

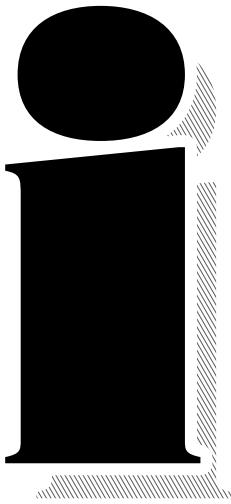


# oh—so— essential oils

by Ellen Seidman

FROM ANCIENT EGYPT TO MODERN TIMES, ESSENTIAL OILS HAVE BEEN USED TO TREAT ANXIETY, ACHES AND EVEN ACNE. LEARN HOW TO HARNESS THEIR HEALING POWERS AT HOME.





*am exhausted—I need to go to sleep this second,* I thought. Only it was 7:20 on a weeknight and I had tasks to do and kids to get to bed. I'd recently gotten an essential oil diffuser for our bedroom;

I thought it might come in handy for stress relief. Now, though, I reached for revitalizing grapefruit oil. I plopped in a few drops and pressed “on.” Minutes later, I felt more awake. It worked! Then my husband walked in. “Ew, what’s that smell?” he asked. Uh-oh.

Extracted from plants, flowers and citrus fruits, essential oils are hot: Industry revenue has gone up about 13 percent in five years, according to the market-research firm IbisWorld. The ancient Chinese, Egyptians, Indians and Greeks relied on essential oils as medicine. They’re

now gaining new ground because of growing evidence of their powers; a review published in the *International Journal of Neuroscience* concluded that various scents can significantly affect mood, cognition and physiology. Increased openness to complementary and alternative treatments is fueling this boom, says Woodson Merrell, MD, director of integrative medicine at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City: “Patients like essential oils because they’re a remedy that is natural, effective and typically safe.”

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## sniff to heal

NEED A LIFT? TRY ONE OF THESE RESEARCH-BACKED ESSENTIAL OIL REMEDIES.

**IF YOU WANT TO...**  
**Feel more alert**



PEPPERMINT

→ Smelling peppermint essential oil made drivers perkier in one study. In another, basketball players who sniffed peppermint oil had better energy and performance.

**IF YOU WANT TO...**  
**Sleep better**



LAVENDER

→ Research shows that lavender increases brain alpha waves associated with relaxation and deep sleep. The do-it-all scent may also alleviate PMS symptoms and reduce pain.

**IF YOU WANT TO...**  
**Reduce appetite**



GRAPEFRUIT

→ One small study of rats published in the journal *Neuroscience Letters* found that inhaling grapefruit oil can inhibit a key gastric nerve, dulling the sensation of hunger.

**IF YOU WANT TO...**  
**Stop sniffles**



EUCALYPTUS

→ This scent reduced stuffy noses and head pressure in people with sinusitis, per a German study. Put a few drops in a sink with warm water, drape a towel over your head and breathe it in.

**IF YOU WANT TO...**  
**Quell anxiety**



SWEET ORANGE

→ In one study, adults who inhaled this oil and then took a test handled the pressure sans increased anxiety. Other citrus oils, such as bergamot, can also help you keep your cool.

**IF YOU WANT TO...**  
**Get a happiness hit**



LEMON

→ Japanese researchers found that folks with depression who sniffed citrus fragrance were able to lower their dose of antidepressants; the scent helped normalize hormone levels.

**IF YOU WANT TO...**  
**Alleviate nausea**



GINGER

→ Ginger teas and candies work, but smelling the essential oil also eases queasiness, per research done by anesthesiologists; cancer centers use it for patients who've had radiation.

**IF YOU WANT TO...**  
**Ease stress**



LAVENDER

CHAMOMILE

NEROLI

→ A 2013 study of ICU patients published in the journal *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* found that sniffing this combo significantly reduced anxiety.

**IF YOU WANT TO...**  
**Quit smoking**



BLACK PEPPER

→ In one study, cigarette smokers who inhaled it reported having fewer cravings than those who didn't; the scent irritates the back of the throat, a sensation smokers miss.

