feet then too this foot bath is very beneficial.

Potpourri:

Potpourri as the name suggests is a mixture of dried flowers, herbs, grass and seed pods. Few drops of essential oil added to the potpourri and kept in a bowl would keep giving out aromatic fragrance for 4-6 weeks. Another more effective method would be to keep the potpourri mixture after adding the essential oil in a closed container overnight so that the oil gets absorbed. The following morning the box can be kept open and the lingering aroma would fill the area.

Bedtime:

Sprinkle 2-3 drops on the pillow cover or on a tissue that can be placed under the pillow or cushion cover and inhaled just ,before sleeping or while sleeping. This can be very useful in treating headaches, stress, tension and in boosting confidence. Some of the essential oils act as an aphrodisiac too.

Compresses:

Both cold and hot compresses are good for health. Add 2-3 drops of aroma oil to a bowl of hot (depending on how much of heat you can withstand) or warm water and dip a hand towel or piece of cotton to enable it to absorb the mixture then squeeze out the excess water and place the towel or cotton on the area to be treated. Leaving the compress on the area for two hours is quite beneficial. Oil like lavender is usually used. This provides relief when used over bruises, skin problems and premenstrual syndromes. To make cold compress, add 6 cubes of ice to a bowl with 2-3 drops of essential oil and dip a hand towel or a piece of cotton to absorb the mixture then squeeze out the excess water and place the towel or cotton on the area to be treated. Cold compress is highly helpful in treating burns, sore feet, hangover, sprains and headaches. After a facial the use of hot and cold compress, alternately, helps the skin.

Oral Intake:

It is an accepted practice abroad to take essential oil orally as it is safe. However, care should be taken only under the supervision or guidance of an experienced aroma therapy practitioner. Few oils can be taken internally in a prescribed dosage for a particular problem like indigestion under the guidance of a qualified therapist only.

Beauty Treatment:

Aroma oils have been used as an application for the skin from times immemorial. As they are highly soothing in treating and enhancing the natural beauty of the skin they

can be safely incorporated in facials, massages, manicures, pedicures, scalp treatment, hair wash, hair treatment along with other creams and oils. Rose, chamomile, lemon, lavender, geranium, sandalwood are some good oils for facials irrespective of the fact that beauty treatment is given to normal, mature dry, oily, sensitive or problem skin. Either one of these or a combination of two of them could be used. The carrier oils that are helpful in a beauty treatment are sweet almond, wheat germ, peach kernel, apricot kernel and sunflower. Steam facials with essential oils are also rejuvenating and help in improving the skin texture.

Room Sprays:

There is a call for protecting the environment and this is becoming a prime concern worldwide. Aerosols are being discouraged due to their ozone depleting properties. Essential oils are natural and hence they could be used liberally to deodorize a room, freshen and scent your bathroom, living-room, bedroom, dining-room, office cabin, etc. Merely add 10-12 drops of aroma oil to half a liter of water and spray the mixture with the help of a spray bottle. Oils like lavender, lemon, peppermint, pine and rosemary are best for this application. Cupboards, wardrobes can also be disinfected. If a room smells of dampness or there are moulds in the hotel rooms, houses, offices or factories and shops the essential oil along with water can be sprayed.

Insect Repellents:

Essential oils are excellent fragrant dispenser and non toxic insecticides. Just 2-3 drops of essential oil can be used on pillow covers, mattresses or used mosquito mats (this can be electrically reused) or applied to the exposed skin after blending with carrier oil before going to bed. Lemon-grass is best for flying insects, tea-tree for ants and fleas, thyme for crawling pests, camphor for moths and citronella for mosquitoes. Even delicate plants (both indoor and outdoor) can be protected from insects by spraying the above essential oils to the roots of the plant.

Miscellaneous Uses:

Aroma oil can be added to the water used for cleaning the house. It can be used to wipe the kitchen counter, platform, dining tables, babies' nappies for disinfecting purpose and also to wash the baths and toilets.

Aroma oils have versatile applications and innumerable benefits and can be made a part of our daily routine.

How to Select Aroma Oils?

