

Aromatherapy and Parkinson's

What is Parkinson's?

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurological condition. People with Parkinson's do not have enough of the chemical dopamine because some of the nerve cells that produce it have died. Although it is not clear why this happens researchers think it is a combination of genetic and environmental factors that cause the dopamine-producing nerve cells to die.

Dopamine allows messages to be sent to the parts of the brain that co-ordinate movement and therefore plays a vital role in regulating the movement of the body. With the loss of dopamine-producing nerve cells, these parts of the brain are unable to work normally; causing the symptoms of Parkinson's to appear. The level of dopamine then continues to fall slowly over many years, causing symptoms to further develop and new symptoms to appear.

It is thought around 1 in 500 people are affected by Parkinson's disease, which means there are an estimated 127,000 people in the UK with the condition.

Most people with Parkinson's start to develop symptoms when they're over 50, although around 1 in 20 people with the condition first experience symptoms when they are under 40. Men are slightly more likely to get Parkinson's disease than women.

Symptoms of Parkinson's

There are 3 main symptoms:

- involuntary shaking of particular parts of the body (tremor)
- slow movement (shuffling gait)
- stiff and inflexible muscles.

People living with Parkinson's also experience a wide range of other physical and psychological symptoms including:

- depression and anxiety,
- balance problems (may increase the chance of a fall),
- loss of sense of smell (anosmia),
- insomnia,
- memory problems

How can Aromatherapy Help with Parkinson's?

Although no treatments or therapies have been scientifically proven to slow, stop or reverse the progression of Parkinson's disease some people with Parkinson's disease find complementary therapies help them feel better and can ease their symptoms. As with any conditions different things work for different people so it is best to explore what works for you.

One of the benefits of aromatherapy is that it can be administered in many different ways – massage, inhalation, bath (risk of slipping), compresses, douches, ointments, creams and lotions but when you book an appointment with an aromatherapist it is most likely that the method will be through an aromatherapy massage.

This method combines the inhalation of essential oils via the olfactory/ limbic/ hormonal/ emotional response and absorption upon application to the skin. The oils will be chosen by the aromatherapist to have the desired effect on the client be it for their analgesic, anti-depressant, sedating or stimulating properties, to name just a few.

It is vital that the essential oils are selected, measured and applied correctly and for obvious safety reasons should only be blended under advice from a qualified Aromatherapist.

Reduce inflammation of the brain: Immortelle (*Helichrysum Italicum*); Frankincense (*Boswellia Carterii*).

Reduce tremors: Basil (*Ocimum Basilicum*); Frankincense (*Boswellia Carterii*); Lavender (*Lavandula Angustifolia*); Clary Sage (*Salvia Sclarea*); Marjoram (*Origanum Marjorana*); Vetiver (*Vetiveria Zizanoides*).

Help with stiffness and rigidity: Frankincense (*Boswellia Carterii*); Basil (*Ocimum Basilicum*); Lavender (*Lavandula Angustifolia*); Sandalwood (*Santalum Album*).

Ease symptoms of stress: Lavender (*Lavandula Angustifolia*); Roman (Anthemis Nobilis) and German Chamomile (*Chamomilla Recutita*); Neroli (*Citrus Aurantium*); Frankincense (*Boswellia Carterii*); Rose Otto (*Rosa Damascena*); Clary Sage (*Salvia Sclarea*); Bergamot (*Citrus Bergamia*); Ylang Ylang (*Cananga Odorata*); Sandalwood (*Santalum Album*); Sweet Marjoram (*Origanum Marjorana*); Mandarin (*Citrus Reticulata*); Geranium (*Pelargonium Graveolens*); Jasmine (*Jasminum Officinale*).

Insomnia: Lavender (*Lavandula Angustifolia*); Neroli (*Citrus Aurantium*); Sweet Marjoram (*Origanum Marjorana*); Roman Chamomile (*Anthemis Nobilis*).

Help with muscular tension and the circulation: Marjoram (*Origanum Marjorana*); Basil (*Ocimum Basilicum*); Rosemary (*Rosmarinus Officinalis*); Ginger (*Zingiber Officinale*); Black Pepper (*Piper Nigrum*); Peppermint (*Mentha Piperita*); Lemongrass (*Cymbopogon Citratus*); Geranium (*Pelargonium Graveolens*).

Always contact a qualified Aromatherapist who will guide you on the oils that are suitable for your individual needs.

Research

Parkinson's disease Project by Shirley Price (positivehealth.com)

This research study used a blend of essential oils that included Marjoram (*Origanum majorana*), Clary Sage (*Salvia sclarea*) and Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*). The patients were divided into three groups: the first group received a regular aromatherapy massage from a therapist along with using essential oils at home in the form of massage and baths. The second group used essential oils at home, but did not receive a massage from a therapist, and the third group received regular massage sessions from a therapist, but no home use of essential oils.

The symptoms studied included: Tremors, slurred speech, rigidity, muscle or joint pain, cramp, low energy, weakness in limbs, hypertension, memory loss, insomnia, constipation, headaches, nausea, nightmares, difficulty in swallowing, anxiety and/or depression.

The results, at the end of the 9' month study, showed improvement in the two groups using aromatherapy, and less improvement in the group receiving massage without essential oils.

Reference:

Parkinson's news today

Normal Doige The Brain's Way of Healing

Parkinson's UK

www.nhs.uk

Blog.parkinsonsrecovery.com

Positivehealth.com

www.nhs.uk/conditions/

draxe.com/

The Encyclopedia of Essential Oils, Julia Lawless

The Complete Guide to Aromatherapy, Salvatore Battaglia

To find a practitioner to discuss your needs [click here](#)