**IF YOU WANT TO...**  
**Be better focused at work**



ROSEMARY

→ The scent can improve concentration, speed and accuracy during mental tasks, per a study at Northumbria University in England. Other recent research found it may boost memory, too.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: WOMAN, STEPHANIE RAUSCHER/TRINK ARCHIVE; THIS SPREAD: WOMAN, CHRIS GRAYNER/TRINK ARCHIVE; PEPPERMINT, BRANISLAVA/CORBIS OUTLINE; LAVENDER, ROSEMARY, CALVERT/GETTY IMAGES; GRAPEFRUIT, SIRISTAFORD/GETTY IMAGES; EUCALYPTUS, FRANCESCO FERRARI/GETTY IMAGES; LEMON, CREATIVE COMMONS; CHAMOMILE, MAXIMILIAN STOOK LTD/GETTY IMAGES; GINGER, JUDITH M/GETTY IMAGES; SWEET ORANGE, JEFFREY MAYER/GETTY IMAGES; PEPPER, STUART MINZEL/GETTY IMAGES; ROSEMARY, MATILDA INDEBLAD/GETTY IMAGES



**more  
ways to  
make good  
scents**



*Fill a spray bottle with water, add several drops of essential oil and spritz your linens before bed, suggests aromatherapist Andrea Butje.*



*Place a few drops of lemon essential oil on your kitchen sponge at day's end to kill germs—and make your kitchen smell really good in the morning.*



*Put a drop or two of essential oil on a couple of cotton balls, says lifestyle blogger Jill Nystul; tuck them in your vacuum-cleaner bag or smelly shoes.*

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Today, nurses in hospitals reach for essential oils to treat everything from nausea to anxiety. And it's not just patients who benefit: In the emergency room at Nashville's Vanderbilt University Medical Center, when diffusers were installed to spread citrus scents, the portion of staffers who reported frequently experiencing work-related stress dropped from 41 percent to 3 percent. In stores, you'll find essential oils in body lotions, shampoos, even household cleaners. Someday they may be tapped for other benefits; findings show that applied essential oils can inhibit growth of tumors and kill potentially deadly bacteria like E. coli.

### HOW AROMATHERAPY WORKS

When you sniff an essential oil, your olfactory bulb fires off signals to the limbic system, the part of the brain that controls emotions—that's how scents affect your mood. Depending on the type of oil used, your blood pressure or heart rate may rise or fall, and your body may release certain hormones.

That said, you have to *like* an oil for it to have an optimal effect (why my husband wasn't rejuvenated by

our grapefruited room). "Besides the physical reaction, a psychological one happens when you smell a scent," notes Adriane Fugh-Berman, MD, associate professor of pharmacology at Georgetown University Medical Center. She recalls dissecting cadavers in medical school, when professors dropped peppermint oil into the formaldehyde to mask the odor. "For years, the smell of peppermint reminded me of dead bodies!" she says. "I still have to buy nonpeppermint toothpaste."

### FYII (FOR YOUR INHALING INFORMATION)

Aromatherapy isn't healthy for everyone. People with asthma should avoid essential oils, says Alan Hirsch, MD, neurological director of the Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation in Chicago, and pregnant women need to check with their doctors first. Never drink an essential oil, even in a small amount, without medical supervision. "Essential oils can be poisonous if you ingest too much—they could affect your nervous system and cause seizures," Dr. Fugh-Berman cautions. (Hel-lo: They're strong enough to decimate E. coli.)

## oh, go on, rub it in

Applying essential oils to skin lets components get into your bloodstream for a more direct effect. Mix with a carrier or base oil to avoid irritation; good ones include jojoba, sesame, sweet almond and olive. Start with one or two drops of essential oil per ounce of carrier oil; if that isn't intense enough, work up to no more than 15 drops (much less for strong oils like peppermint). Some usages:



#### TEA TREE OIL

→ Antifungal, antiseptic and antibacterial, this oil is so potent that it has killed MRSA and staph in lab settings. Mix it with a carrier oil to fight off athlete's foot, acne and dandruff, or add a couple of drops to a squirt of your shampoo.



#### PEPPERMINT

→ In one study, rubbing this oil (mixed with alcohol) into temples soothed headaches. In another, a massage with peppermint and eucalyptus oils (also combined with alcohol) reduced post-workout muscle cramps.



#### LAVENDER

→ Reach for it to soothe scrapes and stings. A few drops of lavender oil combined with the same amount of rose oil, plus an ounce of sweet almond oil, may ward off painful menstrual cramps when massaged on the abdomen.



#### CEDARWOOD

→ Blended with rosemary, thyme, lavender and a carrier oil and rubbed into the scalp, it can help with hair loss—in one study, 44 percent of women saw new growth. Or pair with melted coconut oil to soothe eczema.