It is a fact that we get automatically attracted to pleasant smell and drift away from unpleasant smells. Subconsciously we react to smells that fall in the range of these two extreme categories. The fragrance of freshly prepared food activates the saliva when one is hungry and newly cut grass relaxes a person who is highly stressed. Aroma therapy is based on this instinctive response to smell. ...

An alarm dock could be preset to release a particular scent you wish to wake up to. Patients could be made to relax by inhaling smell before undergoing a therapy. Automobile manufacturers could develop air conditioners with a preset mechanism to discharge aromas to keep the drivers alert while driving.

There are two simple tests to train your nose to learn and memorize the various smells. Test I would tell you how good your sense of smell is and Test II would tell you which aroma or essential oil you like the best.

Test I: Sniff and Tell Test

Blindfold your eyes and ask your friend or a family member to bring ten items from your kitchen. Let your partner allow you to sniff the item one by one and then try to recognize them by their aroma without actually seeing them. The items could be

freshly cut citrus fruit, freshly crushed herbs, jars containing pickle, sauce, etc. Place the items three inches away from the tip of your nose for about 30 seconds. You should guess all the items correctly. If you are successful in guessing a minimum of 5-6 items then it means that your sense of smell is above average. However, one should aim to develop 100% sense of smell.

Test II. The Family Scent Test

Pick nine essential oils viz. three from the floral family, three from spicy family and three from green family. Mix them up and smell them randomly. You can smell them with your eyes closed for better concentration. This test will enable you to find out which aroma category you like the most. Maybe you like the floral smells better than the scent of the oil from the green family.

An aroma therapist should at least stock 30-40 types of oils. It is advisable to go in for the aromas you are naturally attracted to rather than all the essential oils that are available in the market.

Specific Features of Aroma Oils

Analgesic (To reduce pain)

Oils: Bergamot, Chamomile, Lavender, Marjoram and Rosemary.

Antidepressant (To lift the mood)

Oils: Bergamot, Clarysage, Chamomile, Geranium, Lavender, Neroli, Petitgrain, Rose, Orange, Sandalwood and Ylang Ylang.

Anaphrodisiac (To decrease sexual response)

Oils: Marjoram.

Anti-Inflammatory (To reduce inflammation)

Oils: Bergamot, Chamomile and Lavender.

Antiseptic (To fight bacteria locally)

Oils: "Bergamot, Eucalyptus, Lavender, Juniper, Rosemary, Tea-tree and Sandalwood.

Antiviral

Oils: Tea-tree and Lavender.

Astringent

Oils: Cypress, Cedarwood, Juniper, Frankincense, Sandalwood and Rose.

Aphrodisiac (Enhance sexuality)

Oils: Rose, Neroli, Clarysage, Sandalwood and Ylang Ylang.

Bactericide (Kills bacteria)

Oils: Bergamot, Eucalyptus, Lavender, Juniper, Rosemary and Neroli.

Cephalic (Clears the mind, stimulates mental activity)

Oils: Basil and Rosemary.

Chalagogue (To stimulate the flow of bile)

Oils: Chamomile, Lavender, Peppermint and Rosemary.

Cytophylactic (Regenerates cell)

Oils: Frankincense, Tea-tree, Lavender, Neroli and Palmarosa.

Deodarant (Reduces odour)

Oils: Clarysage, Lavender, Neroli, Petitgrain, Eucalyptus, Lavender and Cypress.

Detoxifying (Cleanses the body of impurities)

Oils: Fennel, Juniper and Rose.

Diuretic (To increase production of urine)

Oils: Cypress, Cedarwood, Chamomile, Frankincense, Fennel, Geranium, Juniper, Rosemary and Sandalwood.

Emmenagogue (To encourage menstruation)

Oils: Basil, Clarysage, Chamomile, Juniper, Lavender, Marjoram, Rose and Rosemary.

Expectorant (To expel phlegm)

Oils: Bergamot, Eucalyptus, Marjoram and Sandalwood.

Febrifuge (To reduce fever)

Oils: Bergamot, Chamomile, Eucalyptus, Tea-tree and Peppermint.

Fungicidal (To arrest growth of yeasts, moulds, etc)

Oils: Lavender and Tea-tree.

