

## BE SAFE AND SMART

Before using an essential oil, you should be aware of its possible adverse effects. Aromatic plant distillates have been used for over a century as food additives, as well as in perfume, cosmetics, soaps, etc. The FDA is the regulatory body in the United States, and most essential oils have the G.R.A.S. (generally regarded as safe) designation. The following is basic safety information regarding essential oils in general, and further considerations can be found on the Samara Botane **Essential Oil Monographs**.

Essential oils that are considered **too toxic** for aromatherapy are **Bitter Almond, Brown and Yellow Camphor, Rue, Tansy, Wormseed, Wormwood and Sassafras**. Other oils that could be considered **hazardous** are **Cinnamon leaf, Cassia, Pennyroyal, Thuja and Mugwort**. Essential oils that have not been safety tested and need caution are Amni visnaga, Catnip, Chamomile, certain Eucalyptus chemotypes (E. globulus and E. citriodora are the only ones tested nontoxic to date), Inula graveolens, Kanuka, Manuka, Melissa, Niaouli, Ravensara aromatica, Rosemary chemotypes except the common cineol types, Spikenard, Thyme chemotypes other than phenol, Valerian and Yarrow. Essential oils that have been tested and do need caution are , Benzoin resinoid (sensitizer), Bergamot (photosensitizer), Calamus (banned in cosmetics), Cinnamon bark (powerful irritant and sensitizer) Copaiba or Copahu (sensitization), Inula graveolens (sensitization), Peru balsam (sensitizer), Tagetes (sensitizer),

Researcher Martin Watt advises us that there are three adverse reactions to consider when essential oils are applied to the skin:

- 1) **Irritation:** This is when a substance comes into contact with the skin and causes anything from a mild itch to a burn, almost immediately. Usually, once the substance is removed, healing takes place and there should be no further problem.
- 2) **Sensitization:** This can be much more serious than irritation. Once the substance has been introduced to the skin, it can cause permanent changes in the immune system in a similar manner to a vaccination. Symptoms may not occur until time passes. Once the body has become sensitized, a reaction may occur the next time the substance is introduced. Sensitization can appear in varying degrees of severity, from a mild itch to severe anaphylactic shock. The latter in aromatherapy is almost unknown. To be safe, however, if after using any essential oil or absolute, an irritating or burning sensation, or blotchy irritable skin rash are noticed, then that particular oil or chemically similar ones should not be used again. Sensitization is not common.
- 3) **Photosensitization:** (Sometimes referred to as phototoxicity). This is where a substance coming into contact with the skin can react with ultra violet light. This reaction can cause anything from mild brown blotches to severe burning of the skin. The condition can be long lasting, and the condition can recur after exposure to ultra violet light. The main essential oil to avoid in this respect is expressed Bergamot, however, it is wise to be cautious with all Citrus oils.

**Pregnancy:** There are many claims in aromatherapy books about not using certain essential oils during pregnancy that are unfounded. Oftentimes information attributed to the effects of essential oils are from research data regarding the water-soluble

extracts of the plant, taken orally. Used in moderation, with common sense most essential oils used in aromatherapy are safe to use in pregnancy. The exceptions would be **birch** and **wintergreen** oils. **Clary sage** should be avoided by anyone with a history of early miscarriages. Please remember that any aromatherapy treatment will affect your baby if you are pregnant or nursing. **KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN.**

**Epilepsy:** It is true that any strong smell can and may trigger an epileptic incident. However, some trials have indicated that relaxing oils can substantially reduce the incidence of attacks. Therefore, it may be advisable to avoid pungent oils like **camphor, eucalyptus, tea tree, rosemary, etc.**

**High or Low Blood Pressure:** There are no scientifically verified trials published, following the external application of essential oils. There are also no proven cases of anyone that has suffered ill effects from escalation of blood pressure caused by aromatherapy. Generally, an aromatherapy massage will decrease blood pressure that is high due to stress.

**Safety levels have been ascertained for the most common essential oils used in aromatherapy. Diligent aromatherapists should inform their clients about those that have not been tested. There are no 'traditional' uses of essential oils, and these reports are those reflecting the use of the herb and not the essential oil.**

**More is not better with essential oils, and they should be used in sparing, minute amounts. Body size, weight, age and state of health can determine dosages.**

**Oxidization and rancidity can cause toxicity. Refer to CARE OF ESSENTIAL OILS.**

**TREATING EMERGENCIES:** If an essential oil is accidentally splashed in the eyes or on sensitive skin or mucous membranes, immediately douse the affected area with olive oil. This acts as an absorbent fat, binding to the essential oil, diluting its effects and enabling removal. Other vegetable oils or aloe vera gel can be used as an alternative. **NEVER USE WATER TO DILUTE AN OIL BURN; this will only disperse the essential oil increasing the area of damage. After removing the olive oil from skin and around eyes with a damp cloth or tissue, you can wash skin with gentle soap and water.**

