

Essential oils and their use in Cosmetic Products

Essential Oils are highly concentrated liquids extracted from plants. The term 'essential' indicates that the oil carries the distinctive perfume of the plant. The oils are usually extracted from the plant by distillation although this isn't the only method.

Traditionally the oils have been used in many different ways including medicines, skin and hair treatments, food preparations, drinks and perfumes.

Many common essential oils are reported to have medicinal properties that have been applied in folk medicine since ancient times and are still widely used today. For example, some essential oils have antiseptic properties; some are stronger and more effective than others. The claims are supported in some studies and unconfirmed in others.

Whilst manufacturers may not make claims on their products that the product will heal, uplift or otherwise, many people will still search out a product that contains a particular essential oil if they believe that the properties of that oil will help them.

Because of their concentrated nature, essential oils should not be applied directly to the skin, hair or scalp in their undiluted or "neat" form. Occasionally, the use of essential oils can cause an allergic reaction on the scalp - it is wise to carry out a patch test first using essential oil diluted in a carrier oil.

Certain oils should be avoided during pregnancy. These include Basil, Cedarwood, Cinnamon, Clary sage, Clove, Juniper, Lemongrass, Peppermint and Rosemary.

If in doubt about the use of essential oils, always seek professional advice.



Safety Precautions when Handling Essential Oils

Although essential oils can be used to the great benefit of your general health, it must always be kept in mind that they are potent compounds. There are also some that should not be used on the body nor ingested because of their high oral and dermal toxicity. We would not supply these to you in any of our lessons or courses.

If you accidentally spill essential oils - Clean any spillage with an absorbent material such as kitchen roll.

If you accidentally get essential oils in your eye - Flush with copious amounts of MILK for at least 15 minutes and seek medical advice if symptoms persist.

If you accidentally swallow essential oils - Rinse mouth with MILK and seek medical attention.

Handling - Do not eat, drink or smoke when handling. Respect good personal hygiene.

Always mix with carrier oil before applying to the skin. Never apply to inflamed or broken skin. Do not use neat on skin.

Do not take internally. If pregnant seek medical advice before using.

Storage - Store in a cool, dry place away from heat and direct sunlight. Always use original containers. Avoid contact with polished surfaces and plastic.

Keep essential oils away from children and pets

Essential oils can be used in several ways:

Inhalation - place one to five drops on a handkerchief, in a vaporiser or diffuser, or on a light-bulb ring and inhale the aroma

Baths - add 4 to 6 drops of essential oil to one teaspoon (5g) of carrier oil (such as sweet almond or wheatgerm), add to bathwater and stir vigorously

Massage - add 1 to 5 drops of essential oil to one teaspoon (5g) of carrier oil and massage into the affected area. Carrier oils include sweet almond, wheatgerm, olive oil, apricot kernel, avocado or other plant or vegetable oils. Warming the oil increases absorption

Compresses - add 3 to 5 drops of essential oil to 300g of hot/warm water. Soak a clean flannel in the water, squeeze out excess water and apply to affected part of the body (cold for bruises, sprains, headaches; warm for abscesses, boils, period pains, cystitis). Repeat two to three times a day until the condition improves

Steam treatments - add 1 to 2 drops of essential oil to a medium-sized bowl of freshly boiled water. Cover head with cloth, lean over the water and inhale the steam, taking care to keep the bowl steady and to not get too close to the water to prevent scalding

Room Fragrancer - add 5 to 10 drops of essential oil to a teaspoon of carrier oil in an oil burner

As always, use caution if you have allergies or a family history of allergies. If you think you may be allergic to an oil, do a patch test first.

Further tips for using Essential Oils:

- Place 1 or 2 drops of Clary Sage on your pillow before retiring to promote restful sleep.
- Add 1 drop Frankincense oil to your facial moisturiser to bring out a radiant glow in your skin
- When washing out the fridge, freezer, or oven, add 1 drop of Lemon essential oil to the final rinse water
- Place 1 or 2 drops of Rosemary on your hair brush before brushing to promote healthy hair
- Place a few drops of Geranium on cotton wool balls and place inside a pair of trainers and leave over night to help freshen
- Ease headache pain by rubbing one drop of neat Lavender oil onto your temples
- To enhance a candle, place a drop of any essential oil on the candle **BEFORE** you light it
- Place a few drops of Peppermint oil on the floor to repel ants

The oils should be stored in a cool, dry place, out of the reach of children.

Never take essential oils internally unless specifically instructed by a qualified practitioner.

Patch Test - Before using any of the products you make you should consider carrying out a patch test. This involves placing a little of the product on the skin of the inner arm. If, after 24 hours, there is no redness, itchiness or adverse reaction to the product, then hoorah, it is ok to use!

If you do suffer a reaction, it will not be as strong or as embarrassingly noticeable in this area as it would be if you had tried the product on your face.

