

DOES AROMATHERAPY REALLY EASE ANXIETY?



Did you know that it has been scientifically proven that certain smells can affect your mood? The sense of smell is very powerful and the right scent can put you in a good mood, or calm you down during times of stress or anxiety.

'Aroma therapy' or using essential oils for aromatherapy purposes is becoming an increasingly popular way to reduce stress levels at home, work and even in schools. Whilst there are no clinical studies specifically focusing on this subject, enough positive feedback from users have led many researchers to conclude that it works.

Aromatherapy with essential oils is believed to be helpful in treating people suffering from depression, anxiety disorders such as obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and other stress-related conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), all of which can be common in our society today. Anxiety disorders affect roughly 33% of the general population at some point during their life. [\(1\)](#).

While some people believe that aromatherapy is effective only as a complementary medicine, many doctors recommend it as an alternative treatment for anxiety disorder patients who have not yet found relief from chemical drugs or cognitive behavioural therapy.

Smells are powerful enough to make us hungry, [\(2\)](#) thirsty and even remind

us of memories we had long forgotten. They can also make us feel calm and relaxed. Relaxing essential oils include lavender, cedar wood, vetiver, jasmine, patchouli, sandalwood, bergamot and ylang-ylang. Studies have shown that although these oils work on the majority of people, bergamot in particular can actually increase anxiety. This is mostly in children with autism. [\(3\)](#)

For that reason, it is always best to check with a doctor before treating your anxiety yourself.

Aromatherapy is the use of plant oils, called essential oils, to promote physical or psychological well-being. Essential oils are concentrated volatile (usually odourless) liquids extracted from plants. They contain various chemical components such as terpenes and terpenoids [\(4\)](#) among others. These scents can be used for cosmetic purposes, but also have medicinal value.

These include pain management, but a particular benefit, and one of the most interesting is its potential ability to treat anxiety.

There are many studies being conducted on patients with anxiety to determine if there are any benefits to be had from the use of aromatherapy. The findings thus far have been very promising [\(5\)](#).

I should imagine that being in ICU having major surgery would make any one feel anxious. One study has found that aromatherapy is used to successfully reduce anxiety and increase relaxation in patients in this situation [\(6\)](#).

Another situation that makes many of us feel anxious is the dentist. Just thinking about it can raise the stress levels of even the most level-headed person. The good news is that aromatherapy has been found to lower the stress levels of children before having dental treatment. [\(7\)](#)

Not only can children benefit from a reduction in nerves when going to the dentist. Adults have also been found to feel less anxious after aromatherapy. This study was only small but the results were enough to show that aromatherapy is not only effective towards reducing dental related anxiety but also it can improve quality of life for these particular patients as well. [\(8\)](#)

Many aromatherapists think that lavender oil is by far the best for treating anxiety. [\(9\)](#)

Mixing the oil with water in a diffuser or vaporizer will suffice. Or you can simply place an oil-soaked cotton ball underneath your pillow before going to bed at night to allow you to access its benefits. Other suggestions include adding it into bathwater, applying diluted amounts to the inside of the wrists or the temples or even burning it in an oil diffuser.

Due to the ability of aromatherapy to relax people and make them feel more peaceful, it is no wonder that massage therapists incorporate aromatherapy into their business model.

The benefits of aromatherapy are seemingly endless, especially when one considers its non-invasive nature and the fact that essential oils can be made at home by anyone interested in doing so. The use of these natural compounds have evidently shown promising signs in helping with symptoms related to anxiety disorder patients. Further research is being done to determine the mechanisms through which they have their effects and just how much of them are needed to produce the desired results. These studies will hopefully help doctors treat anxiety disorder patients more effectively in a safe and affordable way.

Aromatherapy is a good option for anxiety disorder patients because it is not invasive or dangerous. Unlike chemical drugs that affect brain function by changing the way neurotransmitters work in the brain to give off mood-boosting messages, essential oils simply trigger certain smells which improve moods or calm emotions without causing any harmful side effects.

Although being pregnant is a normal, natural condition many women do experience anxiety, especially when they think about giving birth. Despite many reports that aromatherapy is not safe for the unborn baby, it has been found that this is not so and is a great technique to lower stress levels of

pregnant women. [\(10\)](#) Just to be on the safe side it is best to check with your doctor before using essential oils during pregnancy.

The other section of the public that may not benefit from aromatherapy are those with allergies. Those with allergies should also take extra precautions as some people can have allergic reactions to essential oils. For this reason, and general safety, essential oils should always be diluted with a carrier oil and not used on their own.

Anxiety disorder patients who want to try out natural remedies without worrying about side effects or chemical drug interactions, can opt for aromatherapy to help them cope with their specific anxiety symptoms.

Some of the ways you could do this at home include having specific scents around your house according to what mood you'd like to feel (e.g., placing a bowl of fresh flowers (including lavender) in your bedroom if you wish to wake up feeling relaxed). You could also burn candles using specific scents associated with reducing either anxiety or depression. You could also purchase a diffuser which diffuses the scent of essential oils into the air.

Aromatherapy is a natural way to reduce stress and anxiety, so why not give it a try!

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