

# AROMATHERAPY

Has its origins in the ancient world, with essential oils being extracted from various parts of trees, shrubs, herbs, grasses and flowers and being used for incense, perfume and medicinal purposes.

The earliest documentation of aromatics being used as perfumes, and plants being used medicinally date back to Egypt around 2800BC.

Documentation from both India and China circa 2000BC list aromatics and their therapeutic applications, these understandings formed the basis of Ayurvedic and herbal medicine.

The ancient Greeks acquired much of their medicinal knowledge from the Egyptians and expanded on the learnings. Hippocrates c.460 hailed as 'the father of medicine' noted...

***"The way to health is to have an aromatic bath and massage every day."***

Aromatics were introduced into Europe from the Middle East and used from the 12th century until the scientific revolution of the 19th century and the growth of the modern drug industry. Contrary to this, in India, China and the Middle East the advancements in modern medicine did not change the practice of self-care using home remedies and consultation with traditional healers, thus the tradition of Ayurvedic and herbal medicine has been unbroken since antiquity.

The 1920's saw a resurgence in the use of aromatics in Europe, stemming from France. With amongst others three notable pioneers Gattefossé, Valnet and Maury.

Aromatherapy is a science and an art. The science is the therapeutic action of essential oils on the body. The art is creating a synergy, blending two or more oils together to enhance their effects, so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

To create a synergy a number of factors need to be taken into account. Such as; the symptom to be treated, the underlying cause of the disorder and the aesthetic response as you will be unlikely to use a blend whose smell you find unappealing.

Typically I use four essential oils when creating a synergic blend. But for self-care, utilising Piesse's principle of fragrant harmony and selecting three essential oils is a simple way to create your own blends.

Essential oils can generally be classified being a top, middle or base note. Top notes are light and fresh. Middle notes are the heart and make up the bulk of the blend, the scent emerges some time after the first impression. Last are the base notes, these are rich and heavy in fragrance, emerge slowly and fix the lighter notes.

A good starting point for blending essential oils is to use a ratio of 3:5:2 drops to 50ml base oil and leave it to settle for a day to allow the aromas to meld.

In addition to the recommended five key oils I have listed a further ten for you to explore. Price points of those vary.

## **Applications for essential oil:**

*(my guidelines are based on the premise of little and often. These are safe quantities for daily use)*

Foot bath: 1 drop

Inhalant: 1 drop

Candles: 1 drop once wax has slightly melted

Diffuser: 3 drops

Facial oil: 5 drops per 50ml of base product

Massage oil, lotion, bath oil/foam, shower gel:  
10 drops per 50ml of base product

Room spray: 20 drops to 200ml water



Each essential oil is made up of a combination of constituents that interact with the body's systems: hormones, circulatory, immune etc. The chemical profile altering our state of mind, stress levels and physical wellbeing. Helping the body to return from an imbalanced state i.e. illness to a balanced one.

The methods of application are generally via the skin (massage and bathing) and respiratory (diffusers/inhalants). There will be more than one oil that can address your needs and it is a prudent to switch from time to time so as not to build up a tolerance.

Five key oils that will address most needs are lavender, bergamot, rosemary, ravensara and peppermint. When purchasing ensure that you buy pure essential oils. Avoid oils that say 'blended' as this will be essential oil in a base oil. And those labelled 'natural essence' are likely to be synthetic.

Pricing of essential oils is dependant on the abundance of oil within its source of origin, method of extraction and labour. The ones mentioned below are all at an accessible price point and a 10ml bottle should last a frequent user around 2-3 months.

**Lavender:** If you only buy one essential oil, this should be it as it is the most versatile and can be used for countless conditions (the list below is simply a summary). Very few people have a bad reaction to lavender and it is safe for use with children. It is also one of the few essential oils that can be used neat on the skin to treat injuries and insect bites, only a minute amount will be needed. It also blends well with all other essential oils. The finest quality is French lavender.

**Uses:** acne, anxiety, arthritis, athlete's foot, burns, colds, coughs, eczema, flu, headaches, healing, high blood pressure, hormonal conditions, immune boosting, infections, insect bites, insect repellent, insomnia, menstrual conditions, migraines, muscular pain, rheumatism, sciatica, sedative, sinusitis, skincare, stings, stress, sunburn, wounds.

**Bergamot:** From the rind of the bergamot fruit it has a fresh lively aroma which is uplifting, although the action of the oil is relaxing. One of the best essential oils for emotional conditions.

**Uses:** acne, anxiety, convalescence, digestive problems, eczema, loss of appetite, psoriasis, respiratory conditions, skincare, UTI's - add a few drops mixed with a base oil to bath water at the first signs of cystitis.

