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There are oils often used in aromatherapy, a form of alternative medicine that uses plant extracts to support health and well-being. However, some of the health claims associated with these oils are controversial. This article explains everything you need to know about essential oils and their health effects.

Essential oils are compounds extracted from plants. The oils capture the smell and aroma of the plant, or essence. Unique aromatic compounds give each essential oil its characteristic essence. Essential oils are produced by distillation (through steam and/or water) or mechanical methods such as cold pressing. Once the aromatic chemicals have been extracted, they are combined with the oil carrier to create a product that is ready for use. The way oils are produced is important because essential oils derived from chemical processes are not considered to be true essential oils. Summary Essential oils are concentrated plant extracts that retain the natural smell and taste, or essence, of their source.

Essential oils are most commonly used in aromatherapy practice, in which they are inhaled by various methods. Essential oils are not designed for ingestion. Chemicals in essential oils can interact with your body in several ways. When applied to the skin, some plant chemicals are absorbed (1, 2). It is believed that some uses can improve absorption, such as applying with heat or in different areas of the body. However, research in this area is lacking (3, 4). Inhaling aromas from essential oils can stimulate the area of your limbic system, which is part of your brain that plays a role in emotions, behavior, sense of smell, and long-term memory (5). Interestingly, the limbic system is actively involved in the formation of memories. This may partly explain why familiar smells can evoke memories or emotions (6, 7). The limbic system also plays a role in controlling several unconscious physiological functions such as breathing, heart rate and blood pressure. Thus, some people claim that essential oils can have a physical impact on your body. However, this has yet to be confirmed in studies. Summary of essential oils can be inhaled or diluted and applied to the skin. They can stimulate the sense of smell or have therapeutic effects during absorption. There are more than 90 types of essential oils, each with its own unique smell and potential health benefits. Here's a list of 10 popular essential oils and health claims associated with them: mint: used to boost energy and aid digestion. Skin like eczemaRose: Used to improve mood and reduce anxietyChamomile: used to improve mood and relaxationYlang-Ylang: used to treat nausea headaches, and skin diseasesTea Tree: used to fight infections and boost immunityJas: used to help with depression, childbirth, and and and Used to aid digestion, mood, headaches, and moreSummary there are over 90 widely used essential oils, each of which is associated with certain health claims. Popular oils include mint, lavender and sandalwood. Despite their widespread use, little is known about the ability of essential oils to treat certain diseases. Here's a look at the evidence on some of the common health problems that essential oils and aromatherapy have been used to treat. Stress and Anxiety It has been estimated that 43% of people who have stress and anxiety use some form of alternative therapy to help alleviate their symptoms (8). As for aromatherapy, the initial studies were very positive. Many have shown that the smell of some essential oils can work together with traditional therapy to treat anxiety and stress (9, 10, 11). However, due to the smells of compounds, it is difficult to conduct blind studies and eliminate biases. Thus, many reviews on stress and anxiety relieving the effects of essential oils were inconclusive (12, 13). Interestingly, the use of essential oils during a massage can help relieve stress, although the effects can only last while a massage occurs (14). A recent review of more than 201 studies showed that only 10 were reliable enough to analyze. It also concluded that aromatherapy was ineffective in treating anxiety (15). Headaches and migrainesIn the 90s, two small studies showed that dabbing mint oil and ethanol mixture on the forehead of participants and temples relieve headache (16, 17). Recent studies have also observed a reduction in headache pain after applying mint and lavender oil to the skin (18, 19). Moreover, it has been suggested that the use of a mixture of chamomile and sesame oil in temples can treat headaches and migraines. It is a traditional Persian remedy for headaches (20). However, better research is needed. Sleep and insomnia Mixing of lavender oil has been shown to improve the sleep quality of women after childbirth, as well as patients with heart disease (21, 22). One review examined 15 studies of essential oils and sleep. Most studies have shown that smelling oils - mainly lavender oil - have had a positive effect on sleep habits (23). Reducing inflammationIt has been suggested that essential oils can help in the fight against inflammatory