Hepatic (To strengthen liver)

Oils: Chamomile, Lemon, Cypress, Rosemary, Tea-tree and Lavender.

Hypertensive (To raise blood pressure)

Oils: Rosemary and Clarysage.

Hypnotic (To induce alpha state)

Oils: Chamomile, Lavender, Neroli, Marjoram and Ylang Ylang.

Hypotensive (To lower blood pressure)

Oils: Marjoram, Lavender and Ylang Ylang.

Immunostimulant (To strengthen the body's defensive reaction to infection)

Oils: Lavender and Tea-tree.

Nervine (To strengthen the nervous system)

Oils: Chamomile, Lavender, Marjoram and Rosemary.

Sedative (To calm the nervous system)

Oils: Bergamot, Clarysage, Juniper, Frankincense, Lavender, Marjoram, Rose, Neroli and Sandalwood.

Stimulant (Enhances the body activity)

Oils: Black Pepper, Eucalyptus, Geranium, Rosemary and Peppermint.

Tonic (To strengthen the body generally)

Oils: Black Pepper, Basil, Chamomile, Geranium, Frankincense, Lavender, Juniper, Marjoram, Rose, Neroli and Tea-tree.

Oils to be used in moderation

Basil

Clarysage

Camphor

Tarragon

Fennel Thyme

Ginger

Oils that are photo-toxic or photosensitive

Photo-toxic or photosensitivity is a reaction to essential oils causing redness, increased pigmentation and problems of the skin when in contact with the sunlight or excessive light. There is a possibility that the oils that cause photosensitivity can increase the likelihood of damage to the skin.

Bergamot

Cedarwood

Clarysage

Ginger

Lemon

Oils to be avoided in pregnancy

Rosemary Clarysage

Basil Cedarwood

Fennel Juniper

Thyme Tarragon

Marjoram

Oils that can cause skin irritation

Basil Lavender

Bergamot Lemon

Black pepper Lemon-grass

Camphor Neroli

Cedarwood Peppermint

Chamomile Pine

Clove bud Sandalwood

Eucalyptus Tea-tree

Geranium Thyme

Ginger Vetiver

Juniper Ylang Ylang

Avoid using the essential oils undiluted and insist on a skin patch test before using the aroma oils extensively on a regular basis.

Oils to be avoided while taking Homeopathic medication

The oils given below, when used while under Homeopathic medicine could neutralize the benefits of the Homeopathic remedies therefore they should be avoided.

Black Pepper Camphor

Clove bud Eucalyptus

Peppermint Rosemary

Oils to be avoided when driving (long distance)

The following oils should be avoided when driving because these can cause drowsiness when one has to be alert.

Chamomile Petitgrain

Geranium Rose

Lavender Sandalwood

Marjoram Vetiver

Neroli Ylang Ylang

Oils that can be contra-indicators during certain illness

Condition Contra-indicator oil

Asthma : Marjoram, Camphor, Rosemary.

Anorexia : Patchouli.

Cancer : Basil, Fennel.

Epilepsy : Clarysage, Fennel, Eucalyptus, Lavender, Rosemary.

Hypertension : Rosemary, Thyme

Hypotension : Marjoram, Clarysage

Liver disease : Clove Bud, Thyme, Vetiver

Ulcers of the stomach and intestine : Cinnamon

Equipment Required for Mixing Oils

After studying the feature, properties or category, select the essential oils you wish to mix and use. It is preferable not to mix more than three oils at a time. Also select the oils belonging to the same category. For example if you want to use more than one oil select them all from either floral, spicy, citrus, green or woody. Hence you could try

out a mixture of perhaps lavender, rose and ylang ylang as all these belong to the floral family.

Once you have selected the oils that you want to mix and use, try the combination in a smaller quantity before you mix a large quantity so as to not waste the oils. Cut long strips of blotting paper, put a drop of each of the selected oils in case you wish to use equal amounts of all the oils selected. In case you have decided to use anyone or two of the selected oil more than the other, add two drops of those. Now hold the strip and move the oily tip of the blotting paper backward and forward under your nose as you inhale the aroma. Allow your sense of smell to be the judge and guide you in selecting the combinations.