**DO NOT TAKE ESSENTIAL OILS INTERNALLY UNLESS SUPERVISED BY A MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL.**

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## CARE OF ESSENTIAL OILS

Essential oils are aromatic, volatile extracts, comprised of concentrated natural chemicals. In the closed bottle, essential oils are clustered vaporous, aromatic molecules that take liquid form. With the exception of the more viscous oils, medium and light density essential oils will become gaseous very rapidly when exposed to the air and, if given enough time, will waft off completely, sometimes leaving absolutely no residue of their former selves behind at all, and sometimes leaving only a little sticky puddle (the denser molecules) . . . becoming but a fragment of the synergistic whole at its birth.

Following some simple guidelines, you can create the optimum conditions for your essential oils to last up to 2-5 years. We have discovered pots of unguents in the tombs of ancient Egypt that remain vibrantly scented today. If used within 6 months to a year, a 5ml or 15ml bottle of any essential oil should remain fresh and vibrant if stored properly.

**OXYGEN IS THE ESSENTIAL OIL'S FIRST WORST ENEMY.** If you are storing quantities of essential oils, they will stay stable longer if you keep the oxygen (referred to as 'head room') in the bottle to a minimum. Oxygen causes oxidation and deterioration. There are several things you can do in this regard. As you use and deplete the essential oil in any one bottle to less than two-thirds full, place remaining contents in a smaller bottle, which will automatically reduce the head room. Always re-label immediately to insure accuracy of contents in your new bottle. You can also add liquid nitrogen to larger bottles of essential oil (available from fine wine making stores) to deplete oxygen to its minimum.

**SUNLIGHT IS THE ESSENTIAL OIL'S SECOND WORST ENEMY.** You can provide protection from damage caused by ultraviolet light by always storing essential oils in dark colored bottles in a closed dark cabinet in a cool and relatively constant temperature. It is recommended by some to store all cold-pressed citrus oils and the blue oils in a refrigerator.

Essential oils enjoy constant, cool temperatures and darkness. The effects of sunlight are damaging to the fragile composition of an essential oil, both by the effect of temperature variation and the adverse effects of ultraviolet light. Essential oils are best stored in dark glass bottles (amber, cobalt or other dark glass) in a cool, dark place. Fluctuating temperatures and direct sunlight can adversely affect all phyto-extracts, including essential oils, absolutes and CO2 extracts. Because of concentrated potency, always keep essential oils out of reach of children and away from open flames.

Essential oils should always be well labeled to insure accuracy of contents. It is a good idea to cover paper labels with clear tape so that information doesn't smear and labels are always readable.

Never use rubber bulb stoppers/dispensers with pure essential oils. A reputable supplier will provide essential oils in small bottles with dropper inserts made of a tough plastic that can withstand the corrosive effects of essential oils and aid convenience for dispensing drops in blending. *For your convenience in re-bottling, Samara Botane offers 5, 10 and 15 ml bottles with dropper insert caps available in packages of 6 each and amber glass bottles with plain caps in sizes ½ to 32 oz.*

Information regarding the Latin name of the single botanical extracted, country of origin, method of extraction and quantity (usually in mls) should always be on your bottle (or on a separate list provided by your supplier), along with specific lot and batch information.

When you add your essential oils to a fixed oil, cream or lotion base, the shelf life of the carrier becomes the determining factor for shelf life, not the essential oil. It is best to make small batches of products that you will use within a short period of time. Your finished products keep longer when refrigerated, also.

It is suggested to keep essential oils away from homeopathic dilutions, since they can be affected by the strong odors of essential oils like eucalyptus or the mints.

When working with essential oils, always make sure that the environment and all measuring tools and equipment are clean and disinfected. It is possible to use antiseptic/antibacterial essential oils themselves for this purpose. Citrus oils that have begun to oxidize are good elements for cleaning and, combined with a little Tea Tree for anti-bacterial action, are extremely useful for cleaning all surfaces. It is helpful to clean orifice reducers, caps and bottle necks periodically with alcohol to prevent contamination.

When blending or bottling essential oils, remember to protect yourself from over-exposure. Avoid contact with undiluted (neat) essential oils, especially on broken skin. Wear adequate gloves and lab covering. Ensure adequate ventilation and take frequent walking breaks in fresh air. You will find more information to assist you when working with essential oils in **BLENDING TIPS AND TOOLS** and individual **ESSENTIAL OIL MONOGRAPHS**.

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