

aromatherapy in the salon

DI The International
Dermal Institute®
Postgraduate Education in Skin and Body Therapy

aromatherapy in professional esthetics is the use of essential oils in a treatment, carefully selected for the individual client and based on a professional consultation.

Even though essential oils are formulated with many professional skin care products as a part of the fragrance, our discussion of "aromatherapy oils" refers to essential oils (in a pure form) blended into a carrier (usually a vegetable oil) with no added chemicals, preservatives or fragrance. Essential oils are extracted from plants, herbs and flowers. Aromatherapy oils are generally between a 5 to 35 percent strength depending on the manufacturer, usage and area of the body to be treated.

High concentration and 100 percent strength essential oils should not be applied directly to the skin because they can cause serious side effects, skin reactions and, in the case of narcotic oils, sickness. A high concentration oil may be indicated for use in the bath because it is diluted with gallons of water before coming in contact with the skin.

Although individual essential oils are used in aromatherapy, we have had the best results by using blends of several oils together for a synergistic effect.

Essential oils, when blended into the carrier base, are then ready for use in esthetics. They can be applied to the skin with massage, warm infusions, bathing or



compresses. Because of their volatile nature, aromatherapy oils should be packaged in either aluminum or glass bottles.

Aromatherapy oils should not be exposed to heat, light or hand contact, as this will degrade the oils. This includes diluting the oils with water, even though they can be added to a bath. Store aromatherapy oils in their original bottles, in the dark and tightly closed.

Each essential oil has its own unique "personality" and is used for particular benefits. For example, we have found lavender oil is excellent

for burns and irritation, ylang-ylang produces super results on oilier skins, and geranium oil is very calming and anti-inflammatory. When carefully selected and blended for skin care usage, these effects are subtle and consistent. Probably the best policy is to buy only top quality oils from reputable suppliers who specialize in aromatherapy and offer full training and education.

aromatherapy in action

body massage – The best and most effective way to include aromatherapy oils in a treatment is with massage. This does not mean a rigorous and stimulating combination of petrissage and kneading, but rather a gentle and rhythmic routine to relax and de-stress the entire body. Even when correctly applied, oils will only be absorbed for about seven to ten minutes. They will not be absorbed if applied when the body is sweating through anxiety, heat or after exercise. A large amount of body fat will impair their absorption, as will water retention and poor circulation.

The aromatherapy oils should be selected for their effects on the individual client, either relaxing, detoxifying or stimulating. If the entire body is to be treated, the sequence should be as follows: legs, spine, back of the head and neck, feet, face, upper chest and then abdomen. Apply the oil to each region and after massaging that particular area, move on to the

next region, applying the oil and massaging that area. Never overapply the oil. It is not necessary to “slip and glide” as with traditional European massage. For a relaxing massage, press each pressure point for two to three seconds. For a pick me up, hold each point for a single second.

facial massage - Because of their strong anti-bacterial effects, aromatherapy oils are very beneficial to the skin condition, especially oily and problem skins. The oil should be applied after cleansing and light steaming (for hydration not elimination), and applied with a light pressure point massage. After the massage, a gel or cream masque would be indicated (clay-based will absorb the oil and be too stimulating). A Dr. Lucas Pulverisator can be utilized with the aromatherapy oil for rehydration, and the benefits sealed in with a light moisturizer.

Although clients with oilier skins may be a little wary of using any essential oil, including aromatherapy oils on their skins, it should be remembered that aromatherapy oils are made up of molecules such as alcohols, phenols and terpenes and because they are so quickly absorbed, little trace of them is actually left on the skin.

bath treatments - A very effective way to use aromatherapy oils is in a warm bath. The room should be warm, and the doors and windows should be closed to allow for inhalation of the vapors. The body should be immersed in the bath for at least 10 minutes, and the ideal temperature of the water is about 100°F. The odoriferous molecules of the aromatherapy oil stimulate the nerve endings that are an extension of the limbic portion of the brain which is responsible for our feelings of pleasure, contentment and well-being.

They also connect with the

hypothalamus, which sends chemical messages to the pituitary gland which controls every endocrine gland in the body. This effects the thyroid, adrenals and ovaries, and by this indirect route, the aromatherapy oils can exert a powerful influence over the hormonal secretions of the body.

A familiar example of smell affecting the body functions is when our digestive juices begin to flow when the odor of cooking is detected.

compresses - Compresses or poultices are an age-old way of drawing impurities out through the skin, to soothe irritation or relieve congestion. They were one of the first treatments in medicine, and their history goes back thousands of years. Traditionally, the most common compresses were made from mustard seed, fennel or linseed, and were particularly popular when treating colds and skin problems. Compresses or poultices with aromatherapy oils can be used for a concentrated facial treatment, but should not be considered for delicate or sensitive skins.

Dry ingredients such as wheat germ, bran or herbs are mixed with the selected aromatherapy oil and warm water into a stretchy paste. The mixture then is sandwiched between a square of muslin gauze to form a compress. This treatment is very effective during a facial or in a back treatment. Place damp eye pads over the eyes before a facial compress is applied. Mold the compress to the skin and leave on for 10 to 15 minutes. The compress may be placed under warm steam, but it should not be warm enough to cause sweating of the skin.

warm facial infusions - The use of the Dr. Lucas Pulverisator is a very effective way to rehydrate and soothe the skin with aromatherapy oils. The Dr. Lucas

should be filled with distilled water in the inner container, and allowed to heat up. The front glass beaker should be filled with a herbal infusion, such as chamomile, and a few drops of the selected aromatherapy oil. As the water in the inner chamber heats up, steam will be produced, and the pressure from the steam sucks up the infusion and mixes it with the warm steam to form a gentle and moist pulverisation. This should be directed at the skin for 5 to 7 minutes, thus providing a marvelously hydrating and soothing application, which incorporates both gentle moisturizing and inhalation of the vapor.

Aromatherapy is not a new technique. The massage treatment with essential oils dates back to ancient China and Tibet. As we study and learn more about aromatherapy, it is possible to “read the body and skin” to discover even more ways to help our clients in their daily health and beauty care.

references

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