Since aroma therapy is very personal you should get the other person to do a similar test before mixing a combination because it is not necessary that the mixture selected by you and liked by you should necessarily be liked by others too.

Equipment

- A 10 ml dark coloured glass bottles with stoppered caps for storing pure essential oils.
- Four eye-droppers or pipettes. You could use one only if you thoroughly wash it every time after every use.
- A small funnel for pouring carrier oils into bottles.
- A large, dark colored glass, stoppered bottles for storing the combinations of oils or a ceramic bowl for immediate use. Please do not use metal containers or bowls.

- Strips of blotting paper.

Caution to be Exercised While Using Aroma Oils

Skin Patch Test

To test aroma oil blended with carrier or base oils

- Wash and dry the forearm thoroughly.
- Apply just a few drops of the blended aroma oil to moisten the area.
- Cover the area with a sterile gauze.
- Let it remain for 24 hours.
- If there is irritation then wash immediately.
- In case of irritation, you should not use this oil.

To test essential oil in its pure state

- Wash and dry the forearm thoroughly with an unscented vegetable soap.
- Apply one drop of the aroma oil to the crook of the arm.
- Bend the arm so that it touches the shoulder for five minutes.
- Open and dose once more.

If any irritation occurs wash immediately with water and soap or wipe carefully with a cotton ball soaked in milk and vegetable oil.

In case accidental poisoning occurs follow the following:

Aroma oils being potent, safety precautions need to be followed with utmost care. Do not allow children to play with these oils and always store them away from the reach of children and other non-qualified users of essential oils.

In Eyes

In case essential oil comes in contact with the eyes, do not rinse with water. But instead wipe the eye with a ball of cotton soaked in milk or vegetable oil. If irritation still persists wash the eyes with water poured from a jug, from a height of 3- 5 inches for 15 minutes. Consult a doctor. It always helps to wash the eyes for 10 to 15 minutes than splashing it with running water.

Toxic Effects

When the oil is not evenly spread out on the area and remains concentrated in one area in a large quantity it can have a toxic effect. Even daily exposure to the same oil on a regular basis for a prolonged period can lead to toxicity. Symptoms that would follow a toxic reaction are fatigue, headaches, liver pain, liver enlargement, coughing and urine disturbances. This make it mandatory for the therapists using essential oils to work in a well ventilated room and wash their hands thoroughly after handling the oils.

Allergic Effects

An allergic reaction to aroma oil would result in nausea, dizziness, sweating, stomachache, mucous membrane, irritation and palpitation. These allergic reactions are temporary and would cease to exist as soon as the use of the essential oils is stopped.

The toxicity of the essential oils depends on the level of toxicity and concentration of the chemical compounds. All aroma oils need to be used as per instructions only and more so when handling those essential oils under toxic listing. Normally a toxic reaction occurs when the essential oil is used in excess or incorrectly. It is safer to use the aroma oils under proper guidance and instructions.

The following precautions needs to be followed while dealing with essential oils having toxic rating:

- Do not exceed the recommended dosage.
- If you feel uncomfortable even while using the recommended dosage reduce the dosage to half. Follow the skin patch test carefully.
- Avoid usage for a long period. The maximum administration time should not exceed 2 - 4 weeks. Leave a gap 30 days before beginning to use again.
- Avoid use during pregnancy.
- Do not use if you are a nursing mother.
- Do not administer on infants, small children, frail or elderly people who have less resistance.

Different Ways of Using Essential Oils

Rub oil:

8-10 drops of essential oil in 10ml base oil. Use only 4-6 drops once a day preferably at: night

Baths:

6-8 drops in a tub, 2-3 drops in a bucket once a day

Shower:

10-12 drops in 10 ml base oil once a day. Wash as usual. Add oil on your face towel, cloth or sponge or use your hands and rub briskly all over the body as you stand under the running shower. Breathe deeply to benefit from the aromatic vapour.

Massage oil:

8-10 drops of essential oil for every 30 ml of vegetable base oil once a day

Diffuser:

1-6 drops

Inhalation:

2-3 drops once a day 1-2 drops on a tissue. Sniff when required. Keep the tissue under the pillow during the night. 2-3 drops of essential oil on a piece of cotton and left for 10-15 minutes to dry. This piece of cotton can be kept in the cupboard, car, shoe rack, lockers etc.

