

Essential oils may be used for a variety of purposes including culinary, cosmetic, aromatic, and cleaning. The following guide provides general essential oil usage tips. Please note however, that usage may vary depending on the oil being used and the desired outcome. It is recommended to consult with a qualified aroma therapist to obtain specific recommendations. Essential oils are very concentrated, making them very potent and often require dilution before being used topically, for cleaning, and for aromatic purposes. Be sure to follow the recommended use, and consult with your health care provider prior to use if you have any health concerns. Information is readily available online and through other means. However, make sure the information is from a reputable source and backed by reliable scientific evidence.

Once opened, some essential oils, such as citrus oils, should be stored in the fridge to help preserve the efficacy of the oil. Other oils, such as tea tree, should be stored in the fridge to help prevent potentially irritating compounds from forming. Carefully read and follow the storage instructions for each oil. Keep all oils out of the reach of children.

Aromatic Use:

Aromatic use alone may provide significant benefits. Benefits may be limited to simply providing a pleasing scent, but may also promote physical and psychological well-being such as provide calming or invigorating feelings. Using oils aromatically can involve very simple methods or can utilize specialized equipment. Note that aromatic methods which do not heat the essential oil are typically regarded as the most ideal, since heating the oil may destroy some of the oil's components.

Simple forms of aromatic use include:

- Place a little oil in a cotton ball and hold it up to your nose
- Rub some oil into your hands and cup them over your nose
- Add a few drops to a warm bath
- Place a few drops in warm water, cover head and water with a towel, and inhale
- Add drops to potpourri
- Mixed into wax and burn
- Heat oil on a candle warmer or light bulb ring

The following are the common types of diffusers:

- A nebulizing diffuser releases whole essential oil particles into the air. While it is typically regarded as the most potent diffuser, due to its ability to release highly concentrated amounts of whole essential oils, most experts recommend to only use it for shorter durations. A nebulizing diffuser may use significantly more oil and is often louder than other diffusers.
- An ultrasonic diffuser converts water into vapor without heating it; the water then carries the essential oil throughout the air. An ultrasonic diffuser does not spread oils as quickly or efficiently as a nebulizing diffuser; but provides the added benefit of humidifying the area it is used in and may be used for prolonged durations.
- An evaporative diffuser blows air over an essential oil, causing the oil to evaporate quickly. This form of diffuser is often less expensive and not very loud; but has been criticized because it may not release all parts of the essential oil at the same time since the most volatile components evaporate first and the least evaporate last, thereby decreasing its aromatic value.
- A heat diffuser functions like an evaporative diffuser but uses small amounts of heat instead of air to release the essential oils. The drawbacks and benefits are similar to an evaporative diffuser. The use of heat may make this the least desirable diffuser for aromatic purposes.

Topical Use:

Topical and aromatic use of essential oils provide similar effects, because topical use provides aromatic benefits and aromatic use causes small amounts of oil to make contact with the skin and mucus membranes, thereby providing a topical benefit. Studies have noted that topical use of oils provides benefits independent of the aromatic effect of the oil, possibly due to absorption of oils through the skin.

Some essential oils may be applied neat (directly to the skin). Others should be diluted with a carrier oil, such as a jojoba, sunflower, grape seed, coconut, almond, or olive oil to prevent skin irritation, photosensitization, or other adverse reactions. Be sure to carefully follow the dilution instructions that come with your oil. Additionally, dilution provides the added benefit of applying an essential oil evenly over a large area of skin, and can be done even for those that require no dilution. If you have never used a particular oil topically before, be sure to patch test it on a small area of skin, such as your forearm before applying to a larger area to ensure you don't experience any adverse reactions to the oil. When using essential oils topically, do not apply near eyes. If oil gets in your eye, flush with milk or carrier oil.

The following are ways to apply essential oils topically:

- Add to hot or cold compress and apply to skin
- Massage into skin
- Mix into lotion or other personal care product and apply to skin
- Place a small amount on a cotton ball or cotton swab and apply to a specific area

Internal Use:

Some essential oils may be used to add flavor and aroma to foods. While some individuals may also use essential oils internally as a dietary supplement, be sure to follow recommended use directions and consult with your health care provider prior to consuming products if you have any medical concerns. Be advised that some essential oils, such as eucalyptus and tea tree, may be toxic when consumed. Keep all essential oils out of reach of children.

Cleaning:

Essential oils should generally be diluted when used for cleaning. Also, be sure to test a small amount of essential oil on the surface before using it, as some essential oils including citrus and eucalyptus can strip varnish off of furniture. Some essential oils well suited to cleaning include: bergamot, eucalyptus, geranium, grapefruit, lavender, lemon, rosemary, and tea tree.

- Create home cleaning products by mixing essential oil with vinegar, alcohol, unscented cleaning solution, or baking soda and water.
- Add a few drops of essential oil to a damp cloth and put it in the dryer with your laundry.
- Freshen up garbage cans, drains, toilet bowl, etc. with a few drops essential oil.
- Use essential oil in a diffuser to purify the air (especially helpful for pet odor or cigarette smoke).
- Add essential oils to blotting paper to deodorize shoes, drawers, or other small spaces.
- Add a few drops to a wet cloth and wipe down surfaces such as counters, floors, walls, and fridge interiors. Many essential oils have been shown to have antibacterial and/or antifungal properties. With their refreshing aromas and pure ingredients, essential oils are a great alternative to traditional cleaning products.
- Some essential oils can be infused into sanitizers or soaps to clean hands and reduce the spread of germs.
- Apply essential oil directly to skin or dilute in carrier oil, depending on the oil and skin sensitivity to cleanse skin and leave skin feeling refreshed and with a healthy appearance.

Essential Oil Safety:

- Not all essential oils are deemed safe for internal use. Be sure to read usage instructions carefully and use as directed.
- Many essential oils are best when diluted with a carrier oil. Be sure to follow recommended use and patch test prior to full use.
- Keep essential oils out of the reach of young children and even pets. Essential oils are highly concentrated and should not be used without adult supervision. When using on children or pets, apply a very small amount of diluted oil to test for skin sensitivity.
- Essential oils should not be used in the eyes, inside the ear canal, or on open wounds. In the event of accidental contact with the eye, dilute with vegetable oil NOT water (milk will work, as well).
- Discontinue use of an essential oil if you experience severe skin, stomach, respiratory or other discomfort from using the oil. To lessen effects from skin discomfort (including redness or irritation), apply vegetable oil to the affected area.
- Essential oils are best rubbed on the bottoms of the feet versus the palm of the hands, as when used on the hands the oil may be transferred to the eyes or mouth.
- Essential oils are best when stored in dark containers in a cool, dark place. Refrigeration may prolong the quality efficacy of some oils, especially citrus and tea tree.
- Consult your physician before using essential oils if you are pregnant, nursing or under a doctor's care.

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