

# SPECIAL TOOLS HANDOUTS

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Aromatherapy Tips for Stress

Aromatherapy Tips for Pain

Hydrotherapy at Home: Cold

Hydrotherapy at Home: Heat

# AROMATHERAPY TIPS FOR STRESS

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Here are some ways to use essential oils at home to help when you're stressed or feeling blue. Use only pure, high-quality oils. Ask your massage therapist for more information about sources to obtain quality oils.

## ESSENTIAL OILS FOR STRESS OR THE BLUES

- Geranium
- Rose
- Neroli (orange blossom)
- Lavender
- Lemongrass
- Basil
- Roman chamomile

For direct use on the skin, always dilute essential oils in a "base" oil. Base oils include almond, walnut, and grapeseed, but any good quality vegetable oil works fine.

## WAYS TO USE YOUR OILS

*Self-massage.* Make your own personalized oil, by blending neroli and geranium, or lavender and lemongrass, in a base oil (see above). It's also nice to add a few drops of basil to either of these blends.

*Baths.* Add 10 drops of lavender, Roman chamomile or rose to a warm tub—and swish!

*Diffusers.* A diffuser is a special device to dispense essential oils into the air without altering their components. Use as directed. Alternatively, you can add oils to a ring designed to fit around a light bulb or add drops of oils to a bowl of water placed on a radiator. Try the blends listed above.

**Note:** Tell your massage therapist if there is an essential oil you particularly like. He or she may have it available to add to the oil used during your session.

## RESOURCES

Renowned aromatherapist Françoise Rapp has e-books, a newsletter and other information on her website: <http://www.aromalchemy.com>

Aromatherapist and teacher Jeanne Rose is the author of *The Aromatherapy Book: Applications and Inhalations* (North Atlantic Books, 1995) and offers home-study courses.

# AROMATHERAPY TIPS FOR PAIN

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Here are some ways to use essential oils at home to help ease your aches and pains in muscles or joints. Use only pure, high-quality oils. Ask your massage therapist for more information about sources to obtain quality oils.

## ESSENTIAL OILS FOR ACHES AND PAINS

Roman chamomile  
Birch  
Atlas cedarwood  
Rosemary  
Eucalyptus  
Peppermint

The last two can be irritating, so always dilute them in a “base” oil before using. Base oils include almond, walnut, and grapeseed, but any good quality vegetable oil works fine.

## WAYS TO USE YOUR OILS

*Self-massage.* To blend a nice massage oil, add about 10 drops of essential oil to an ounce of base oil or lotion. Try this blend: 2 drops chamomile, 2 drops birch, 2 drops rosemary, and 4 drops lavender added to one ounce base oil. Massage into sore or cramped muscles after a bath.

*Baths.* Add 10 drops each of eucalyptus and Atlas cedarwood to a tub of warm water, and soak. Add the oils after your bath is drawn and swish well before entering water.

*Compresses.* Soak a clean towel in a sink of very warm water to which 5-10 drops of a blend of the above essential oils has been added. Wring out and apply it to your sore body part. Resoak when the towel cools and use for a total time of 20-30 minutes.

*Rubdowns.* To avoid soreness from exercise, give yourself a brisk rub down after a workout. Mix 10 drops of a blend of black pepper, rosemary, and eucalyptus to an ounce of base oil. Rub your limbs quickly and thoroughly. It’s advisable not to oil your body before vigorous exercise, because the oil can interfere with your ability to sweat.

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# HYDROTHERAPY AT HOME: COLD

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## TIPS FOR COLD THERAPY

Cold is used to reduce pain and swelling, and to tone the body.

Brief applications of cold water to the face, hands, and head can increase mental activity and alertness. It can also help tone the skin of the face.

Very cold applications, such as ice bags or bags of frozen peas should be used briefly on localized areas, like inflammation, swelling or sprains. Use for 20-30 minutes on the injury followed by 15-20 minutes off. This therapy works best when used frequently within the first 24 hours of an injury. Always use a cloth between your skin and ice. Note: If a joint or limb seems deformed or you can't bear weight or otherwise use it normally after 24 hours, contact your physician.

Source: *Take Care of Yourself: The Complete Guide to Medical Self-Care*, Donald Vickery, MD, and James Fries, MD.

## ALTERNATING HOT AND COLD

You can also alternate heat with cold, further increasing circulation to enhance healing and relieve pain. Alternating application of heat and cold is sometimes called a vascular flush because the heat expands the blood vessels, and the cold constricts them, causing a flushing action.

Try alternating a hot shower with a cold one, a cold plunge after a sauna, or a series of hot and cold towels applied to an area, such as an area of chronic stress and pain like the upper back and shoulders. The general recipe for ratio of time for hot and cold applications is three to one, for example, three minutes of heat to one minute of cold. End with the cold application as it feels refreshing and pain-relieving.

## PRECAUTIONS

Do not use ice or any very cold applications if you have Raynaud's disease, peripheral vascular disease, peripheral neuropathy, hypersensitivity to cold, or reduced skin sensations. Diabetics should always use caution when applying ice to their skin.

Also be careful with heat applications to avoid burning. Remain very aware of the degree of heat of an application and how it feels against your skin.

# HYDROTHERAPY AT HOME: HEAT

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Hydrotherapy is the use of water to relax or heal. The main way it achieves this is by heating or cooling the body which results in improved circulation, increasing the flow of nutrients and carrying away wastes from tissues and organs. Heat therapy is easy to use at home to relieve tension and relax the muscles.

## TIPS FOR HEAT THERAPY

Moist heat applications are considered very effective for the discomforts of arthritis, as well as general soreness and stiffness.

You probably know that standing under a hot shower can reduce your back, neck, or arthritis pain, and that soaking in a tub can help ease menstrual and muscle cramps. In the shower, try rotating your neck and shoulders and stretching out your calf muscles. Add Epsom salts and drops of essential oil such as lavender, ylang-ylang, or rose to bath water to enhance relaxation and soothe joint or muscle stiffness.

Saunas or steam baths help relieve anxiety and tension, and have been used for centuries to promote health by sweating. Follow a bath or sauna with a quick cool shower to seal in the heat by closing the pores. It also pushes the blood back to the internal organs, and leaves you feeling strong, relaxed and balanced, rather than lethargic.

Use a hot footbath to relieve upper body congestion, for example a sore throat or headache, because the blood is drawn down from the head and internal organs toward the capillaries of the feet.

For upper body tension or congestion, try soaking a towel in hot water mixed with a few drops of essential oils for relaxation (try lavender) or relieving congestion (try eucalyptus). Have your friend or loved one place the wrung-out towel over your upper back, then cover it with a dry towel or fleece (which tends to hold in the heat better). Or use a commercial heat pack according to directions.

## PRECAUTIONS

If you are pregnant, or have a heart condition, diabetes, or high blood pressure, consult with your physician before using hydrotherapy. Use caution if you have sensitive skin.

Be careful with heat applications to avoid burning. If you use an electric heating pad, don't fall asleep!

## RESOURCE

The Division of Biological Sciences, University of Chicago website:  
[scc.uchicago.edu/heattherapy.htm](http://scc.uchicago.edu/heattherapy.htm)