Water bowls:

1-9 drops of aroma oil to be added to bowl of boiling water. Keep in the room and close the windows, door and allow the aroma to spread in the room. This can also be used in the work places.

Room sprays:

4-6 drops can be added to 30 ml of water in a spray bottle. Shake well and spray the mixture in the air. Avoid spraying directly on delicate machines. Ideal for home and office use.

Careful Handling of the Essential Oils

- Essential oils are not recommended for internal consumption.
- Certain oils are to be avoided during early pregnancy as they can induce menstruation and some even have diuretic properties which can deplete the fluid in the foetal sack. These oils include basil, clarysage, rosemary, juniper, marjoram, clove bud, fennel, cypress, peppermint, cedarwood. However this caution does not apply to oils used in vaporisers.

- Avoid exposure to sun for at least four hours after using essential oils as some oils can make the skin photosensitive to ultraviolet rays from the sun. Bergamot, lemon, orange, petitgrain are some such oils that can cause photosensitivity.
- People suffering from high blood pressure, epilepsy, neural disorders or kidney disease should avoid some oils viz. black pepper, rosemary, cypress, juniper.
- Aroma oils are not a substitute for any drugs being taken under the advice of a qualified physician for serious ailments. It is always advisable to consult a qualified therapist before considering the use of essential oils particularly when suffering from serious ailments.
- Use the oils in recommended dosage. Usage in excess can lead to opposite effect to that which you are trying to achieve and there are chances of building up of the toxicity within the body. Ylang ylang, marjoram, clarysage need to be used with utmost precaution.
- Essential oils should always be used after dilution unless recommended otherwise.
- Keep out of reach of children.

- Store the oils only in dark glass containers. The color of the bottle should preferably be amber rather than cobalt blue. Only blended oils should be stored in cobalt blue bottles.
- Store in a cool, dark place away from sunlight to prolong the life of the aroma oils and also to preserve the therapeutic powers of the essential oils.
- Avoid using essential oils near the eyes or other sensitive areas.
- Avoid contact with plastic, varnished or painted surfaces.
- When blending essential oils' use a stainless steel, glass or ceramic container and not plastic.
- Do not use essential oils on newborn. Use only one drop of lavender in the bath until the age of four months. For the use of essential oils on children up to the age of 12 years, a quarter of a dosage given to an adult should be utilized.
- What suits one may not necessarily suit another person.
- Avoid certain aroma oils under the influence of alcohol. Oils viz. clarysage, marjoram, ylang ylang should particularly be avoided in case alcohol has been taken.

- Some oils may irritate the skin. Always do a skin patch test before applying the oil to larger area.
- If you are not sure of a particular blend, it is always better to take advise from a professional aroma therapist.

How Aroma Oils Are Made?

Distillation

Water distillation for dried material that will not get damaged by boiling. This method is also used for powdered materials and flowers like rose and orange flowers

Water and Steam distillation for dried and fresh material that would get damaged by boiling. In this method they are supported on a perforated grid and steam is passed through them like cinnamon and clove.

Direct steam distillation for fresh plant material having a high boiling point, steam is passed at a high temperature (seeds, roots, wood). Also applicable for fresh plant material like peppermint.

Cold pressing or expression

It is mainly for citrus oils like lemon and orange. The fruit is rolled over sharp projections that puncture the oil glands. Fruit is then pressed to remove the oil and then washed off with a fine spray of water. Rotating the mixture at a very high speed separates oil and water. The fruit can also first be separated from the peel and then cold pressed like bergamot.

Carbon dioxide extraction

Liquid CO₂ is used as a solvent to extract essential oils. Liquefied under pressure, it acts as a solvent, reverting back to gaseous nature when pressure is reduced leaving no trace of solvent.

Solvent extraction

Volatile solvents like petroleum, ether, benzene or hexane are mixed into petals till the essential oil is completely dissolved. Filtration is followed by reduced pressure and evaporation of the solvent to give concrete products which contains insoluble vegetable wax or pigments. On continuing the process with solvents and freezing it finally separates the waxes and gives the final product which is called absolute.