

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 4 EOs available to patients who would like to try aromatherapy:

- Peppermint *Mentha piperita*
- Ginger *Zingiber officinale*
- 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
- Decrease anxiety
- 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.

The option to receive aromatherapy by inhalation is by using a personal stick.

When you are ready, unscrew the cap from the stick. Hold it a few inches from your nose and take three or four slow deep breaths. Repeat as needed. This stick can be clipped onto your gown or pillowcase for a more hands-free experience.

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 and have never used essential oils.
- Peppermint will not be used with children 3 years old or younger.

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