

# 5 ESSENTIAL OILS YOU NEED IN YOUR MEDICINE CABINET

If you think essential oils are just for fragrance, think again.



RASĀYANA<sup>LLC</sup>

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Oils extracted from aromatic plants have been known as the oldest form of medicine to mankind. Egyptian hieroglyphics and Chinese manuscripts date essential oil use as far back as 1550 BC. Distilled from their respective parts (seeds, bark, leaves, stems, roots, fruits, or flowers), low pressure and low temperatures during the distillation process are key to maintaining the purity and therapeutic value of these oils. Other factors are: which part of the plant the oil was distilled from, soil condition, fertilizer used, geographic region, climate, altitude, and harvest season and methods.

Producing certified pure, therapeutic-grade essential oils are expensive because it may require several hundred pounds (or even several thousand pounds) of plant material to extract one pound of pure essential oil. So I make sure to use suppliers like [Floracopeia](#) or [doTERRA](#), who ensure sustainable agro-forestry practices and deliver the purest oils available on the market today. Most of their oils average \$30 per 15 ml of oil, with rare oils (i.e. Melissa oil) going for as much as \$100 for 3 ml.

Essential oils are nature's built-in mood stabilizers. They act on the Limbic system, known as the emotional center of the brain, which is strongly linked to smell. I think it important to mention because the vast amount of oils used are by the perfume industry, where so many plants are being exploited for their aromatic qualities only. Using high pressure, high temperature, rapid processing, as well as the use of chemical solvents often used during distillation (to yield a greater amount in a shorter time), may make some essential oils smell good and cost less - but they'll lack most, if not all, of the chemical constituents (i.e. Terpenes, esters, aldehydes, ketones) responsible for its therapeutic affect.

Essential oils create environments in which microbes cannot live. I use them to keep my stone warmer clean between multiple treatments in a given day. They're the active ingredient in my natural bug spray. I employ them for pest control in my garden. I rub them into sore muscles and infected teeth or toe nails. I inhale them after a long day when my patience is wearing thin, or when I'm trying to stay relaxed in a hot, stinky, crowded, loud space like the fish market in Kochi, India or the train station in Mumbai .

# Working Safely

Before getting started with your essential oils, it's good to know how to use them safely. In general, essential oils are quite safe and highly beneficial when used properly. However, because their uses are still relatively unknown, people can and do hurt themselves using these highly concentrated botanical substances improperly.

How an EO is absorbed into your body produces specific effects. The most powerful therapeutic effect is obtained via blood circulation and transport to central glands in the brain, responsible for emotional, neurological, and immunological functions. EO's can be absorbed in minute quantities thru the skin, via carrier oils and various dilutions, to address various skin conditions. EO's that are inhaled have a direct effect on the sinuses, throat, and lungs - making them helpful in respiratory conditions. Here are key things to keep in mind when working with essential oils (EOs):

- ☑ **Do not take EOs internally.** It is rare to find a physician in the United States who would prescribe a specific dose for internal consumption, and you should avoid taking EOs internally - especially if the practitioner's training is more from a marketing vs. clinical perspective.
- ☑ **Avoid prolonged exposure without ventilation.** Depending on your delivery method and sensitivity level, you could experience head ache, dizziness, or nausea. In my experience, exposure ranging from 5-60 minutes has not created problems.
- ☑ **Do not apply directly to your skin.** Skin reactivity is becoming more common as adulterants are often added to skin care products. Though there are some mild EO's like Lavender or Rose, a general rule is to dilute EOs in a carrier oil like jojoba or sesame, and always test patch an area of the skin with 1-2 drops before applying to the rest of the body.
- ☑ **Buy directly from the distiller.** There are many levels of buyers and sellers in the fragrance industry and as a general rule, the larger the EO company, the more likely the quality of the oil will be compromised. You want to look for some type of seed to seal guarantee, where the company discloses their commitment to sourcing and testing methods.
- ☑ **Do not use EOs on infants, children, or during pregnancy** without the supervision of a trained practitioner.
- ☑ **Avoid direct UV light** exposure immediately after EO application



# Choosing Your Delivery Method



## Diffuser

Any device that uses evaporation of liquid to release a scent into the air, is a diffuser. Diffusers accomplish the evaporation in a few different ways: via heat (like a burning candle or electric vaporizer), via ventilation (when air passes over an EO-soaked reed or pad), via humidification (when water is mixed with EO to create a mist distributed by a fan), or via atomizer/nebulizer (which uses a high velocity and pressurized air stream), making their quick evaporation process a favorite among respiratory therapists.

