

Some of the most frequently asked questions

Q. Will essential oils be used automatically if the midwife thinks that I would benefit?

A. No, this is an optional service.

Your consent to its use will always be obtained and documented.

Q. How can essential oils be used?

A. They can be used:

- In the bath / birthing pool
- In a footbath
- For a massage (back, neck, arms, hands, legs, feet, abdomen)
- For inhalation via a bowl of hot water
- On the palm of the hand
- On a tissue / cotton wool ball
- Cold or hot compress

References

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Mc Nabb, M. T., Kimber, L., Haines, A. and McCourt, C. (2006) *Does massage from late pregnancy to birth decrease maternal pain perception during labour and birth?- A feasibility study to investigate a programme of massage, controlled breathing and visualization, from 36 weeks of pregnancy until birth*. Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice, 12: 222-231

Mitchell, M., Williams, J., Hobbs, E. and Pollard, K. (2006) *The use of complementary therapies in maternity services: A survey*. British Journal of Midwifery, 14 (10): 576-582

Midwifery Digest, 15 (1): 73-78 Williams, J. and Mitchell, M. (2006) *Midwifery managers' views about the use of complementary therapies in the maternity service*.

Complementary Therapies in Practice, 13: 129-135

Contact details

For further information contact your community midwife who can also ask a midwife aromatherapist to speak to you.

Taunton and Somerset 
NHS Foundation Trust

The use of Essential Oils

**Aromatherapy and massage
for late pregnancy, labour,
birth and after your
baby is born**

Maternity

The use of essential oils

Aromatherapy and massage are an art and a science that have been practised for many years in a large number of maternity units in England.

Recent research has shown that the use of essential oils and/or massage for late pregnancy, labour and birth can offer a natural alternative to help you cope with labour. This can increase your overall satisfaction with the experience of having a baby.

Who can use aromatherapy and/or massage?

If you have a normal pregnancy you should be able to benefit from aromatherapy and massage. This means you:

- are 37 weeks pregnant and over are having one baby, presenting head down (cephalic)
- go into labour spontaneously after 37 weeks of pregnancy
- have no known or expected problems for yourself or your baby

When being induced or preparing for caesarian section, some essential oils can be used. If you wish to use aromatherapy and/or massage with mildly raised blood pressure, well-controlled diabetes and with cardiac or circulatory disorders, you need to contact a midwife/aromatherapist for further information (details at the back).

What are the benefits of using aromatherapy and/or massage?

They widen the range of coping strategies in labour create a sense of well-being in mind and body can improve the labour experience by potentially:

- increasing relaxation
- diminishing anxiety thereby reducing pain perception
- providing continuous emotional and physical support
- reducing nausea / vomiting
- making the contractions more effective
- enhancing bonding with the newborn and breast feeding outcomes
- improving postnatal recovery

Which essential oils are used?

Clary sage

- Eases muscular aches and pains
- Can reduce anxiety and fear and therefore make contractions more effective
- Can help with post natal depression

For use in labour and after your baby is born, not suitable after uterine surgery

Cypress

- Reduces fluid retention and improves the circulation - can ease oedema, carpal tunnel syndrome, hemorrhoids (piles) and varicose veins
- Can help with wound healing

Not suitable with high blood pressure

Eucalyptus

- A cooling refreshing oil
- Antiseptic, can warn off colds

Not suitable for the birthing pool or bath as it is cooling

Frankincense

- Excellent for calming nervous tension and hyperventilation by slowing and deepening breathing

For use in labour and after baby is born

Geranium

- Uplifting
- Stimulates milk flow

For use after your baby is born

Jasmine

- Uplifting / gives confidence and helps with pain. Therefore it can make contractions more effective
- Stimulates milk flow

For use in labour and after your baby is born, not suitable after uterine surgery

Lavender

- Uplifting
- Emotionally calming / Sedating / Relaxing
- Helps with headaches and muscular aches and pains

Lemon

- Refreshing and emotionally uplifting
- Very good antiseptic properties
- Can enhance the effect of other essential oils

Mandarin

- Uplifting
- Sedating: good for restlessness, insomnia, agitation and nervous tension
- Reduces muscle spasm
- Can enhance the effect of other essential oils

Peppermint

- Cooling, refreshing
- Clears headaches, can ease migraines

Not suitable for the birthing pool or the bath as it is cooling

Roman chamomile

- Eases muscular aches and pains
- A powerful anti-inflammatory oil
- Excellent for insomnia and stress and calming nervous tension
- The essential oil of choice if you suffer from allergies (asthma, eczema, hay fever)

Rose

- Anxiety reducing
- Balances emotions
- Can help if contractions slow down (see clary sage)

For use in labour and after your baby is born not suitable after uterine surgery