

Aromatherapy and Cerebral Palsy

What is the Cerebral Palsy?

Cerebral Palsy UK (<http://www.cerebralpalsy.org.uk/cerebral-palsy.html>) defines this condition as: “a term used to cover several neurological conditions.”

What Causes Cerebral Palsy?

These conditions are caused before, during or shortly after birth as a result of injury to the brain due to any of the following reasons:

- Limited or interrupted oxygen supply to the brain
- A bleed within the baby's brain
- A premature or difficult birth process
- The mother catching an infection whilst pregnant
- Changes in genes which affect the development of the brain

Cerebral Palsy can affect muscle control, coordination, and tone, reflexes, posture and balance. Often a person with Cerebral Palsy will display signs of the condition, but the effects can vary greatly from person to person.

The NHS describes three different categories of Cerebral Palsy, it is also possible to have a combination of categories which is referred to as 'Mixed Cerebral Palsy'.

Spastic Cerebral Palsy

This affects muscle stiffness or weakness. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Athetoid Cerebral Palsy

This affects muscle tone, causing involuntary spasms. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Ataxic Cerebral Palsy

This affects balance and coordination. [Click here to learn more.](#)

The effect Cerebral Palsy has on individuals ranges from the very mild, to more severe cases that can make it difficult for people to control their limbs.”

There is currently no cure for Cerebral Palsy.

How Can Aromatherapy Help with Cerebral Palsy?

Scope.org.uk recommends massage for sufferers of cerebral palsy, with the aim of the following benefits:

- “Stimulates circulation and increases the flow of oxygen around the body.
- Stimulates digestion and elimination of waste thus helping with colic or constipation. It may also help premature babies absorb food and gain weight more easily.
- Stimulates the flow of lymph and elimination of toxins. This will aid the immune system and help resistance to infections.
- Encourages muscle co-ordination.
- Stimulates the central nervous system. This is important for both neurological and motor development.
- Improves skin.
- Can aid recovery from childhood ailments such as asthma, catarrh, sleep problems, teething and earache.
- Stimulates release of endorphins (happy hormones) that induce feelings of well-being
- Stimulates awareness.
- Promotes trust between parent and child and can help children feel more secure
- Reduces anxiety.
- Promotes calmness and relaxation.
- It also improves bonding and attachment for parents and child by:
 - Skin to skin contact
 - Eye to eye contact
 - Smiling
 - Soothing sounds made by massager
 - Cuddling
 - Response and interactions
 - Gives parents confidence in coping with the child

You can massage to music, either soothing or stimulating, depending on the time of day. Choosing the right time to massage your baby can make all the difference to the enjoyment of the experience. Only massage your baby if he or she is in good health.”

What Massage Medium to Use?

A baby's skin is very sensitive and prone to allergies so it is advisable to do a patch test 24 hours before commencing massage. The most common massage medium is oil. Cold pressed, organic vegetable oils such as sunflower seed or almond oil deliver nutrients to the skin. Baby oils are not advised, as these are mineral oils and so do not penetrate the skin.

The IFA do not recommend that essential oils are used on any child under the age of two years. After that age, the following may be considered at a low dosage, and under the guidance of a fully qualified Aromatherapist:

- **Mandarin** (*Citrus nobilis*)
- **Lavender** (*Lavandula angustifolia*)
- **Roman Chamomile** (*Chamaemelum nobile*)

References:

<https://www.scope.org.uk/support/families/therapies/baby-massage>
www.cerebralpalsy.org.uk
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cerebral-palsy/>

Research Trials:

None to date

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