## Baths

Before dropping essential oils in the bath, mix them first with salts or an emulsifier such as milk or sesame oil. Bath salts disperse the oils safely into the water, while milk and sesame oil emulsify the EO so that it disperses. Without them, drops of EOs float on the water and then directly onto the skin. Combined with the heat of the bath, this can cause dermatotoxicity, especially if the oils are of a heating nature. Floracopeia recommends a generally safe dose of 5 - 10 drops, mixed with ½ to 1 cup of salt or emulsifier.

## Compress

Good for bumps and bruises, muscle soreness, painful periods. A safe dose is 8 drops EO in 5 oz. warm water. Soak cotton or linen and apply to affected area for 10-15 minutes.

## Massage

As a bodyworker, this is my favorite delivery method. I work with EOs regionally on the body, and generally dilute my therapeutic EOs 1-3% for adults, mixing 5-15 drops EO per ounce of carrier oil like sesame or organic jojoba oil. I also recommend you perform a patch test on the back of the wrist and wait 10 minutes for any potential reaction, before applying in larger areas of your body.

## Direct palm inhalation

Working only with gentle oils that can be applied directly to the skin, such as lavender or rose, rub 2 drops EO between your palms and hold them up to your face. Inhale deeply.

# My Five Faves



**Lavender** (*Lavandula angustifolia*) Steam distilled from the flowering top, this analgesic is most recognized for its cell regeneration and psycho-emotional calming or sedative properties. I typically dilute a 1-2 drops in 15 drops of base oil to provide a general sense of well-being for my clients. It can also be applied neat (no dilution) on bites/stings, burns, blisters, chicken pox, or diaper rash. Known as an adaptogen, the divine healing properties of this plant will work wherever it is needed most in the body. I've also diluted 6 drops into 1 oz. water in a small misting spray bottle and used it as a linen spray, lightly spritzing my pillow cases and sheets before bedtime



**Rosemary** (*Rosmariunus officinalis*) Steam distilled from the flowering plant, this powerful antioxidant is one of my 'top guns' for respiratory distress including bronchitis and sinusitis. It is an arterial vasodilator, also commonly used for low blood pressure, along with anti-inflammatory properties used in arthritis and cancer treatment. I dilute use this primarily in the winter, opening up the sinuses and the conscious mind, and stimulating memory - or I pour a few drops next to my drain during a steamy shower and practice Kalabati pranayama. I've also applied it neat to inflamed joints. \*Good for Kapha constitutions.

## My 5 Faves



**Rose (*Rosa damascena*)** Steam distilled from the flowers, this anti-hemorrhagic, anti- infectious oil has been used for several things ranging from digestive and menstrual problems, to headaches, and skin complaints. I apply this one neat, on pulse points or the soles of the feet (for fast absorption into the body). It provides emotional balance and is good to apply topically to poison ivy/oak to prevent scarring. \*Good for Vata, Pitta, and Kapha.



**Clove (*Eugenia caryophyllata*)** Steam distilled from bud and stem, this is a strong antiseptic that helps pull infection from tissues and has been historically used for toothaches and intestinal parasites. I use it primarily to aid in muscle aches and pains as it supports the cardiovascular system and stimulates blood flow in fatigued areas. \*Good for Kapha



**Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*)** Steam distilled from leaves, I use this one for its antispasmodic and cortisone-like action in joints and muscles. Especially good in treating arthritic pain, cartilage injury, bone spurs, muscle pain and cramping, and tendonitis. This one is a key player in my deep tissue massages.