

THE ULTIMATE BEGINNERS GUIDE TO ESSENTIAL OILS

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Do essential oils really work?

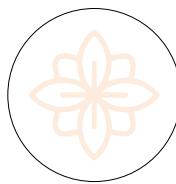
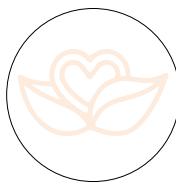
What are essential oils and aromatherapy?

Aromatherapy is the practice of using essential oils for therapeutic benefit.

Essential oils are extracted from flowers, herbs, leaves, roots, fruit and seeds and are used to support physical and mental health. Essential oils work together with the body to create health-promoting effects. Because of the natural origin, uniqueness, complexity and volatility of these compounds (they evaporate quickly), they are nearly impossible to make in a laboratory.

Essential oils are concentrated and powerful. They are extracted directly from the plant by steam distillation or cold pressing and are then packaged. The volatility of essential oils makes them uniquely special. They are able to evaporate easily at room temperature, making them perfect for home use—especially in an aroma diffuser.

One of the easiest, safest ways to use essential oils is in an aroma diffuser.



How do essential oils work?

By understanding the basics of essential oils and how they work, you will know how to use them effectively in your everyday life.

When inhaled, the scent molecules in essential oils travel from the olfactory nerves cells in the nose directly to the brain. Here they impact the amygdala, the emotional centre of the brain where our memories and emotions are created and stored. As such, essential oils have the ability to affect our moods and emotions.

A report from the National Institute of Health (NIH, 2020) also noted some positive physiological effects on the body when essential oils are inhaled.

Essential oils can also be applied to the skin. When used topically, they are absorbed and travel around the body via the bloodstream. In doing so, they are able to deliver a range of benefits to the body's systems and organs.



What does the research say?

Essential oils aren't a new idea; they have been used by humans for over 5000 years. We have only just scratched the surface in understanding their potential benefits. Until recently, the knowledge and benefits of essential oils have been primarily based on personal experience and passed on by word of mouth.

However, over the last few years, there has been an increasing amount of scientific research done on essential oils. This has led to many of the positive effects and benefits of essential oils being confirmed and documented.

Below is a summary of studies on the most commonly used essential oils and their reported effects.

Essential Oil

Reported effects in studies

Bergamot

Reduces stress, helps relieve anxiety, helps treat mood disorders, soothing, promotes hair growth, can increase the skin's collagen content

Eucalyptus

Wound healing, antimicrobial, antiseptic, cleansing

Frankincense

Balancing for the skin, may improve bowel function, may help relieve asthma symptoms

Geranium

Reduces skin ageing, reduces oxidative damage (improves the body's antioxidant defences), can increase the saliva concentration of estrogen

Grapefruit

Reduced weight gain, antibacterial, disease prevention

Lavender

Anxiety-relieving, antidepressant, analgesic, antifungal, antibacterial

Lemon

Analgesic, may reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, may reduce nausea and morning sickness, may improve skin health

Lemongrass

Anti-inflammatory, treatment of inflammatory skin conditions

Peppermint

Analgesic, antibacterial, soothes itchy skin, helps improve headaches

Spruce

Soothing, stress relieving, reduces anxiety, antiseptic, prevents and treats respiratory problems and muscle aches

Sweet Orange

Relieves stress and anxiety, antidepressant, analgesic, antibacterial against certain bacteria

Tea tree

Antimicrobial (antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral), effective against mites, treats acne

How to use essential oils

When it comes to using essential oils, there are three main application methods: aromatic use, topical use and internal use. Thankfully, you don't need to be an expert to enjoy the wide variety of benefits that essential oils offer. All you need is a basic understanding of how to safely and simply use essential oils throughout your daily routines.

Using essential oils aromatically

Using essential oils aromatically is as easy as breathing. If you use an oil aromatically, it simply means you're experiencing the aroma of the oil through the air. Aromatic use typically involves breathing in or inhaling the essential oil via a diffuser.

An aroma diffuser is one of the safest and most popular ways to use essential oils. Oil diffusers are designed to disperse aromas and essential oils indoors. They can help increase your energy levels, improve your awareness, and help you keep calm, all at the push of a button.

