

Aromatherapy and Asthma

What is Asthma?

Asthma UK reports that:

“Asthma is a long-term condition that affects your airways - the tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs. You could say that someone with asthma has 'sensitive' airways that are inflamed and ready to react when they come into contact with something they don't like.

Asthma tends to run in families, especially when there's also a history of allergies and/or smoking.

How does asthma affect the airways?

When a person with asthma comes into contact with something that irritates their sensitive airways even more (an asthma trigger), it causes their body to react in three ways:

1. the muscles around the walls of the airways tighten so that the airways become narrower
2. the lining of the airways becomes inflamed and starts to swell
3. sticky mucus or phlegm sometimes builds up, which can narrow the airways even more.

These reactions cause the airways to become narrower and irritated - making it difficult to breathe and leading to asthma symptoms, such as chest tightness, wheezing, or coughing.

Who gets asthma?

In the UK, around 5.4 million people are currently receiving treatment for asthma. That's one in every 12 adults and one in every 11 children. Asthma affects more boys than girls. Asthma in adults is more common in women than men. Asthma can sometimes be defined as a type, such as 'occupational'. Approximately five per cent of people with asthma have severe asthma.

Can asthma be cured?

Here at Asthma UK we're striving to find a cure, but currently there is no cure for asthma. The good news, though, is that there are lots of safe and effective treatments available to manage the symptoms. You just need to work with your GP or asthma nurse to find the ones that work well for you, and get into good habits so you take them exactly as prescribed, so you can get the benefits.

Is asthma a serious condition?

Tragically, three people die every day because of asthma attacks and research shows that two thirds of asthma deaths are preventable. The reassuring fact is that most people with asthma who get the right treatment - and take it correctly - can manage their symptoms and get on with what they want to do in life.”

How Can Aromatherapy Help with Asthma?

Certain essential oils may help to reduce the occurrence and severity of asthma attacks by helping to open the airways and reduce inflammation. Potential essential oils include:

- Clary Sage (*Salvia sclarea*)
- Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*, *E. smithii*, *E. radiata*, *E. dives*)
- Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*)
- Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*)
- Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*, *L.spica*)
- Marjoram (*Origanum majorana*)
- Melissa (*Melissa officinalis*)
- Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)
- Frankincense (*Boswellia sacra*)
- Myrtle (*Myrtus communis*)
- Tea Tree (*Melaleuca alternifolia*)

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

References:

<https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/understanding-asthma/what-is-asthma/>

The Art of Aromatherapy by Robert Tisserand

Aromatherapy – An A-Z by Patricia Davies

The Complete Guide to Aromatherapy by Salvatore Battaglia

The Encyclopedia of Essential Oils by Julia Lawless

Encyclopedia of Aromatherapy by Chrissie Wildwood

Essential Oils in Colour by Rosemary Caddy

Aromatherapy Workbook by Marcel Lavabre

Aromatherapy for Health Professionals by Shirley and Len Price

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