

Ancient Wisdom and Modern Healing

By Radhia Gleis, PhD., C.C.N.

Recently, I have been exploring the efficacy and therapeutic use of essential oils for myself and my clients. I have been studying the application of essential oils as a complement to my nutritional recommendations. Essential oils can be used for skin and scalp conditions such as acne, athlete's foot, burns, cuts, dandruff, eczema, insect bites, parasites, sunburn, warts, and wrinkles. They are recommended for muscle, joint and circulation problems such as arthritis, high blood pressure, cellulite, aches and pains, and varicose veins. For respiratory problems and infections, various essential oils are prescribed for allergies, asthma, earache, sinus infections, congestion, and colds and flu.

Essential oils are also used to improve digestion, promote hormonal balance, and tone the nervous system in conditions including anxiety, depression, sexual dysfunction, and exhaustion. Essential oils can be used as quick and effective mood enhancers, for increasing energy and alertness or reducing stress and promoting relaxation. Essential oils can be used as perfumes and lotions, and can be used as incense to improve the atmosphere in houses and offices.

Essential oils have been used for thousands of years in ancient civilizations. They were not only the primary source of perfumes for the ancient civilizations of Egypt, India, Greece, and Rome, but they were considered mankind's first medicine. Such oils have been found in 3,000-year-old tombs in the Pyramids, and early Greek physicians, including Hippocrates, mentioned aromatic plant essences and oil massages for their healing and mood-enhancing qualities. There are over 200 references to aromatics, incense, and ointments throughout the Old and New Testament of the Bible. Considered as valuable as gold, the infant Jesus was offered the gift of frankincense and myrrh. Mary Magdalene anointed the feet of Jesus with precious oils; Moses used aromatic substances to protect the Israelites from the plagues that decimated the ancient Egyptians. The Romans associated essential oils and their fine aromas with wealth and success. Ayurvedic medicine, the world's oldest healing system, has long recommended essential oil massage as a health treatment for many conditions.

A great deal of documented research reveals that most viruses, fungi and bacteria cannot live in the presence of many essential oils. Perhaps this explains why during the 15th century, a legendary group of thieves, assumed to be spice traders and perfumers, were protected from the Black Plague as they robbed the bodies of the dead. For thousands of years women (and men) have collected plants to be used as healing medicines. They gathered the herbs by the waning and waxing moon, the cycles of the seasons, the ebb and flow of the universe and the natural rhythms of their bodies. This wisdom is and was passed on from mother to daughter, and teacher to apprentice. It was around the 14th century when the 'witch-hunts' began in Europe and herbalism encountered its first big

obstacle. These skills were feared by the Roman Catholic Church and thousands would be persecuted for using herbs. Despite the Church teachings that using herbs was evil, many met in secret to worship and pass on their knowledge.

Essential oils work by entering the body in two ways, through the nose and through the skin. When a fragrance is inhaled, the odor molecules travel up the nose where they are absorbed by hundreds of millions of nerve cells in the mucus membrane. Here they connect to receptor sites in the olfactory epithelial lining. When stimulated by odor molecules, this lining of nerve cells triggers electrical impulses to the olfactory bulb in the brain.

The nose is a powerful sense organ, and the sense of smell is connected directly to the limbic system of the brain. Research has shown that aromas and the sense of smell influence memory recall, moods, and bodily responses, because the limbic system is directly connected to those parts of the brain that control heart rate, blood pressure, breathing, memory, stress, and hormone balance. Essential oils can have profound physiological and psychological effects, with their potent aromas they can be used to enhance moods, promote relaxation, fight infection, initiate regeneration, work like hormones and increase energy levels.

Essential oils and human blood share similar qualities, for instance, essential oils have hormone – like properties, which help bring balance to many physiological systems of the human body. These hormone – like chemicals can stimulate the production of hormones from the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus governs the production of growth hormones, reproductive hormones, thyroid hormones, and neurotransmitters, such as serotonin.

Essential oils can also be used for weight reduction because of their unique ability to stimulate the section in the brain that governs our feeling of satiety or fullness following a meal. Dr. Alan R. Hirsch, M.D., a neurologist, and the founder of the Smell and Taste Treatment and Research Foundation, Inc., in Chicago has done most of the innovative research in the field of Smell and appetite suppression.

In his research, Dr. Hirsch asked 3,193 overweight people (mostly women) aged 18-64 to inhale a variety of “neutral” sweet smells, including banana, green apple, and peppermint, three times in each nostril whenever they were hungry. After six months, he found that, on average, the participants in his study lost five pounds a month. Similar research has been done at the Human Neuro-Sensory Laboratory in Washington, D.C. and this research fully supports Dr. Hirsch’s findings. Researchers there studied eighty people who were given one of two inhalation devices. One contained a combination of specially selected scents; the other was a placebo (neutral un-detectable scent). All of these subjects were asked to inhale the scents three times five to six minutes before and after eating a

meal. At the end of the six-month trial, those participants who used the selected scents lost an average of 19 pounds, while the placebo group only lost an average of 4 pounds. (Hirsch AR. Gomez R, Weight reduction through the inhalation of odorants, J. Neurol Orthop. Med Surg 1195:16:28-31)

There are many studies that have shown the effects of aromatherapy, including libido and sexual arousal, emotional trauma release, immune enhancement, increased cognitive function, increased energy levels, hormone balance, weight loss, and more. At Advanced Health Institute, our practitioners are now offering customized aromatherapy massage. Prior to your message appointment, based on a preliminary assessment, a custom blend of oils are specifically created for your particular health needs. The massage therapist uses your special blend in your massage session and you take the rest of your custom essential blend home with you. Find out more about therapy treatment by visiting our website at www.advancedhealthinstitute.com or call us at (512) 416-1810.