Another major benefit of diffusing is that essential oils can purify the air. By using oils with purifying properties, you can dispel unwanted odours and replace them with pure, pleasant aromas.



Many of the air-purifying products on the market—like candles or air fresheners—contain toxins and synthetic chemicals, which makes using essential oils even more desirable. If you use high-quality oils that are free from contaminants and fillers, they provide a safe, natural way to purify the air in any room, avoiding having to inhale harmful toxins.

Essential oils like Tea Tree, Lemon, and Eucalyptus are particularly known for their cleansing and purifying properties.

What is a diffuser and how does it work?

A diffuser disperses essential oils into the air and fills the space with natural aromas. Using a diffuser allows you to safely enjoy the many benefits that essential oils offer—in the easiest way possible.

In each diffuser you will find a small ceramic plate that creates a cool, odourless water vapour when vibrated, just like the mist you find around a waterfall. When you add essential oils, this vibration breaks the essential oils into microscopic particles.

The diffuser spreads this mist of water and essential oil out into the air you breathe.



Using essential oils topically

Applying essential oils topically, or on the skin, is an effective way of reaping the benefits essential oils offer the skin and other parts of the body. Due to their chemical composition, essential oils can penetrate the skin—the body's largest organ—and travel through the body.

While essential oils are easily absorbed by the skin, it is safer and more beneficial to mix your essential oils with a carrier oil to slow evaporation, while simultaneously moisturising the skin.



What is a carrier oil?

Carrier oils are substances that can dilute essential oils. As the name suggests, a carrier oil will literally “carry” the essential oils, allowing them to be applied easily to your chosen area. Diluting an oil for topical application will not make it less effective. When you dilute an essential oil, it enhances the absorption, which maximises the topical benefits.

One of the most important reasons to use a carrier oil is to prevent skin reactions without lowering the essential oil’s efficacy.

Ideally, a carrier oil should be a pure vegetable oil so that it doesn’t damage the chemical makeup of the essential oil.

There are many different carrier oils to choose from, and each of these oils has its own unique properties and benefits. The best carrier oil will depend on your skin type, as well as your individual preferences. Some common ones include Jojoba Oil, Rosehip Oil and Olive Oil.

Using essential oils internally

Both aromatic and topical application of essential oils are easy to do. When you long to feel energised, calm or focused, aromatic usage provides simple and quick access. When you want to soothe or nourish, topical usage is hugely effective.

This begs the question, why use essential oils internally?

When you ingest an oil, it directly enters your bloodstream through your gastrointestinal tract, where it's then processed by the liver and distributed throughout your body. The oils are absorbed and transported to your organs, including the brain—where they can take effect.

Despite the benefits, we caution against using essential oils internally.

The body can only handle essential oils—which are incredibly potent—in appropriate doses, and the safe dosage levels and speed of absorption are very different depending on whether they are used topically or taken internally. As such, we advise this should be left to a medical professional to prescribe and should not be tried at home.



Using essential oils in everyday life

Who can use essential oils?

Essential oils can be used by virtually anyone. Essential oils have the ability to change our mood, help us get a better night's sleep or feel more relaxed, focused or energetic.

There are many ways in which essential oils can be very helpful in the treatment of many mild ailments. From pain relief to mental health issues, the benefits of essential oils—which are still largely undiscovered—stretch far and wide.

While essential oils can be used by almost anyone, there are safe ways

to use essential oils. If pregnant or breastfeeding, speak to a qualified aromatherapist. If you have any serious health issues or allergies, it is best to consult a medical practitioner first.

Most essential oil users don't only use essential oils for their wellness benefits. Essential oils can also be used for those who want to set a fresher, more dynamic mood in their home. A cosy home is a home that smells good.



The main benefits of using essential oils

Essential oils have a multitude of proven health benefits. While they have been used for the last 5000 years, only a fraction of their benefits have been discovered. Below we'll uncover the most popular benefits of essential oils.

Essential oils and sleep

While scientific research on how aromatherapy affects sleep is still limited, many studies have shown that essential oils have a dramatic impact on the quality and consistency of sleep.

Our sense of smell is connected directly to the brain's centre for memories and emotions, otherwise known as the limbic system. As you inhale the aromas of essential oils, they are detected by cells inside the nose which send the information to the brain through the olfactory nerve. This information goes directly to the brain's limbic system, where it has the ability to impact our emotional reactions and memories.

