

AROMATHERAPY TO REDUCE ALLERGIES

by Sabrea Munz

Allergies are estimated to affect approximately 50 million people in the United States. As many as 30 percent of adults and 40 per cent of children have allergies and the number of affected persons is rapidly increasing. While treatment by traditional doctors or with over the counter medicines is often successful in treating the symptoms of allergies (sneezing, itching, runny nose, coughing, fatigue, etc.), these symptoms can be reduced or alleviated by the use of essential oils.

Allergic reactions can be triggered by certain foods, pet dander, airborne pollen or venom from stinging insects, such as wasps and bees. Recent changes and increasing cost of health care lead many of the millions of allergy sufferers to treat their symptoms with essential oils.

The Mayo Clinic states that allergies occur when your immune system creates antibodies to a foreign substance that does not cause a reaction in most people, such as pollen, bee venom or pet dander. Antibodies are composed of protein that can identify and neutralize foreign substances that cause illness.

Numerous types of foreign substances enter the body and are called antigens. The antibody antigen reaction is a mechanism to protect the body from invasion of a wide variety of toxins, chemicals, bacteria, viruses, etc. Each type of antibody is unique and defends the body against one specific type of antigen. When you have

allergies, your immune system makes antibodies that identify a particular allergen (a hyper reactive antigen) as harmful, even though it isn't. When you come into contact with the allergen, your immune system's reaction can inflame your skin, sinuses, airways or digestive system. Symptoms depend on the substance involved and the amount of exposure to that substance.

Severity of allergic symptoms varies from person to person and can range from minor irritation to anaphylaxis, which is potentially a life-threatening emergency.

Allergy symptoms depend on the substance involved and can involve the airways, sinuses and nasal passages, skin, and digestive system. Large numbers of people take anti-histamines, decongestants or prescription medication during allergy season or year round to treat their allergy symptoms. Some take allergy shots throughout the year. Those seeking a more natural remedy treat their allergy symptoms with essential oils.

Essential oils have antihistamine, anti-inflammatory and anti-allergen properties that can help reduce uncomfortable symptoms and help a person be able to enjoy the changing seasons.

There are several ways that a person can use essential oils to reduce their allergy symptoms. Oils can be diffused (spread around or dispersed) using a diffuser, inhaled using a nasal inhaler, or applied topically.

A nebulizer diffuser is a device that takes essential oils and breaks them into separate molecules before dispersing the

smaller molecules into the room. It is said that these smaller molecules can be more readily absorbed by the lungs and have a greater therapeutic value than other types of diffusers.

Other diffusing methods can be done by adding several drops of essential oil on a cotton ball or tissue and allowed to evaporate into the air, or adding essential oils to a bowl of steaming water. This vaporizes the oil, and you can place a towel over your head and over the bowl of water and breathe deeply.

Oils are also diffused by placing several drops of essential oil onto a cotton ball or tissue and allowing it to evaporate into the air or by adding essential oils to a bowl of steaming water which vaporizes the oil. When vaporizing an essential oil, you can place a towel over your head and over the bowl of steam (taking care not to burn yourself) and breathe deeply.

Another method of using essential oils to treat allergy symptoms is to deliver them via a nasal inhaler. Place the specified oils into the inhaler, hold the inhaler just below one nostril and inhale, hold for a count of 5, then exhale. Inhale into the other nostril and proceed as previously described. This can be done 2 - 3 times in each nostril and repeated every 2 - 3 hours if needed. This procedure will help your body to absorb the oils into your bloodstream where they can then be delivered throughout the body and brain, as needed.

Topical application of essential oils can be applied to the skin a couple of ways to relieve allergy symptoms. It should first be diluted with a carrier oil to avoid sensitization. Then it can be applied to a dressing or directly to the effected area. Optional heat or cold can be applied.

Disperse cleaning oils Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), lemon (*Citrus limon*) and lavender (*Lavender officinalis*) throughout your home on a regular basis can help reduce pollens and allergens.

A few drops of Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus radiata*) added to a hot shower can help relieve seasonal allergy symptoms. It is most effective when applied topically and needs to be diluted prior to applying to the skin. To accomplish this, mix 1 drop of eucalyptus essential oil with 2-3 drops of carrier oil, such as fractionated coconut oil, and apply to the neck, chest or bottoms of feet.

A few essential oils that may be helpful in combating allergy symptoms include:

Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus radiata*) – helps to fight symptoms such as congestion, headaches and respiratory conditions. It is anti-inflammatory, disinfectant, and expectorant. When mixed with carrier oil such as grape seed, jojoba, or fractionated coconut oil, it can safely be applied topically to chest and throat areas. Eucalyptus oil should be used with care and people with high blood pressure and epilepsy should avoid it. Excessive use of this oil may cause headaches. Avoid with children less than 5 years of age. Avoid during pregnancy.

Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*)– helps to improve breathing by opening sinuses and airways, fights infection, relieves pain of headache and muscular pain, and has anti-inflammatory properties. Dilute with carrier oils and apply to temples for headache pain. Apply to back of neck to relieve stress and tension. It can cause irritation to the skin and

mucus membranes and should be kept well away from the eyes. It should be avoided during pregnancy and should not be used on children under five. Not for use in the bath.

Lemon (*Citrus limon*) – protects immunity, relieves respiratory issues. Excellent antibacterial agent, which makes it well suited for respiratory inflammation. Cleansing to the environment. Citrus oils can be photosensitive, so exercise caution with exposure to UV rays. Not for use in the bath.

Lavender (*Lavender officinalis*)– anti-inflammatory, builds immunity, eases muscle pain, and can act as a natural antihistamine. It has a very calming and relaxing, soothing aroma. Diffuse to help ease mental strain. Don't use with low blood pressure. Can use in 3rd trimester of pregnancy in low concentration (1% dilution) and moderation. Same for children.

Blue German Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*) – anti-inflammatory, relaxing, and eases inflammation. It is a powerful antispasmodic and muscle relaxant that can be used as an emergency remedy during asthma attacks, rub on solar plexus, wrists and temples. It is important to note that one should avoid Roman Chamomile if allergic to ragweed. It also has emmenagogue properties when used in high concentrations, so it should be avoided during pregnancy.

Blue Cypress (*Callitris intratropica*) – Antispasmodic and disinfectant. Helps to relieve breathing difficulties and suppress coughing. May benefit symptoms of Asthma. Best to avoid it during pregnancy. It is also best to do a skin patch test before using it in a massage blend.

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)– Can decrease respiratory symptoms such as constricted breathing, wheezing and coughing. Can be very beneficial for any kind of digestive issue or upset stomach. Can cause photosensitivity and skin irritation.

Combat allergies and relieve allergy symptoms using essential oils. By doing so, you may be able to avoid frequent trips to the doctor, heavy use of over the counter and prescription allergy medication or painful shots. Essential oils can contribute to your overall health and well-being. They are truly one of nature's great gifts to us.

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