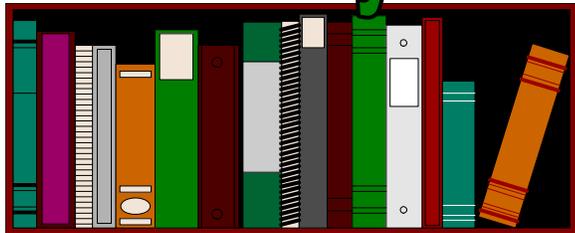


Articles by Sara



Essential Oils and Aromatherapy For Those with Bleeding Disorders

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After doing some research on how essential oils might improve the quality of life for those with hemophilia, I soon discovered how little I really knew about this genetic disorder that affects approximately 17,000 (mostly young male) individuals. As a Registered Aromatherapist I have some concerns about “recommending” general blends or specific oils for this population due to the lack of scientific research available. My concerns are based on our creed, “first do no harm”,

Aromatherapy is the use of aromatic and volatile oils from herbs, plants, and trees to improve physical and mental health. These essential oils have been extracted from the leaves, seeds, roots, rind, flowers or bark of plants. They are a watery substance and not oily at all, as the name implies. Many ancient cultures, dating back to at least 4,000 B.C. have studied and used it, and now modern medicine is also recognizing its benefits. Clinical trials have shown that “aromatherapy” can affect digestion, respiratory congestion, headaches, pain relief, circulation lymphatic drainage and hormonal balance, as well as easing depression, anxiety and stress. In 2004 the Nobel Prize went to scientists who discovered how many odor receptors we each have (10,000) and establishing that our sense of smell is as important and complex as sight or hearing.

It is critical that you understand two concepts. First that essential oils provide the “aroma” in aromatherapy. Most essential oils are used by the fragrance and food industry, only a small fraction are used by aromatherapist. As a healing modality, it is absolutely imperative that you use only 100% pure essential oils and not synthetic fragrance oil. Pure essential oils come in small dark vials that are labeled with the botanical name of a single plant., the method of distillation, and plant origin. Often they will also have the date of distillation, batch number and always vary in price from \$10 to \$150. The price is dependent on the amount of plant material it takes to produce the essential oil. Essential oils may be purchased from health food stores and reliable internet sites like www.naturesgift.com , www.juliarosebotanicals.com and others. The second key concept is safety. Some people may have adverse reactions to certain essential oils. Throughout this article you will be given safety tidbits but these are not a substitute for professional advice. If you have any safety concerns consult a Registered Aromatherapist or other healthcare professional before using an aromatherapy blend or essential oil.

In addressing issues for those with hemophilia, certain essential oils may prove helpful for improving joint pain, reducing anxiety, easing depression, and/or minimizing bruises. Since I have never worked directly with a hemophilia client , my suggestions are based purely on the properties of the essential oils themselves and no clinical data.

The most prudent place for us to begin our aromatic journey is by acknowledging some of the basic guidelines and contraindications for using essential oils and aromatherapy.

Essential oils are very strong (45% stronger than dried plant material) and natural does not mean harmless.

Read precautions and uses associated with each oil.

Essential oils not recommended for use **at all** in aromatherapy are: Birch, Thuja, Wintergreen, Bitter Almond, Yellow Camphor, Horseradish, Mugwort, Mustard, Rue, Southernwood, Cassia, Bitter Fennel, Rue, Tansy, Sassafras and Wormwood.

Hemophiliacs should avoid any oils that have blood thinning properties. These oils could include: Clove Bud , Cinnamon Leaf, Bay Laurel, Wintergreen, Oregano, and Sweet Birch. These oils are also often included in over the counter preparations, gum, food and drinks. However, “there is still some controversy about whether essential oils reach the bloodstream in sufficient quantities after a topical aromatherapy treatment to have a pharmacologic effect.” (Balacs 2002)

Photo sensitivity or severe skin damage by the sun may be caused by using cold pressed citrus oils such as Lemon, Orange, Bergamot, Tangerine, and Mandarin due to furocoumarins. If you apply a blend with these oils to the skin and expose yourself to UV rays (sun or tanning bed) a rash or skin problem may develop. Steam distilled lime and grapefruit oils appear to have no topical contraindications at this time.

Do not take essential oils internally,

Keep oils out of the reach of children, the mentally confused, and pets.

Keep away from the eyes. If you get essential oils in the eyes rinse immediately with milk followed by vegetable oil and water. Water alone will not work as essential oils are not water soluble.

Keep oils away from naked flame.

Store in a cool dark place.

Always blend essential oils with a carrier oil, cream, water or other base before using.

. It is always wise to consult a reference manual or a Certified/Registered Aromatherapist prior to treating specific health conditions. Blending proportions will be dependent on a health assessment, age, and other pertinent factors. Methods of use vary and are dependent on the needs of the client. The most common methods of use are inhalation (breathing in) and topical use via massage or compress.

