



Frequently Asked Questions About Aromatherapy

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When I teach classes or give seminars, I find that many of the same questions come up on a regular basis. Here are some of those questions along with short, general answers that may be helpful in finding further information on this fascinating subject.

So, what is Aromatherapy? Aromatherapy is the art and science of utilizing the distilled extracts of aromatic plants to help heal the mind, body and spirit. These extracts are known as Essential Oils.

What are Essential Oils? Essential Oils are volatile, natural substances that are the actual immune system of the plants from which they are extracted. True Essential oil comes from plants rather than synthetic formulas. Essential Oils are antiseptic, antibiotic, anti-viral, anti-inflammatory, and contain many other medicinal properties which are both healing to our bodies and emotions.

How do Essential Oils work? Essential Oils can be applied to the skin when blended with a carrier oil, or the pure vapors may be inhaled. These Oils, when used, travel through the entire body, affecting our various systems: nervous, muscular, circulatory, endocrine, and lymphatic. And through our sense of smell, Essential Oils play an important role in balancing our moods and emotions, therefore helping to maintain overall well-being.

What should I look for in an Essential Oil? When buying Essential Oils, be sure that they are from a reputable manufacturer, to ensure you are getting the purest Oils available. Beware of the commonly marketed products that are labeled "aromatherapy", yet are actually synthetic perfumes. These inferior "commercialized" products have no therapeutic properties. A true Essential Oil will often have the Latin name of the plant on the label. True Essential Oils will vary in price depending on several factors.

What are some of the price factors? Simply put, the two most common ones are scarcity and method of extraction. An Essential Oil from a plant that is somewhat rare, containing components that are difficult to extract, will cost many times more than Essential Oil from a more common plant that has an easily extracted oil. Citrus oils, for example, are usually easily obtained and simple to extract and are therefore among the lower-priced (though no less effective) Essential Oils.

Should I sniff them or rub them in?

Both methods are very effective. When you rub them into the skin, whether individually in a base oil or as a blend, Essential Oils are absorbed by osmosis straight into the bloodstream. Potently antibiotic, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal (and somewhat anti-viral), each Essential oil also has its own therapeutic properties. Once inside the bloodstream, their molecules immediately begin remedial work on the cellular structure of the vital organs and immune system. Working this way, Essential Oils can help ease pain, soothe symptoms such as inflammation, cure infections, help re-build tissue, muscle and bone and recharge the immune defenses.

When you inhale Essential Oils, the fragrant aromas (aromatic molecules) interact with the olfactory membrane at the top of your nose, generating nerve impulses that travel into the limbic system. The limbic system contains all the regulatory mechanism that controls motivation, moods, memory and creativity as well as the autonomic nervous system. Different fragrance molecules contained in each Essential Oil stimulate the brain's cerebral cortex to release neurotransmitters. These immediately begin to neutralize the stress chemicals that clog the system to produce the problems.

Do they need to be diluted? Absolutely, especially when they are rubbed into the skin (transdermal absorption). The rule of thumb is 20 drops Essential Oil to two ounces of a carrier oil such as sweet almond oil.