Also note that essential oils may not mix well with certain drugs. For example, blue chamomile oil can hamper the enzyme that metabolizes some antidepressants. "If you're using patch medication, applying essential oils in the area could cause an interaction," adds Andrea Butje, a clinical aromatherapist who runs the Aromahead Institute, which offers virtual courses. (See Oh, Go On, Rub It In, below left, for more on topical uses for oils.)

## THE ESSENCE OF FINDING GOOD OILS

Don't buy into claims that an oil is "therapeutic," "clinical" or "premium" grade—they're marketing ploys. "There is no body that oversees the essential oil industry, and there is no seal of approval," says Jade Shutes, a clinical aromatherapist and president of the National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy. Generally, USDA-certified organic oils are best because they're not contaminated with pesticides. Telltale signs of a quality product:

- The label or website description lists the Latin name of the plant from which the oil is derived, which indicates that it's pure (thus offering the most potent payoffs). If the label states only "lavender essential oil," the product could contain filler ingredients.
- The company does gas chromatography/mass spectrometry (GC/MS) testing, science-speak for "This oil passed a purity test." (However, smaller companies sometimes can't afford the testing, so don't make this your sole marker.)
- A company's oils are different prices. It's far cheaper to extract oil from, say, citrus fruits than from flowers; companies that charge the same for every kind may very well be including synthetic substances.
- The oil comes in a glass container that's amber or dark blue to protect it from oxidation. Keep oils in the fridge to prolong their life.

## RULES FOR INHALING

The best way to disseminate an essential oil: through a little machine. Diffusers (they cost around \$30 to \$40 each) work fine for simply chillaxing—you fill a small basin with water and plop in a few drops of your chosen essential oil, and a fan emits a scented mist. But for a true therapeutic effect, opt for a nebulizer, which shoots oil particles straight into the air sans water. (Nebulizers are used by clinicians and tend to cost a bit more.)

Whichever device you choose, turn it off within an hour, says aromatherapy expert Robert Tisserand, author of *Essential Oil Safety*: "There's no need to constantly inhale—you won't get an additional benefit, and you want to give your body a break or it may react adversely to continued inhalation, resulting in increased heart rate, for example." Also: Diffuse when your husband is out of the house, to avoid an adverse reaction in your marriage. ■

# If You Bought Dreamfields Pasta

## You could get money from a Settlement

A Settlement of two class actions has been reached with Dakota Growers, the maker of Dreamfields Pasta. The lawsuits claim advertisements and packaging for Dreamfields Pasta are misleading. Dakota Growers denies these claims.

### Who's included?

Generally, the Settlement includes anyone who purchased Dreamfields Pasta with a label that referred to "glycemic index" or "digestible carbs," in the United States between February 2004 and July 1, 2014.

### What does the Settlement provide?

The \$5,000,000 cash Settlement will cover:

**Online Purchases:** Receive an automatic payment for online Dreamfields Pasta purchases, of \$1.99 per box, if you received a settlement notice by email. There is no limit on the number of boxes.

**Purchases Made in the Store:** File a claim to receive \$1.99 for each box of Dreamfields Pasta you purchased in a store (up to 15 boxes per household).

**Other Costs:** Payment of notice and administration costs.

Any money remaining in the Settlement after payment of claims and costs will be donated to the American Diabetes Association.

**Changes to Packaging:** Dakota Growers agrees to remove statements referring to "glycemic index" or "digestible carbs" from the packaging of Dreamfields Pasta for one year.

### How can I get a payment?

File a claim online at [www.DreamfieldsSettlement.com](http://www.DreamfieldsSettlement.com) or by mail by September 1, 2014.

### What are my rights?

Even if you do nothing you will be bound by the Court's decision. If you want to keep your right to sue Dakota Growers yourself, you must exclude yourself from the Class by September 1, 2014. If you stay in the Class, you may object to the Settlement by September 1, 2014. For instructions on how to exclude yourself from the Class or object to the Settlement, please see [www.DreamfieldsSettlement.com](http://www.DreamfieldsSettlement.com) or call 1-866-430-6382.

The Court will hold a hearing on September 24, 2014 to consider whether to approve the Settlement, and a request for attorneys' fees and expenses up to \$2,920,000, which would include an incentive award for the five plaintiffs named in the lawsuits to an amount not to exceed \$20,000 in total. The attorneys' fees, expenses, and incentive award will be paid separately by Dakota Growers and will not reduce payments to Class Members. You or your own lawyer may appear at the hearing at your own expense.

For more information or a Claim Form:  
[www.DreamfieldsSettlement.com](http://www.DreamfieldsSettlement.com)  
or 1-866-430-6382