

## **Aromatherapy is medicine** Dr. Bonnie Huang Hall 510 624 9137

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**Aromatherapy** is the therapeutic use of essential oils from plants for the improvement of physical, emotional, and spiritual well being. Essential oils are extracted from plants by steam distillation or mechanical expression (cold press). Generally they are inhaled or used topically when diluted in a carrier oil. It is not widely administered orally. When used correctly, they may be therapeutic, however, like any drug, there are side effects and toxicity.



**Toxicity:** Allergic reactions can occur if the skin becomes sensitized to the oils. Severe sun burns may also occur, particularly with citrus oils before sun exposure. In addition, ingesting large quantities of essential oils (may be as a little as 1 ml, especially in children) may also cause toxicity and severe illness. Wintergreen contains high amounts of methyl-salicylate. As little as 5ml has caused death in children. Approximately 10 ml of clove oil has caused liver failure. Topical applications of lavender and tea tree oils have anti-androgenic, estrogenic effects. This may cause enlargement of breasts in prepubertal children and should be avoided in those with estrogen dependent tumors. Like any medicine, **Keep essential oils locked and away from children to help prevent accidental ingestion.**

### **TIPS**

If you choose to use essential oils, safest way to use essential oils is inhalation. Always dilute essential oils with a carrier oil (olive oil, vegetable oils) before topical application! 1 drop in 1 teaspoon oil is a good starting point for adults. Given the risks involved, I do not advocate topical or oral essential oil usage in children < 12.

### **Example Essential oils and their uses with limited evidence**

Peppermint oil for irritable bowel syndrome

Lavender oil for improving sleep, anxiety, and reducing agitation in dementia patients

Tea tree oil for acne

Sources:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK65874/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17239735>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26133206>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15895251>

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