

Aromatherapy: Essential Oils

Aromatherapy is the use of organic plant extracts called essential oils. It can help you feel relaxed, calm, soothed, or uplifted. Essential oils:

- Are very strong. You need to mix them with lotion, aloe, or oil (almond, sesame, olive, or soy) before using them on the skin.
- Are usually used on the skin or by breathing in the scent. This can provide a healing environment.
- Should never be taken by mouth (ingested). Only ingest them if a trained specialist tells you to. **This is not common advice.**
- Have natural plant elements that make aromatherapy helpful. Other scented products do not help like this.

Using Essential Oils

- Put them into a diffuser. This releases the scent slowly into the air.
- Put a few drops onto a cotton ball or cotton wick, then breathe in the scent.
- Mix a few drops into a lotion, oil, or aloe and massage it onto your skin.

Essential Oil Safety

- **Talk to your doctor or health care provider about using aromatherapy before starting.** Oils can affect people and medical conditions in many different ways. They may also interact with medicines, vitamins, or supplements you take.
- Do not put them in food or drinks.
- **Do not use essential oils full-strength on the skin.** The first time you use essential

oils, do a patch test by applying the lotion with oil to a small area of skin. If the skin reacts, such as swelling, itching, hives or burning, clean the area by washing it with soap and cool water.

- **If full-strength oil gets on the skin, use plain oil (almond, sesame, olive, soy, etc.) over the essential oil before washing with soap and water.**
- Do not use them on or near your face.
- Keep them away from items that can cause fires (flammable), like candles, cigarettes, and gas stoves.
- Keep them out of the sun or high heat. Do not keep them in a car.
- Keep them out of the reach of children and pets. Always help children under 10 years old or those who are developmentally delayed use inhaled aromatherapy.
- Check with a qualified aromatherapy specialist or doctor before using them if you're pregnant or have asthma, seizures, allergies, or clotting disorders.

When to Call the Doctor

- Let your child's doctor or health care provider know if they have a negative reaction to aromatherapy.
- Call the Poison Control Helpline at (800) 222-1222 (TTY-866-688-0088) if you think a child has swallowed any essential oils. They will tell you what to do.