diseases. Some test tube studies show that they have anti-inflammatory effects (24, 25). One mouse study found that an ingest combination of thyme and oregano essential oils helped cause colitis remission. Two studies of rats on cumin and rosemary oils found similar results (26, 27, 28). However, very few human studies have studied the effects of these oils on inflammatory diseases. Therefore, their effectiveness and safety are unknown (29, 30), and the antimicrobial rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria has renewed interest in finding other compounds that can fight bacterial infections. Test tube studies investigated essential oils such as and tea tree oil, widely for their antimicrobial effects, observing some positive results (31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39). However, while these test tube study results are interesting, they do not necessarily reflect the effects that these oils have in your body. They do not prove that certain essential oil can treat bacterial infections in humans. Summary Essential Oils may have some interesting health applications. However, more research is needed in the human body. Essential oils have many uses outside of aromatherapy. Many people use them to smell their home or refresh things like laundry. They are also used as a natural fragrance in home cosmetics and high-quality natural products. Moreover, it has been suggested that essential oils can provide a safe and environmentally friendly alternative to human mosquito repellents such as DEET. However, the results concerning their effectiveness have been mixed. Studies have shown that some oils, such as citronella, can repel certain mosquito species within 2 hours. The protection time can be extended to 3 hours when it is used in conjunction with vanilla. In addition, the properties of essential oils indicate that some of them can be used on an industrial scale to prolong the shelf life of food (39, 40, 41, 42). Summary aromatherapy is not only used for essential oils. They can be used in and around the house as a natural mosquito repellent, or industrially to make cosmetics. Many companies claim that their oils are pure or medical class. However, these terms are not universally defined and therefore have little weight. Given that they are products of the unregulated industry, the quality and composition of essential oils can vary greatly (43). Keep in mind the following tips to choose only high-quality oils: Clean: Find an oil that contains only aromatic vegetable compounds, without additives or synthetic oils. Pure oils usually list the botanical name of a plant (e.g. Lavandula officinalis) rather than terms such as lavender essential oil. Quality: True essential oils are the ones that have been modified the least in the mining process. Choose essential oil without chemicals that has been extracted by distillation or mechanical cold pressing. Reputation: Acquire a brand with a reputation as a manufacturer of high-quality products. Summary High-quality oils use only pure plant compounds extracted by distillation or cold pressing. Avoid oils that have been diluted with synthetic flavors, chemicals or oils. Just because something is natural doesn't mean it's safe. Plants and plant products contain a lot of biologically compounds that can harm your health, and essential oils are no different. However, when inhaled or in combination with base oil for use on the skin, most essential oils are considered safe. Be sure to consider others in your environment who may inhale the fragrance, including pregnant women, children and pets. However, they can cause some side effects, including (44): (44): While the most common side effect is rash, essential oils can cause more severe reactions, and they have been linked to one death case (45). The oils that were most commonly associated with the adverse reactions of lavender, mint, tea tree, and ylang-ylang. Oils high in phenols, such as cinnamon, can cause skin irritation and should not be used on the skin without combining with base oil. Meanwhile, essential oils from citrus fruits increase the skin's response to sunlight and burns can occur. Swallowing essential oils is not recommended, as it can be harmful and, in some doses, fatal (46, 47). Very few studies have examined the safety of these oils for pregnant or lactating women, who are generally advised to avoid them (48, 49, 50, 51, 52). Summary Essential oils are generally considered safe. However, they can cause serious side effects for some people, especially if applied directly to the skin or ingested. Essential oils are generally considered safe for inhalation or application to the skin if they have been combined with base oil. They should not be eaten. However, the evidence supporting many of the related health claims is lacking, and their effectiveness is often exaggerated. With minor health problems, the use of essential oils as an additional therapy is probably harmless. However, if you have a serious health condition or are taking medication, you should discuss their use with your doctor. Practitioner.

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