For better sleep: Lavender, Frankincense, Spruce, Cedarwood



Essential oils and relaxation

Similar to helping with sleep, aromatherapy can effectively reduce stress and usher in relaxation. The aroma is picked up by sensors in the nose that are directly connected to the brain's limbic system. This system controls the body's emotions and memories. Soothing scents can guide the body into relaxation. Essential oils can be used in tandem with massage, yoga or meditation.

For stress relief and more relaxation: Lavender, Geranium, Ylang Ylang



Essential oils and energy

Essential oils are also a great way to boost your energy levels.

They can stimulate your senses, give you energy and make you feel revitalised.

Citrus essential oils have a tremendous effect on uplifting energy levels given that they stimulate the area of the brain that promotes happiness and a better mood.

For more energy: Grapefruit, Sweet Orange, Bergamot, Lime



Essential oils and focus

Some essential oils offer a stimulating jumpstart to mental activity and alertness. Research shows they help prevent the breakdown of acetylcholine, a chemical in the brain that's essential for concentration and memory. Herbal aromas also help by encouraging deep breathing. This oxygenates the brain, creating alertness and focus.

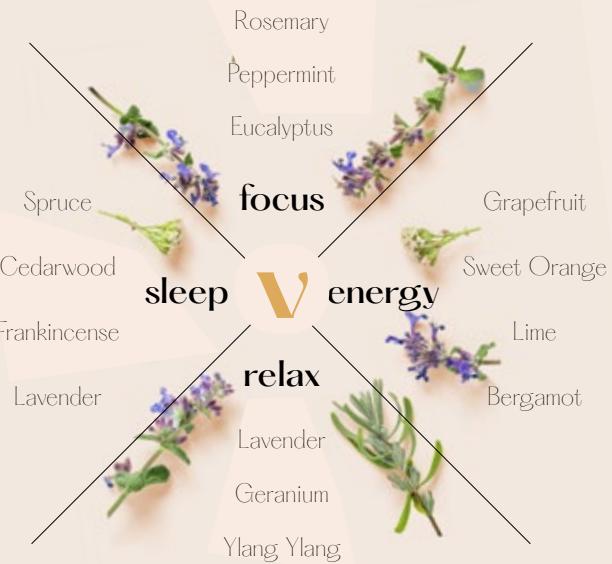
For better focus: Rosemary, Peppermint, Eucalyptus

A 5-step guide to the safe and effective use of essential oils

Step 1

Find your perfect oil

Think about what you want to achieve by using essential oils. If you have a busy daily life, then the perfect oil is one to help you relax. If you need more energy, then your ideal essential oil will be uplifting and invigorating. If you battle to fall asleep or you have difficulty concentrating, select an oil with the complementary properties.



Step 2

How to make the most of your essential oils

The safest, most effective way to use essential oils is in an aroma diffuser. A diffuser will fill your home with the aroma of essential oils, including the air you breathe. A diffuser gives you the same refreshing feeling as standing by a waterfall because of the mist it emits, while adding essential oils to the air you breathe.

If you are considering getting a diffuser, you need an efficient, high-quality diffuser. Quality is paramount. It's important to pick one that effectively disperses the oil and controls how much oil is dispersed and where it goes. Design is also important. Select a diffuser that complements your decor and makes you excited to switch on.

Step 3

User tips for essential oils

Other effective ways to use and benefit from essential oils apart from using a diffuser:

- Using a spray bottle, mist your pillow with an essential oil sleep blend before bedtime to help you fall asleep faster.
- Mix a few drops of Grapefruit essential oil in with your massage oil, and massage it into your skin for an energy boost.
- Add some Eucalyptus essential oil onto your towel to create spa moments in your home.
- Add Bergamot essential oil to a warm bath to get a relaxing muscle treatment.
- Use Tea Tree essential oil on your fingernails and toenails after a shower to keep your nails healthy.
- Spray your mattress, car, closet or the air with a mixture of Lavender essential oil and water. (There's a risk of bacterial 12 contamination unless used up quickly...)

