

Aromatherapy

What is aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is the systematic use of essential oils in holistic treatments that seeks to improve physical and emotional well-being. Essential oils, extracted from plants are thought to possess distinctive therapeutic properties, which may be utilised to improve health and prevent disease.

These natural plant oils are applied in a variety of ways, for example:

- By massage blended in a carrier oil - the most used method
- Adding a few drops to warm bath water (ideally diluted first)
- Through inhalations (this is not advisable for asthmatics)
- Blended into creams/lotions and other plant bases for individual use

An essential oil is an aromatic, volatile substance extracted from a single botanical source by distillation or expression. Essential oils have been utilised in fragrances, flavours and medicines for thousands of years and there are some 400 different oils extracted from plants all over the world.

An aromatherapy session

In a typical aromatherapy session, the aromatherapist will ask questions about previous medical history, general health as well as a person's lifestyle. This will help the practitioner decide which essential oils are safe and the most appropriate for the individual.

After selecting and blending appropriate essential oils, the aromatherapist may apply the oils in combination with massage or suggest other methods if massage is unsuitable.

How aromatherapy may help

Aromatherapy is thought to produce both psychological and physiological effects and is mostly used for stress and stress related conditions. Aromatherapy is used in a variety of healthcare settings, including hospitals and hospices.

Choosing a practitioner

It is important to choose a qualified practitioner who has undertaken all the necessary training to understand the theory and practice of aromatherapy.

The Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC), which is supported by the Department of Health and the Aromatherapy Council, can help when choosing a practitioner. We ensure that all aromatherapists on our register have trained to the national standards of practice in aromatherapy and the Aromatherapy Council Core Curriculum. The CNHC has established a voluntary register for complementary healthcare practitioners who all meet the required levels of competence and practice.

Further information and registered practitioners can be found on the CNHC website www.cnhc.org.uk