

Aromatherapy and Epilepsy

What is Epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a common condition that affects the brain and causes frequent seizures. Seizures are bursts of electrical activity in the brain that temporarily affect how it works. They can cause a wide range of symptoms.

Epilepsy can start at any age, but usually starts either in childhood or in people over 60. It's often lifelong, but can sometimes get slowly better over time.

Symptoms of epilepsy

Seizures can affect people in different ways, depending on which part of the brain is involved.

Possible symptoms include:

- Uncontrollable jerking and shaking – called a “fit”
- Losing awareness and starting blankly into space
- Becoming stiff
- Strange sensations – such as a “rising” feeling in the tummy, unusual smells or tastes, and a tingling feeling in your arms or legs
- Collapsing

Sometimes you might pass out and not remember what happened.

When to get medical help

See your GP if you think you might have had a seizure for the first time.

This doesn't mean you have epilepsy, as a seizure can have several causes and sometimes they're just a one-off, but you should see a doctor to find out why it happened.

Treatments for epilepsy

Treatment can help most people with epilepsy have fewer seizures or stop having seizures completely.

Treatments include:

- Medicine called anti-epileptic drugs – these are the main treatment
- Surgery to remove a small part of the brain that's causing the seizures

- A procedure to put a small electrical device inside the body that can help control seizures
- A special diet (ketogenic diet) that can help control seizures

Some people need treatment for life. But you might be able to stop treatment if your seizures disappear over time.

Living with epilepsy

Epilepsy is usually a lifelong condition, but most people with it are able to have normal lives if their seizures are well controlled. Most children with epilepsy are able to go to a mainstream school, take part in most activities and sports, and get a job when they're older. But you may have to think about your epilepsy before you do things such as driving, certain jobs, swimming, using contraception and planning a pregnancy.

Advice is available from your GP or support groups to help you adjust to life with epilepsy.

Causes of epilepsy

In epilepsy, the electrical signals in the brain become scrambled and there are sometimes sudden bursts of electrical activity. This is what causes seizures.

In most cases, it's not clear why this happens. It's possible it could be partly caused by your genes affecting how your brain works, as around one in three people with epilepsy have a family member with it.

Occasionally, epilepsy can be caused by damage to the brain, such as damage from:

- A stroke
- A brain tumour
- A severe head injury
- Drug abuse or alcohol misuse
- A brain infection
- A lack of oxygen during birth

For more information please visit www.nhs.uk

How aromatherapy helps for epilepsy?

When you use an essential oil, it has many benefits. It can work on the physical condition but it also has emotional and spiritual aspects too. Sometimes this can be wonderful, other times it can be less wonderful.

There are a number of essential oils that can provoke an epileptic-type fit in people who are susceptible, so it is extremely important to be certain that a person does not suffer from epilepsy before beginning any treatment. A properly trained Aromatherapist will always include this in the question asked before the first treatment.

Essential oils, when used knowledgably in correct amounts and all known precautions are adhered to, are safe. There are a few oils, which may be hazardous in certain condition such as epilepsy and pregnancy, and are therefore best used with caution.

The amount used and the frequency of use, together with the correct packaging (e.g. integral drop dispensers), means that any possible harmful effects are minimized.

Safety is of paramount importance when using essential oils as therapeutic agents and all persons connected with their use; storage and transport have the responsibility of keeping abreast of and complying with current legislation. Aromatherapists use essential oils only in very small amounts to achieve benefit from their healing properties.

Essential oils which can be used for Epilepsy conditions:

- Basil oil (*Ocimum basilicum*)
- Bay Laurel oil (*Laurus nobilis*)
- Black Cumin oil (*Nigella sativa*)
- Cedar Himalayan oil (*Cedrus deodara*)
- Chamomile German oil (*Matricaria recutita*)
- Chamomile Roman oil (*Anthemis nobilis*)
- Clary Sage oil (*Salvia sclarea flos, fol*)
- French Lavender (*Lavendula stoechas*)
- Lemongrass oil (*Cymbopogon citratus*)
- Linden Blossom (*Tilia europaea*)
- Neroli oil (*Citrus aurantium var. amara flos.*)
- Petitgrain oil (*Citrus aurantium var. amara*)
- Spikenard oil (*Nardostachys jatamansi*)
- Sweet Marjoram oil (*Origanum majorana*)
- Valerian European oil (*Valeriana officinalio*)
- Valerian Indian oil (*Valeriana wallichii rad.*)



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

Reference:

- Fragrance and Wellbeing Plant Aromatics and Their Influence on the Psyche, Rhind, Jennifer Peace
- The Directory of Essential Oils, Sellar, Wanda
- Aromatherapy for Health Professionals – Elsevieron VitalSource , Price, Len; Price Shirley
- Aromatherapy an A-Z: The most comprehensive guide to aromatherapy ever published, Davis, Patricia
- Clinical Aromatherapy – Elsevieron VitalSource: Esssential Oils in Practice, Buckle, Jane.
- Essential Oils Safety – Elsevieron VitalSource: A Guide for Health Care Professionals, Tisserand, Robert; Young, Rodney
- Essential oils: A Handbook for Aromatherapy Practice, Rhind, Jennifer Peace
- Aromatherapeutic Blending: Essential Oils in Synergy, Rhind, Jennifer Peace
- Ayurveda & Aromatherapy: The Earth Essential Guide to Ancient Wisdom and Modern Healing, Miller, DR. Light: Miller, Dr. Bryan: Diamond, Harvey
- The encyclopedia of Essential Oils, Julia Lawless
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetes>

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