Step 4

Create routines to maximise the effects

One of the biggest benefits of using essential oils and diffusers comes with establishing a routine. Your body and mind can easily be trained to associate given scents to given states. Just think about how the smell of a flower can remind you of your grandparents' garden, or of how a perfume can remind you of your first crush.

By diffusing given aromas at certain times, you can train your body and mind to respond to that scent. For example, if you diffuse Lavender essential oil in your bedroom before bedtime, you will very likely become sleepy when you smell the scent of Lavender.



Step 5

Test and find favourites and DIY blends

Even if you find something you like on your first try, remember that there are many different oils out there. It's fun to try out new scents, and you should give most of them a try. One of the major current trends when it comes to essential oils is DIY (Do It Yourself). A bit of searching online and on blogs can help you learn how to blend different oils to find your perfect mix, or just experiment on your own and come up with your personalised blends!



Essential oils and children

Essential oils can also offer a wide range of benefits to children too. Some of these include encouraging sleep, calming anxiety and relieving the symptoms of colic.

You should always take care when using essential oils around children. Essential oils should never be ingested so it's vital to keep them out of the reach of children at all times. If you think your baby or child may have ingested essential oils, you should seek emergency medical care.

If your child has any underlying health conditions, it's important that you consult their medical provider before using any essential oils to ensure that the oils are not contraindicated with their medical condition or treatment plans.

If you want to use essential oils personally which aren't suitable for use around children, you can choose to use an aromatherapy inhaler. This will allow you to benefit from your chosen essential oils without your child inhaling the scent.

Essential oils should never be used around babies under three months of age due to their delicate body systems.



Essential oils and animals

Our pets are as unique as we are!

Most essential oils are safe to use in a diffuser around animals. This may, however, depend on the type of animal. Cats are typically more sensitive to essential oils than dogs.

As a general rule of thumb, essential oils must be used with caution around pets. Essential oils such as Eucalyptus, Lemon, Grapefruit and Sweet Orange must be used with care as they usually have very strong aromas. If you wish to use these oils, it's recommended that you reduce the amount of oil in the diffuser.

It is not recommended to leave the diffuser on when your pets are home alone, as it might agitate them. Never let any of your pets ingest essential oils. It's always advised to have a door open so your pets can leave the room if they feel uncomfortable. For more specific pet-related information, please contact your local veterinarian.



What not to do when using essential oils

Top 4 mistakes to avoid when using essential oils

1. Assuming that all essential oils are equally effective

Not all essential oils are made the same—quality and purity vary between companies. Some companies sell cheaper essential oils, but remember, you usually get what you pay for. Cheaper oils may not be as effective, or may even be diluted. The more costly ones will usually reflect a much higher quality.

2. Unnecessary internal use of essential oils

Yes, some berries, flowers, leaves and roots are edible, but unless you have picked them in the garden or purchased them at a supermarket, you should be cautious of eating them at random. The same rule goes for essential oils.

Essential oils come directly from plant extracts and are very concentrated and strong.

Essential oils lend themselves to being used aromatically, and using them in a diffuser is one of the safest way.

Doctor Yufang Lin, an integrative medicine specialist at the Cleveland Clinic, warns against swallowing essential oils: "I love aromatherapy," says Dr. Lin. Men, "but I usually warn people against swallowing essential oil because it's a strong medicine... It's easy to take too much, too fast without realising it. Then it can be toxic."

3. Applying essential oils directly on the skin without testing for sensitivity

For many, applying essential oils on the skin is part of a routine for pain relief. But they should not be used undiluted, as your skin could become irritated. Before applying essential oils to your skin, it's important to mix them with a carrier oil. The proportion of essential oil should be a maximum of 3%. TWO drops added to 10 ml of carrier oil corresponds to 1% of essential oil. Remember to test how sensitive your skin is before applying essential oil to it. This can be done by gradually applying an essential oil mixed with carrier oil to your skin.



4. Going out into the sun after applying essential oils on your skin

Some essential oils contain chemical compounds that increase the UV sensitivity of the skin. This is especially true of citrus oils such as Lime, Lemon, Grapefruit and especially Bergamot. As a general rule, you should not go out into direct sunlight or a solarium for 12 hours after applying essential oils to your skin.

Organic vs. non-organic essential oils



**Are organic vs non-organic oils really that different?
And should I care? The short answer is yes.**

Non-organic oils are extracted from plants that are grown with pesticides and other toxic chemicals. While these oils may be kinder to your wallet, they certainly don't do your health or the environment any favours.

