

Aromatherapy and how it can support our immune system

The human body together with all its components is truly formidable when we consider how much it does for us, how it functions and how it supports us. We have our own built in defence system, our immune system that is designed to protect us from any harmful intruders and helps us to stay robust and well. This article will introduce you to a variety of essential oils and their healing benefits that can help contribute towards a healthy immune system complementing other measures such as rest, nutrition and exercise to name a few.

Protecting our respiratory health

One of the main ways that intruders such as cold viruses enter our bodies is through our noses and our mouths. The upper respiratory tract comprises of the nose, nasal sinuses, mouth, pharynx and larynx. When we consider how much our noses and mouths are exposed to, on a daily basis, it is not surprising that these areas can become easily infected and upper respiratory tract infections are common. Research has shown that essential oils are effective for treating respiratory problems and good at alleviating the symptoms of flu, colds, sore throats, tonsillitis and other infections, and it is not surprising that many remedies contain essential oils.

Therapeutic properties of essential oils to support our immune health



Essential oils are derived from different parts of an array of plants and trees, including citrus trees, herbs, spices, medicinal plants and flowers. They each have their own unique therapeutic properties that can really support our immune health. Effective oils for respiratory conditions are tree oils, such as pine and eucalyptus where the oils come from leaves, resins and woods and other anti-microbial oils including lavender, lemon, lemon scented eucalyptus, niaouli, rosemary, tea tree and thyme.

Some essential oils are known as immunostimulants and these work in two ways: they can directly obstruct harmful micro-organisms, and they can stimulate the immune system. Essential oils such as bergamot, eucalyptus, lavender, lemon, niaouli, rosemary, tea tree and thyme act against a variety of bacteria and viruses whilst increasing the immune response. Some essential oils such as basil, Virginian cedarwood, cypress, eucalyptus and thyme are anti-spasmodic. These oils help relax the bronchioles of the lungs and are supportive for asthma, dry coughs and whooping cough. Anti-tussive essential oils, such as cypress, eucalyptus, hyssop and peppermint are those that help prevent coughing and sooth irritability in the respiratory system. Essential oils such as ginger are expectorants and have stimulating and warming properties, which help dry up excessive production of catarrh, literally helping to get things off your chest. Other expectorants include Atlas cedarwood, frankincense, hyssop, myrrh and pine.

Effective methods for our respiratory health

Inhalation is a really great way of getting the essential oil molecules into our respiratory system. The easiest way to do this is to put some boiling water in a bowl adding a couple of drops of the essential oil. Placing a towel over your head helps you to inhale the scented steam. This is excellent even if you haven't got a cold as it gives your respiratory system a deep cleanse. A couple of drops added to a tissue or your pillow can also be very helpful. Sitting in a hot aromatic bath which has essential oils can also be very soothing and supportive as you are not only inhaling the aroma of the essential oils, but the oils are penetrating the skin and being absorbed into blood stream. Essential oils added

directly to the bath will not disperse, will sit on the surface of the water and can cause irritation to the skin. It is advisable to first add a couple of drops of essential oils to a base oil (for example sweet almond oil or grapeseed oil), which can then be added to the water to help disperse the essential oils and to help them to be absorbed into the skin.



Essential oils can also be diffused in your room to cleanse the environment using either an electric diffuser or an oil burner. This is also really useful to cleanse the room when you are convalescing, or during the Winter months when there are more bugs in circulation. Lavender is well known for its relaxing and sleep-inducing qualities whilst also being anti-microbial, so ideal just before bedtime and for people who struggle with insomnia. For people needing a boost in the morning or a helping hand when trying to revise for an exam or remember something important, rosemary is stimulating and anti-microbial and great to diffuse in a work room. If the Winter blues have set in, the citrus oil, bergamot, is wonderfully uplifting and at the same time is antiseptic and immune stimulating.

Chest and back massages can also be soothing and effective at helping us to clear our airways and a chest blend can be made by adding a couple of drops of essential oils together, in a base oil, and then rubbing this into the chest area.

The importance of alleviating stress in immune health

Our bodies are consistently striving to find balance, to protect ourselves and overcome the challenges they are presented with. There are times when our defence system can be compromised and weakened especially if we are tired, not sleeping well, stressed and anxious. When we are anxious and worried, we are releasing more stress hormones and adrenaline into our system and being in a prolonged stressed state can really put our bodies and immune system under immense strain. Essential oils with their multiple healing properties not only support our immune-health but support our emotional well-being too, helping in more ways than one. Frankincense is a wonderful oil for stilling the mind, slowing the breathing down and is an antidepressant and at the same time is a wonderful respiratory tonic. The tree oils are all really wonderful in helping with our respiratory health, cleansing the atmosphere whilst grounding us when we feel fearful and anxious.

The beautiful thing about essential oils is that they have a range of properties that support the body, mind and spirit and I hope you have the opportunity to discover the benefits during the winter months.



Please do seek medical guidance for any medical conditions that may be bothering you. Please also seek guidance before making your own blend particularly if you have sensitive skin, allergies and specific medical conditions. Some essential oils have contraindications and it is best to seek guidance if unsure.