For joint pain and inflammation the following essential oils might prove helpful: black pepper (*Piper nigrum*), helichrysum (*Helichrysum italicum*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*), geranium (*Pelargonium graveolens*), lemongrass (*Cymbopogon citratus-high myrcene content*), lemon (*Citrus Limon*), grapefruit (*Citrus paradisi*) Lavender (*Lavendula angustifolia*), German chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), juniper (*Juniperus communis*) and clary sage (*Salvia sclarea*) for pain. If the inflammation is accompanied by muscle spasm, Sweet marjoram (*Origanum majorana*) may be beneficial. To make a blend choose 1-3 of the above oils and blend in a carrier base for massage or compress. An example of a blend for joint pain could be: 4 drops of black pepper, 4 drops helichrysum and 4 drops of lemongrass mixed in 1 oz. of carrier oil comprised of Sunflower oil (*Helianthus annuus*) chosen for efficacy on bruises and 10% of the specialty oil St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) chosen as an anti-inflammatory. For extreme bruising a blend of 10% helichrysum in 1oz. of rosehip seed oil is thought to be very effective (see www.naturesgift.com for helichrysum healing). This 2% blend would be appropriate for most teens and adults. It is always wise to perform a patch test of any blend before applying it all over the body to be certain there are no negative reactions. To patch test take a small amount of the blend and put on the inside of the forearm. Cover it with a bandage so the blend does not oxidize and leave for several hours. If there is no redness, irritation, or other concerns then proceed with the treatment. Discontinue use if there is any negative reaction. There is a great deal of controversy on the appropriate use of massage therapy on those with hemophilia. I suggest that you consult your physician about medical massage using light touch and heed his suggestions. Some excellent research has been done on this topic by Renee Weaver, founder of the Touch Factor Foundation, a non-profit organization spreading the benefits of massage to those with hemophilia (www.massageandbodywork.com/Articles/OctNov1999/hemophilia.html) Due to the risk of injury, it is important to work with your health care team when making this decision. If you decide that massage is not appropriate, than you could put the above blend on a cool compress and hold it to the injured or painful area. Keep in mind that it is not recommended to apply topical blends to areas where there is broken or open skin. The skin or integumentary system is the body's largest organ. Due to low molecular weight, essential oils are easily absorbed through the skin's pores and hair follicles. Essential oils are generally absorbed by the body anywhere from 15 minutes to 12 hours. Absorption time is dependent on thickness of skin, circulation, and fat deposits.

Inhalation is typically the most effective way to use essential oils for emotional issues such as anxiety, mild depression, panic, etc. Our sense of smell is directly connected with the mind through the olfactory system and the limbic brain where emotions, memory and other functions are located. The sense of smell is 10,000 times more sensitive than any other sensory organ in the body. Aromatherapist and RN, Valerie Cooksley offers some general classifications that can be used when one first begins using essential oils.

Citrus oils are usually mood elevators and stress relievers. These would include oils from fruits such as sweet orange, lemon, bergamot, grapefruit, lime, and mandarin.

Floral oils are generally considered mood elevators and relaxants. These include flowers such as jasmine, rose, neroli, ylang-ylang, geranium and helichrysum.

Grasses such as vetiver and lemongrass are typically relaxants.

Herbal oils are thought to be anti-infectious, stimulating, balancing and include sweet marjoram, rosemary, lavender, and thyme linalool.

Mints such as peppermint and spearmint are mental stimulants which have a cooling and refreshing effect. Spice oils are usually energizing, warming and include black pepper, cardamom, coriander, and ginger. Tree oils are good for grounding and as respiratory aids. These include cedarwood, eucalyptus, pine, sandalwood and tea tree.

There are several methods available for using the above essential oils for inhalation. You may put 2-3 drops of the oil on a tissue, handkerchief, or cotton ball. These are easy to keep with you in a plastic bag for your pocket or desk. You can also make an inhaler for a specific use such as sinus relief or for panic attacks. Inhalers are available from various essential oil companies online. Cool air fan diffusers are always a good investment. These fan diffusers come with cotton pads and you put 3-4 drops of oil on them. They can be used with batteries or plugged in for a convenient way to access the beneficial aromatic oils. Many people I know use fan diffusers at home, work and in their car. Inhalation of essential oils could not be easier! I believe most people can benefit from some type of essential oil inhalation therapy. It is usually safe, easy, and effective but check for allergies and sensitivity to the oils being used. Often mood altering essential oils can be used instead of a prescription medication with potential side effects.

Aromatherapy can and should be an enjoyable part of everyday life. The pure joy of scent is an undeniable source of pleasure for most of us. Keeping in mind the above safety precautions you can use essential oils as part of your daily hygiene regimen, health and beauty treatments and for incorporating aromatic scents into your work or home environment. It is easy and simple to add a few drops of essential oil to your organic unscented shower gel, bath salt, cream, lotion, and shampoo. One of the easiest ways to surround yourself with the healthy vibration of essential oils is to add 8-10 drops of your favorite scent to a 1oz. spray bottle of natural spring water. Shake, spray and smell the sunshine!

This article should not be considered medical advice and should never replace the advice of your physician or health care provider. "Aromatherapy may affect the cardiovascular system by increasing parasympathetic nervous functioning; causing vasodilatation and vasoconstriction, increasing local circulation and reducing clotting" (Martin, Ingrid. *Aromatherapy for Massage Practitioners* 2007) and that is critical knowledge for those with hemophilia contemplating the topical use of essential oils and aromatherapy. Each situation requires individual assessment of the client by a competent and caring health care team which should include a Licensed Massage Therapist and Registered Aromatherapist. If you have any questions about this article you may contact Sara at botanicalhealingarts@hotmail.com.

Reference Resources:

Clinical Aromatherapy by Jane Buckle PhD

Aromatherapy for Massage Practitioners by Ingrid Martin LMT

Healing Home Spa by Valerie Gennari Cooksley RN

www.massagelandbodywork.com/Articles/OctNov1999/hemophilia.html

Natures Gift (www.naturesgift.com)

Sara Holmes, BS LMT Registered Aromatherapist has ten years working in the field of aromatherapy. She is also a licensed massage therapist. She has studied Aromatherapy with some of the leading educators in the field such as Sylla Sheppard Hanger LMT, Jane Buckle PhD., Bev Hawkins LMT RA, and Jeanne Rose Aromatherapist/Herbalist. Sara has a private aromatherapy and massage practice in Tuscola, IL and teaches Aromatherapy and other CAM therapies at Parkland College for the past 4 years. She is also an author and public speaker.

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