

Aromatherapy and Psoriasis

What is Psoriasis?

Psoriasis is a skin condition that causes red, flaky, crusty patches of skin covered with silvery scales.

These patches normally appear on your elbows, knees, scalp and lower back, but can appear anywhere on your body. Most people are only affected with small patches. In some cases, the patches can be itchy or sore.

Psoriasis can start at any age, but most often develops in adults under 35 years old. The condition affects men and women equally.

The severity of psoriasis varies greatly from person to person. For some people it's just a minor irritation, but for others it can have a major impact on their quality of life.

Psoriasis is a long-lasting (chronic) disease that usually involves periods when you have no symptoms or mild symptoms, followed by periods when symptoms are more severe.

Common types of psoriasis

- Plaque psoriasis (psoriasis vulgaris)
- Scalp psoriasis
- Nail psoriasis
- Guttate psoriasis
- Inverse (flexural) psoriasis

Pustular psoriasis

- Generalised pustular psoriasis or von Zumbusch psoriasis
- Palmophantar pustular psoriasis
- Acropustulosis

Erythrodermic psoriasis

What causes of Psoriasis?

People with psoriasis have an increased production of skin cells. Skin cells are normally made and replaced every three to four weeks, but in psoriasis this process only lasts about three to seven days. The resulting build-up of skin cells is what creates the patches associated with psoriasis.

Although the process isn't fully understood, it's thought to be related to a problem with the immune system. The immune system is your body's defense against disease and infection, but for people with psoriasis, it attacks healthy skin cells by mistake.

Psoriasis can run in families, although the exact role that genetics plays in causing psoriasis is unclear. Many people's psoriasis symptoms start or become worse because of a certain event, known as a "trigger". Possible triggers of psoriasis include an injury to your skin, throat infections and using certain medicines. The condition isn't contagious, so it can't be spread from person to person.

For more information please visit www.nhs.uk

How aromatherapy helps for Psoriasis?

The primary aim is to control the extent and severity of the disease, thus limiting the damage to quality of life. Psoriasis is particularly difficult to treat and not surprisingly the more severe the symptoms, the more difficult it is to provide effective treatment. Each case is assessed individually, including especially the psychological impact of the condition. The concomitant use of essential oils for both physical and psychological benefit is an important treatment strategy.

Aromatherapy is a very valuable de-stressing technique, so in this area at least can be a great help. All the sedative and antidepressant oils are suitable.

In aromatherapy there are two main routes by which essential oils enter the body: inhalation and transdermal absorption. Therefore we might expect to see essential oils directly acting on the skin itself. It is known that essential oils have several properties that can be of importance in skin health: for example, skin barrier function, texture and hydration levels can be maintained or indeed restored, inflammation can be reduced, cell regeneration stimulated, wound healing enhanced, infections can be controlled or prevented, and even allergic responses and itching can be alleviated.

In the epidermis, keratinocytes are important in the formation and maintenance of structure: this is achieved via differentiation. Keratinocytes provide a barrier, but they also control levels of hydration, wrinkles and pigmentation. When keratinocyte differentiation is disturbed, the barrier function is affected and several problems such as excessive skin dryness and disorders such as atopic dermatitis and psoriasis can manifest.

Skin diseases, caution is needed when applying essential oils to diseased or damaged skin, because it is more prone to allergic reactions, as well as being more readily permeable to essential oils.

Psoriasis can often be helped by aromatherapy but the choice of oils, both essential and carrier, is crucial. Certain allergies can be triggered and this should also be considered.

Essential oils and Carrier oils which can be used for Psoriasis conditions:

Essential Oils suggestion for Psoriasis

- Bergamot oil (*Citrus bergamia*)
- Cade oil (*Juniperus oxycedrus*)
- Cajuput oil (*Melaleuca leucodendron*)
- Carrot oil (*Daucus carota*)
- Cedarwood, Atlas oil (*Cedrus atlantica*)
- Chamomile Morocco oil (*Ormenis horticaulis*)
- Geranium oil (*Pelargonium graveolens*)
- Helichrysum oil (*Helichrysum italicum, ssp.Serotinum*)
- Immortelle oil (*Helichrysum angustifolium*)
- Jasmine oil (*Jasminum grandiflorum*)
- Juniper oil (*Juniperus communis*)
- Lavender oil (*Lavandula angustifolia*)
- Lemon balm oil (*Melissa officinalis*)
- Lemon verbena oil (*Aloysia triphylla*)
- Lemongrass oil (*Cymbopogon flexuosus*)
- Manuka oil (*Leptospermum scoparium*)
- Marigold oil (*Calendula officinalis*)
- Mexican Marigold oil (*Tagetes minuta*)
- Myrtle oil (*Myrtus communis*)
- Niaouli oil (*Melaleuca viridiflora*)
- Rosehip oil (*Rosa rubiginosa*)
- Sandalwood oil (*Santalum album*)
- Spikenard oil (*Nardostachys jatamansi*)
- Sweet Thyme oil (*Thymus vulgaris Ct.*)
- White Birch oil (*Betula alba*)

Carrier Oils suggestion for Psoriasis

- Evening Primrose oil (*Oenothera biennis*)
- Jojoba oil (*Simmondsia chinensis*)
- Kukui nut oil (*Aleurites moluccanus*)

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

Reference:

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- Essential Oil Safety – Elsevier on VitalSource: A Guide for Health Care Professionals, Tisserand, Robert, Young, Rodney
- Aromatherapy an A-Z: The most comprehensive guide to Aromatherapy ever published, Davis, Patricia
- Aromadermatology: Aromatherapy in the Treatment and care: Bensouilah, Janetta
- The Practice of Aromatherapy: Jean Valnet
- The encyclopedia of Essential Oils, Julia Lawless
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Psoriasis>
- <https://www.organicfacts.net/health-benefits/oils/kukui-nut-oil.html>

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