

Health Facts for You

UWHealth

Clinical Use of Aromatherapy

What is aromatherapy?

It is the use of an essential oil for health and healing.



What is an essential oil?

Essential oils (EOs) are found in the flowers, leaves, bark, wood, roots, seeds and peels of aromatic plants. EO is a liquid product that is extracted from an aromatic plant.

How are EOs used at UW Health?

There are 5 EOs available to patients who would like to try aromatherapy:

- Peppermint *Mentha piperita*
- Ginger *Zingiber officinale*
- Red mandarin *Citrus reticulata*
- Lavender *Lavandula angustifolia*
- Rose *Rosa damascena*

These EOs are offered during hospital stays. Please do not use EOs brought from home.

These EOs can be used to:

- Decrease nausea and vomiting after surgery
- Decrease pain
- Promote sleep
- Promote wellbeing

How will aromatherapy be given?

Your nurse will ask you about what you hope to receive from aromatherapy. This will help your nurse to choose EO options with you. Your nurse will offer you samples of the EO options until you find an aroma you like.

There are two options for you to receive aromatherapy by inhalation.

- Your nurse places 1-3 drops of the EO on a cotton ball, places it in a cup and asks you to breathe deeply for 5-10 minutes with the cotton ball near your nose.
- Your nurse places 1 drop of the EO on each of the top corners of your bedsheet, or 1 drop on your pillowcase.

Diffusers will not be used to give EOs in the hospital.

How do I know if aromatherapy is right for me?

Sometimes EOs are not a good choice for patients. Below is a list of reasons not to choose to use EOs:

- If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant.
- If you have a history of using EOs and had breathing problems while using them.
- If you have asthma, allergies or other breathing problems.
- If you have migraine headaches.
- Peppermint will not be used with children 3 years old or younger.

Talk with your nurse if you have any questions about aromatherapy.