

Aromatherapy during pregnancy

Maternity Services

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Information for Patients

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What is aromatherapy?

Aromatherapy is a complementary therapy which uses essential oils. Essential oils are natural oils. The oils come from plants. They have been found to have a range of benefits.

Is it safe in pregnancy?

Not all essential oils are safe to use in pregnancy. We advise that you check with an aromatherapy trained midwife or other qualified person. You should get advice before using your own essential oils in:

- pregnancy
- birth
- right away after birth
- whilst breastfeeding your baby

It is important to think about the affect of aromatherapy on others around you. For example, birth partners, family, other pregnant people or staff. This is because anyone who can smell the oils can be affected.

If you choose to use your own oils then you are responsible for checking that they are safe and suitable for you to use. The midwife caring for you will not be able to advise you on the use of your own oils. Let the midwife caring for you know if you have been using:

- your own essential oils,
- other complementary therapies,
- natural remedies (like raspberry leaf tea),

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We need to know if you have been using these at any time during your pregnancy. This can be added to your maternity records.

We do not allow the use of diffusers in the maternity unit. This is because we cannot control where the mist (vapour) travels in the air.

Within the maternity services there are some midwives who are trained to give aromatherapy for you to use. If you are interested in using aromatherapy, the midwife will check if it is safe for you. They will be able to talk with you about the oils. They can also answer any questions that you might have.

Can anyone use essential oils?

You may not be able to use aromatherapy if:

- You have an allergy to the oils or carrier oils.
- Certain medical conditions.
- Certain pregnancy complications.
- Taking certain medicines.

There will also need to be a midwife trained in aromatherapy available to assess you. They will be able to make sure the oils used are safe and suitable for you and your baby.

What are the benefits?

- Relaxation. It calms the mind and body. It helps to reduce anxiety and stress. It also helps you to feel more positive about your birth.
- It may help reduce pain and discomfort. This means you may find that you need to use less other forms of pain relief in pregnancy and labour.
- It may help to reduce nausea (feeling sick).
- Offers a more 'natural' choice to support your pregnancy, birth and after birth recovery.
- It may reduce the need for medical intervention.
- It can improve how you feel about your birth experience.
- Some essential oils may help your body to go into labour. Or may help speed up your contractions during labour. This can reduce the need for synthetic hormones.
- It allows your partner to be involved with the use of aromatherapy and massage.

What oils are available?

The carrier oil that we use is Grapeseed oil. The essential oils used within the maternity services are:

- Bergamot
- Black Pepper
- Clary Sage
- Frankincense
- Geranium
- Jasmine
- Lavender
- Mandarin
- Peppermint
- Rose

We will use 1 oil or a blend of oils. This way we can mix the right oils for you and your baby.

How are the oils used?

It can be used for:

- massaging
- breathing in (inhalation)
- foot or hand soak
- compress
- a bath (not for use in the birthing pool)

Safety issues?

- Essential oils should:
 - never be drunk or eaten.
 - never be put on your skin straight from the bottle.
 - never be massaged into broken skin.
- If you do get a skin irritation, wash the area with warm, soapy water. Please let your midwife know right away.
- Keep essential oils in a cool place away from sunlight
- **Keep out of the reach of children and pets.**
- Avoid using essential oils around:
 - babies,
 - young children,
 - pets,
 - anyone who has any medical conditions,
 - anyone who is allergic to any of the oils,



- You must tell us if you have any allergies, medical conditions or take any medicines.
- Once mixed with a carrier oil, essential oils can be used in the bath (unless your waters have broken) but should not be used in the birth pool.

Aftercare advice

After using aromatherapy treatment we recommend you to:

- Stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of water for the rest of the day.
- Rest and relax.
- Avoid stimulants like:
 - caffeine,
 - smoking/nicotine replacement
 - alcohol

Avoid all the above for 24 hours (1 day) after using aromatherapy.

- If you have had a massage using essential oils leave them on your skin for as long as possible to allow them to soak in.
- Avoid exposing your skin to direct sunlight for 24 hours (1 day) after using essential oils on the skin.
- Be careful when using an essential oil blend in the bath as it makes surfaces slippery.

We hope that you find the aromatherapy service useful for your labour and birth experience. We may ask you to kindly give feedback to help us better our service in the future.

Contact information

If you have any questions about aromatherapy then please talk with your midwife or contact the hospital on **0116 258 6111**.

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