Going organic ensures the essential oils you use are free from pesticides. These products are ethically sourced and chemical free - they're good for the environment and good for you!

Because not all essential oils are created with utmost purity and authenticity in mind, you must be your own advocate when it comes to sourcing quality organic essential oils. Following are some tips to ensure you are buying organic essential oils.



Tips when buying essential oils

1. Check the bottle

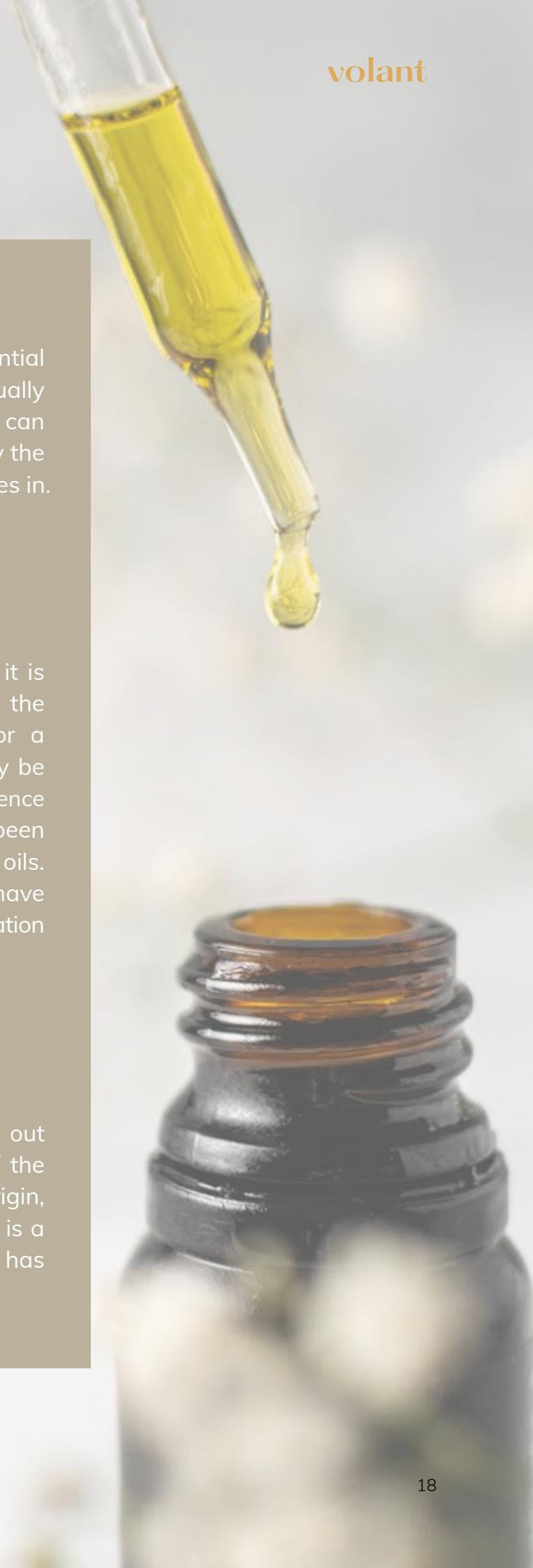
A quality supplier will sell their essential oils in a tightly sealed, dark (usually amber) bottle. Light and heat can damage essential oils, which is why the bottle needs to ensure no light comes in.

2. Read the label

The label should also specify that it is “100% pure essential oil” and list the ingredients. If you’re shopping for a pure essential oil, there should only be one ingredient. If the label says “essence or fragrance oil,” it’s likely it’s been pre-mixed with a blend of other oils. Many reputable brands will also have some type of accreditation or certification noting authenticity.

3. Verify the source

You should be able to easily find out where the oil was sourced from. If the label doesn’t mention country of origin, check the company’s website. This is a great way to see if the essential oil has been ethically sourced.



Conclusion

As a beginner, it's normal to feel overwhelmed by all the information on essential oils.

Always remember that essential oils have been and continue to be used safely by millions of people every day.

After reading this guide you have all the information you need to start exploring the benefits of essential oils safely and effectively.

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