

IAAMA
National Aromatherapy Awareness Week

FACTS SHEET 1

AROMATHERAPY - WHAT IS IT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

Aromatherapy is an ancient healing therapy that dates back to ancient Egyptian times. It involves the use of pure essential oils to treat, influence or modify the mind, body and spirit and to promote health and wellbeing.

Essential oils are liquids generally distilled (usually by steam or water) from the leaves, stems, flowers, bark, roots, or other elements of a plant that contain the true essence of the plant it was derived from. Essential oils, contrary to the use of the word "oil" are not really oily-feeling at all. Most essential oils are clear, but some oils such as patchouli or orange are amber or yellow in color.

Essential oils are highly concentrated and need only be used in small quantities for best results. Essential oils are not the same as perfume or fragrance oils. Where essential oils are derived from plants, perfume oils are artificially created fragrances with artificial substances and do not offer the therapeutic benefits that essential oils offer.

The chemical composition and aroma of pure essential oils can provide powerful emotional, physical and psychological therapeutic benefits. While some essential oils have anti-bacterial properties, others are antiseptic, sedative, uplifting, stress-relieving or anti-spasmodic.

AROMATHERAPY AND ITS APPLICATIONS

One can experience the wonderful healing properties of essential oils through a range of different applications.

Choosing a quality essential oil is important. Ensure it is a pure essential oil (100%) and not a synthetic oil. Some essential oils can be harmful if incorrectly applied. Use them as directed and always consult a qualified Aromatherapist for ongoing treatment advice.

Inhalation

Essential oils that are inhaled into the lungs offer emotional, psychological and physical benefits. Not only does the aroma of the natural essential oil stimulate the brain to trigger a reaction, but when inhaled into the lungs, the naturally occurring chemicals can supply therapeutic benefit. For example, diffusing lavender essential oil can relax the mind; eucalyptus essential oil can help ease congestion and basil essential oil can clear the mind and alleviate intellectual fatigue.

Aromatherapy Massage

Essential oils that are applied to the skin are absorbed into the bloodstream. An aromatherapy massage has countless benefits from relieving muscular tension, easing migraines, improving digestion, alleviating insomnia and improving skin tone.

Since essential oils are so powerful and concentrated, they should never be applied to the skin in their undiluted form. To apply essential oils to the skin, essential oils are typically diluted into a *carrier* oil such as a cold pressed vegetable oil like sweet almond oil, apricot kernel oil or grapeseed oil. An Aromatherapist can prepare the most appropriate blend of essential oils to meet your individual needs.

Baths and Foot Baths

Aromatic baths can help one to unwind, address symptoms such as fluid retention, stress and fatigue and muscular aches and pains.

Compresses

Essential oils can be applied to hot or cold compresses to treat conditions such as headaches and migraine, skin conditions and varicose veins.

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Ointments, creams and lotions

An easy way to enjoy the benefits of aromatherapy is to apply essential oils through an unscented cream, lotion or ointment. These applications can assist in alleviating skin conditions such as eczema, chest infections, cold and flu symptoms, tired feet and ageing skin.

Other Benefits

In addition to therapeutic benefit at the emotional and physical level, essential oils are helpful in other applications. Essential oils can be used as natural and toxic-free alternatives in household and laundry cleaners, and can be used as natural insect repellents and pesticides.

Essential Oil Blends

Essential oils can be blended together to create complex and beautiful aromas, with a specific therapeutic application. Essential oils that are blended with a specific therapeutic purpose in mind may be referred to as an *essential oil synergy*. The benefits of a synergistic blend are often considered to be greater in total, than if using each essential oil in isolation.

Your local Aromatherapist can provide you with more information

For more information contact your local Aromatherapist:

To find a qualified Aromatherapist in your area or for more information contact the International Association of Aromatic Medicine and Aromatherapy (IAAMA) - Phone 02 9715 6622.