

YOUR HEALING KNEADS

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Aromatherapy and Massage

Karrie Osborn

Aromatherapy, a process utilizing the purest essence of a plant, is a 4,000-year-old technique that has enhanced the health of everyone from modern-day pop divas to the scholars of ancient Greece. The art of massage has its own deeply rich roots, with even Plato and Socrates touting the value of hands-on bodywork for good health.

Separately, these two therapeutic traditions hold individual prowess in the realm of personal health and well-being. Together, however, they become a formidable health alliance that can address not only a person's physical health, but the health of the mind and spirit as well.

Let's see how it works. Essential oils are extracted from herbs, flowers, and plants with the intent to improve a person's health and well-being. Addressing everything from arthritis to whooping cough, effects of the approximate 3,000 oils found globally can range from sedative to stimulating and antibacterial to antispasmodic. The benefits derived from aromatherapy during a massage come in part from the contact the essential oil has on our skin, but even more so how it affects us when it's inhaled and absorbed through the soft-tissue linings of our nose and mouth.

The scientific explanation suggests that the essential oil's molecules, when

*Expert: a man
who makes
three correct
guesses
consecutively.*

-Laurence J. Peter



What essential oil is your favorite?

A Natural Complement

Our senses were designed to work best in conjunction with one another. Our sense of taste would not be as acute without our nose lending its support to the process. Our auditory senses might seem hollow if we weren't gifted with sight as well. Indeed, there exists a quiet partnership between all our five senses that's built on synergy.

inhaled, lock onto receptor cells at the back of the nose, sending an electrochemical message to the brain's limbic system. This message appears to trigger memory and emotional responses, causing messages to be sent to other parts of the brain and body. "In this way," says aromatherapist Danila

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Mansfield, "the production of euphoric, relaxing, sedative, or stimulating neurochemicals is stimulated."

Judith Fitzsimmons and Paula Bousquet, authors of *Aromatherapy Through the Seasons*, say the use of essential oils creates a multifaceted effect: "The real beauty of aromatherapy is that it works on a cellular and physical level and also in the emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic areas of your life."

It's really quite amazing when you think about it. Imagine an area the size of a small apricot pit, a 1-inch square area, filled with millions of sensory neurons that can capture, process, and store 10,000 odors. This is our olfactory system at work, and part of its job is to create a personal history for us based on scent, says clinical aromatherapist Ava-Marie Lind-Shiveley. "None of our other senses so well establishes a memory database." She says our response to scent is both physiological and psychosomatic. "Within an instant of smelling an aroma, we can be sent back to the first moment we were introduced to it."

By enabling us to recognize, revisit, and/or reclaim these various emotions and memories, aromatherapy allows another avenue of access for healing during a bodywork session. It creates a path through which the somatic experience can find its full strength.

When the powerful effects of aromatherapy are combined with massage, it can take us to another level, say aromatherapy educators Shirley and Len Price. "When, during a massage, the touch of the therapist is combined with the mental and physical effects of the essential oils, the client is helped to achieve a temporary separation from worldly worries, somewhat akin to a meditative state." Helping clients reach this level of relaxation is a primary goal of massage therapists and aromatherapists alike, so it makes sense that a partnership could beautifully exist.

A Scent Journey

"Scent is not simplistic," Lind-Shiveley says. "It is voluminous." She illustrates this point with a quote from Helen Keller: "Smell is a potent wizard that transports us across thousands of miles

and all the years we have lived. The odors of fruits waft me to my Southern home, to my childhood frolics in the peach orchard. Other odors, instantaneous and fleeting, cause my heart to dilate joyously or contract with remembered grief."

If you decide to do some personal exploration into the world of scent therapy, proceed with due caution in both the quality of the oils you buy and how you dose and administer them. There is a dichotic nature inherent in aromatherapy. It is gentle, yet powerful; subtle, yet intense. There are essential oils strong enough to cause miscarriage, but there also are many oils safe enough to use on infants. The key is knowing how to utilize nature's gifts to provide the best, most effective therapeutic collaboration possible. Talk with your massage therapist about incorporating the science of aromatherapy into your

sessions or ask about a referral to an aromatherapist in your area.