**Rosemary:** Traditionally burnt in sick rooms as a fumigant.

**Uses:** arthritis, cholesterol, digestive complaints, fatigue, hair care, headaches, memory, mental clarity, migraines, muscular pain, reproductive conditions, respiratory conditions, rheumatism.

**Ravensara:** Hailing from Madagascar and used by the indigenous people since antiquity. It has high anti-viral properties and is safe for use with children.

**Uses:** anxiety, aphrodisiac, cold sores, fatigue, immune boosting, MRSA, muscular pain, respiratory conditions, shingles. Pop one drop on a tissue to inhale when commuting on public transport in flu season.

**Peppermint:** Associated with its energising properties, it is an adaptogen so can also induce the opposite action and relax. When travelling pop one drop on a tissue to aid travel sickness. A great oil for use around the house, add a few drops to mop water and down drains to discourage spiders.

**Uses:** acne, circulatory conditions, cooling, digestive complaints, fever, headaches, inflammation, insect repellent, mental clarity, muscular pain, respiratory conditions, rheumatism, shock, toothache, travel sickness, vomiting.

	Properties		Top	Middle	Base
<b>Lavender (middle)</b> <b>Contraindications: first trimester</b>	analgesic antidepressant antiseptic antirheumatic hypotensor nervine sedative	blends well with:	bergamot, clary sage, lemon		cedarwood, rose, sandalwood, vetivert
<b>Bergamot (top)</b> <b>Contraindication: photosensitivity, pregnancy, sensitive skin</b>	analgesic antidepressant antiseptic calminative reproduction sedative	blends well with:		chamomile, cypress, geranium, lavender, marjoram, peppermint, ravensara, rosemary	cedarwood, rose, sandalwood, vetivert
<b>Rosemary (middle)</b> <b>Contraindication: epilepsy, high blood pressure, pregnancy</b>	antirheumatic calmative endocrine hypertensor nervine stimulant	blends well with:	bergamot, lemon		cedarwood, sandalwood, vetiver
<b>Ravensara (middle)</b> <b>Contraindications: pregnancy</b>	antibacterial antifungal antiseptic antiviral expectorant stimulant	blends well with:	bergamot, lemon		cedarwood, sandalwood, vetiver
<b>Peppermint (middle)</b> <b>Contraindication: homeopathic remedies, pregnancy, sensitive skin</b>	analgesic anti-inflammatory antispasmodic antiviral calmative expectorant stimulant	blends well with:	bergamot, lemon		cedarwood, sandalwood, vetiver

Using anxiety and menopause as examples, a few things to consider when making your synergic blend...

**Anxiety:** There are a wide range of essential oils to choose from to facilitate anxiety, just as there are multiple reasons for anxiety and how it presents. When choosing your oils, consider the source of your anxiety plus how it is affecting you mentally, emotionally and physically. With regards to the former are you experiencing insomnia, are you 'on edge' or lethargic? In relation to the latter are you experiencing digestive problems, migraines, tight muscles? Are you susceptible to coughs and colds? Cross reference your experiences with the properties of the oils you have to hand and choose which you feel address your current needs.

	aroma family	anxiety	immune boosting	insomnia	menopausal problems	muscular aches
bergamot	citrus	x	x	x	x	
cedarwood	woody	x		x	x	x
chamomile	herbaceous	x	x	x	x	x
clary sage	herbaceous	x		x	x	x
cypress	woody	x	x	x	x	x
geranium	floral	x		x	x	
lavender	floral	x	x	x	x	x
lemon	citrus	x	x		x	
marjoram	herbaceous	x		x		x
peppermint	camphoraceous/ minty	x	x		x	x
ravensara	camphoraceous/ minty	x	x			x
rose	floral	x		x	x	
rosemary	herbaceous	x	x			x
sandalwood	woody	x		x		x
vetiver	earthy	x		x	x	x

**Menopause:** The progress of menopause can last years and your symptoms may change so you will have to adjust your blend accordingly. Assess the essential oils that generally help and tailor them to your needs. Some things to consider: excessive bleeding, forgetfulness, hot flushes, insomnia, irregular menstruation, libido changes, mood swings, skin/hair changes, vaginal discharge, vaginal dryness, water retention.

If a client presented with low mood, hot flushes and forgetfulness. Although not listed as an oil for menopause, I would put rosemary in the blend as it is the go to oil to facilitate memory.

A basic guide of aromas that will blend well together:

	camph./ minty	citrus	earthy	floral	herbaceous	resinous	spicy	woody
camph./ minty	x	x	x		x			x
citrus	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
earthy	x	x	x				x	x
floral		x		x		x	x	x
herbaceous	x	x			x			x
resinous		x		x		x		x
spicy		x	x	x			x	x
woody	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

n.b. the tables give an overview and are guidelines to give you are starting point for further research. Enjoy experimenting.