

## Aromatherapy and Depression

### What is Depression?

Depression is more than simply feeling unhappy or fed up for a few days.

Most people go through periods of feeling down, but when you're depressed you feel persistently sad for weeks or months, rather than just a few days.

Some people think depression is trivial and not a genuine health condition. They're wrong – it is a real illness with real symptoms. Depression isn't a sign of weakness or something you can "snap out of" by "pulling yourself together".

### How to tell if you have Depression?

Depression affects people in different ways and can cause a wide variety of symptoms. They range from lasting feelings of unhappiness and hopelessness, to losing interest in the things you used to enjoy and feeling very tearful. Many people with depression also have symptoms of anxiety. There can be physical symptoms too, such as feeling constantly tired, sleeping badly, having no appetite or sex drive and various aches and pains.

The symptoms of depression range from mild to severe. At its mildest, you may simply feel persistently low in spirit, while severe depression can make you feel suicidal, that life is no longer worth living. Most people experience feelings of stress, unhappiness or anxiety during difficult times. A low mood may improve after a short period of time, rather than being a sign of depression.

### What causes Depression?

Sometimes there's a trigger for depression. Life-changing events, such as bereavement, losing your job or even having a baby, can bring it on.

People with a family history of depression are more likely to experience it themselves. But you can also become depressed for no obvious reason.

Depression is fairly common, affecting about one in 10 people at some point during their life. It affects men and women, young and old.

Studies have shown that about 4% of children aged five to 16 in the UK are anxious or depressed.

## **Treating depression**

Treatment for depression can involve a combination of lifestyle changes, talking therapies and medication. Your recommended treatment will be based on whether you have mild, moderate or severe depression.

If you have mild depression, your doctor may suggest waiting to see whether it improves on its own, while monitoring your progress. This is known as “watchful waiting”. They may also suggest lifestyle measures such as exercise and self-help groups.

Talking therapies, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) are often used for mild depression that isn’t improving or moderate depression. Antidepressants are also sometimes prescribed.

For moderate to severe depression, a combination of talking therapy and antidepressants is often recommended. If you have severe depression, you may be referred to a specialist mental health team for intensive specialist talking treatments and prescribed medication.

## **Living with depression**

Many people with depression benefit by making lifestyle changes, such as getting more exercise cutting down on alcohol, giving up smoking and eating healthily.

Reading a self-help book or joining a support group is also worthwhile. They can help you gain a better understanding about what causes you to feel depressed. Sharing your experiences with others in a similar situation can also be very supportive.

For more information please visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## **How aromatherapy helps for Depression?**

Many essential oils have marked antidepressant properties and this is probably one of the areas where aromatherapy is most valuable in present day society, offering a safe, natural and non-additive alternative to the millions of tablets prescribed annually for depression and anxiety.

Many essential oils that help depression can also relieve stress because many have a balancing effect probably due to the ester content. Essential oils have many properties: those needed to lift someone out of a depressive state cannot only target the depression but also maintain equilibrium and other physical or mental problems.

Some essential oils have been singled out empirically for their effects on the human psyche, such as *Boswellia carteri* (Frankincense), *Melissa officinalis* (Melissa), *Euclyptus staigeriana* (Lemon scented iron bark), *Ocimum basilicum var. album* (European basil) and *Thymus vulgaris ct. Thymol* (Thyme) that have been recognized as being good for nervous depression.

Each of these oils is subtly different in its action and in its appeal to the individual and the Aromatherapist needs to use his/ her intuition and skill in carefully choosing the best oil, or blend of oils, for each person. Preference for a certain aroma may tell us much about a person's mental/emotional state at the time and as the causes of depression are many and varied, so must be the choice of treatment oil.

The sympathetic understanding of the therapist and the human touch involved in massage is an important part of the therapy. Massage almost always forms the core of the treatment, but aromatic baths are a very valuable way of prolonging the effect between treatments. Essential oils can be used as a room spray to influence mood too or a drop or two evaporated.

Essential oils which can be used for Depression conditions:

#### **Essential Oils suggestion for Depression**

- Bergamot oil (*Citrus bergamia*)
- Chamomile, Roman oil (*Chamaenemum nobile*)
- Clary sage oil (*Salvia sclarea*)
- Everlasting oil (*Helichrysum italicum*)
- Frankincense oil (*Boswellia carteri*)
- French Basil oil (*Ocimum basilicum*)
- Lavender oil (*Lavandula angustifolia*)
- Lemon Balm oil (*Melissa officinalis*)
- Neroli oil (*Citrus aurantium var. amara*)
- Rose oil (*Rosa damascene, Rosa centifolia*)
- Sandalwood oil (*Santalum album*)
- Sweet Marjoram oil (*Origanum majorana*)
- Vetiver oil (*Vetiveria zizanoides*)
- Ylang Ylang oil (*Cananga odorata var. genuina*)
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#### **Essential Oils suggestion for Calming and Uplifting**

- Bergamot oil (*Citrus bergamia*)
- Chamomile Roman oil (*Chamaenemum nobile*)

- Geranium oil (*Pelargonium graveolens*)
- Jasmine oil (*Jasminum officinale*)
- Lavender oil (*Lavandula angustifolia*)
- Lavandin oil (*Lavandula x intermedia*)
- Neroli oil (*Citrus aurantium var. amara*)
- Patchouli oil (*Pogostemon cablin*)
- Sweet Marjoram oil (*Origanum marjorana*)

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

**Reference:**

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- Aromatherapeutic Blending: Essential Oils in Synergy, Rhind, Jennifer Peace
- The Complete Guide to Clinical Aromatherapy and Essential Oils of the Physical Body: Essential Oils for Beginners, Ashley, Elizabeth
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- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/migraine>

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