Karrie Osborn is contributing editor to Body Sense.

BALANCING

Bay Laurel, Cedarwood, Geranium

CLARIFYING

Juniper, Lemon, Peppermint

COMFORTING

Bergamot, Frankincense, Rose

ENERGIZING

Eucalyptus, Grapefruit, Rosemary

FOCUSING

Angelica, Sweet Basil, Lime

SEDATING

Chamomile, Clary Sage, Patchouli

UPLIFTING

Lavender, Orange/Mandarin, Pine, Tea Tree



Aromatherapy has roots in ancient cultures.

What is Hot Stone Massage?

Jed Heneberry

Stone massage is a luxurious experience in which the massage therapist uses warmed, smooth stones to provide bodywork, warming muscle tissue to reduce muscle tension and stiffness, and eliciting physical healing, mental relaxation, and a spiritual connection to earth energy

Photos frequently incorrectly portray the treatment with massage clients relaxing on a towel with stones placed artfully along their naked spines.

In reality, two insulating layers, a sheet and a thick bath towel, will be placed on your skin, and the stones will be placed upon it. Your massage therapist will be using stones heated to 130-140 degrees Fahrenheit. Stones should never rest directly on your skin; they will only touch your skin if the therapist is holding them to apply strokes.

Should I Get One?

The heat of stone massage can be

especially beneficial for certain populations and something to avoid for others. Specific chronic muscular conditions like frozen shoulder or low-back pain benefit as the heat helps tissues relax during massage work. And, while stone massage is lauded for the relaxation it promotes, therapists can use it for targeted trigger-point work and myofascial release as well.

Those who should avoid hot stone massage include people with diabetes, neuropathy, rheumatoid arthritis, skin conditions covering large areas of the body, or local skin conditions such as sunburn, broken skin, localized swelling, or other soft-tissue injuries.

Following are some of the benefits associated with stone therapies:

- oReduces anxiety, pain, and stress.
- oPromotes mental and physical relaxation.
- oCreates a feeling of groundedness and balance.
- oEnhances connection to earth energy.

oPromotes local circulation in the area where it is applied.

oWarms soft-tissue structures so they are ready for firm work more quickly.



Heated stones can provide a wealth of benefits

Nuts Help Control Diabetes

The Benefits of a Healthier Diet

If you're a diabetic, or are otherwise concerned about your glucose levels, a new study has some potentially life-saving news for you. Researchers have found that replacing carbohydrates with just two ounces of nuts on a daily basis significantly improved glycemic control and reduced LDL cholesterol for patients with type 2 diabetes.

The study was published in the August issue of *Diabetes Care* and features the work of David Jenkins, MD, PhD, DSc, who says that, "Nuts, including peanuts, can make a valuable contribution to the diabetic diet by displacing high glycemic index carbohydrates and replacing them with vegetable fats and vegetable proteins which have been shown in the long term to be associated with better cardiovascular health and diabetes prevention."

Why so good?

One of the qualities of nuts that the study gives as a potential cause of this benefit is that they are a source of mono- and polyunsaturated oils--fatty acids that are healthier than saturated fats. In addition, they report that the high amount of protein found in nuts helps reduce hunger by increasing the length of time that one feels full.

Making the change

One thing to consider when seeking to implement this change in your diet is the increasing prevalence of peanut and other tree nut allergies. A 1999 study by the National Institute of Health (NIH) estimated that approximately 1.1 percent of the population, or some 3 million Americans, are affected by this allergy, which can cause hives, throat tightness,

wheezing, vomiting, and other serious side effects.

On the other hand, the NIH reports that over 18 million Americans have been diagnosed with diabetes and estimates that there are an additional 7 million who have not been diagnosed. If consuming two ounces of nuts a day can significantly improve aspects of this condition, which is associated with blindness, heart disease, kidney failure, limb amputation, stroke, and death, it would appear to be a smart move to make.

*A bookstore is
one of the only
pieces of
evidence we
have that people
are still
thinking.*

-Jerry Seinfeld

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