

Aromatherapy 001



What is aromatherapy and what are the basics of essential oils? Here is a quick run down on the whats, why (nots), and hows of essential oils.

Aromatherapy is the use of essential oils for relief of physical, emotional, or mental ailments and conditions.

What are essential oils?

Essential oils are the concentrated oils from a particular plant. Oils can be extracted from many different parts of a plant depending on the specific plant type, i.e. bark, leaf, petal, or root. Essential oils are extracted from plants using distillation, or cold pressing. Think lemon, orange, and citrus peels for cold press; and lavender, rose, or flowers for distillation where it is more difficult to simply squeeze the oil out of a petal.

Every plant contains specific properties that characterize it as helpful in certain situations. These healing properties are available in concentrated form through essential oils. This makes essential oils effective and extremely powerful.

Essential Oil Safety

Because essential oils are highly concentrated forms of plants they are to be used with great care and knowledge. It is advised that essential oils NOT be ingested or taken internally. There are exceptions to this rule, of course, but any attempt at this should be closely monitored and directed by a trained professional. There are many essential oils that could seriously damage intestinal walls, and are simply not meant to be introduced into the body in this form.

Always dilute essential oils when you are using them topically (on your skin). There are, again, a

few exceptions to this rule, but as a general rule of thumb, it is best to dilute any essential oils you plan to put on your body in a vegetable oil; or in a mixture of water and an astringent.

Store essential oils in a tightly sealed container, and in a cool, dark area away from direct sunlight. Essential oils are extremely volatile and will evaporate quickly if left in heated and/or sunlit areas, as well as lose it's aroma and effectiveness.

Ways to Use Essential Oils

There are two ways to use essential oils:

1. Topically/ On your skin. Massage oils, body sprays, lotions, soaps and balms are great ways to harness the benefits of essential oils in ways that enhance the effectiveness of the particular carrier. Soaps, for example, can become more cleansing, or moisturizing depending on the essential oils used, not to mention provide the aromatic benefits while showering.
2. Aromatically/ In the air. By using essential oils a diffuser or in a room/linen spray you can utilize the health benefits of essential oils while altering the ambient energy of your immediate environment. Essential oils can be more subtle smelling than candles or fragrance sprays, but they work on a molecular level to change the particles in the air. Where fragrance oils and commercial deodorizers simply mask odors and introduce more chemicals into the environment, essential oils will actually work to alter the molecular structure of unpleasant or toxic particles.

This was a quick run down and only a taste of the awesomeness that are essential oils. Check back soon for more about specific oils, their uses, and how they may benefit you in everyday life.

What about you? Do you use essential oils? If so, how and what are your favorite ways to use them? If not, what are some of your EO questions or potential concerns?