



AROMATHERAPY DURING PREGNANCY AND LABOUR

To be safe it is best to avoid all essential oils during the first trimester of pregnancy, but particularly oils which are described as 'emmenagogue', i.e. they induce flow. Emmenagogue oils are:

Armoise, Arnica , Basil, Birch, Camphor, Cedarwood, Marjoram, Myrrh, Origanum, Pennyroyal, Peppermint, Rose, Rosemary, Sage, Savory, Thyme and Wintergreen.

Emmenagogue oils should be avoided during pregnancy but some can be used during labour to strengthen contractions.

From the **second trimester** essential oils can be used to help some common pregnancy ailments:

Relieving backache..... A back massage with lavender oil.

To prevent stretch marks From the start of pregnancy, massage or rub mandarin oil (mixed into body lotion) in to hips, abdomen and inside thighs (mandarin oil is one of the few oils that can be safely used on your baby).

Oedema... If severe and persistent consult your midwife or GP, but in mild form, massage the legs upward with geranium.

Circulatory problems..... Such as varicose veins or haemorrhoids – lemon oil and plenty of fresh garlic.

General relaxation and to encourage sleep.....Lavender and chamomile oil.

The oils can be used in three ways:

1. Heated in water in an aroma jar.
2. Aromatic bath : 6 drops of essential oils in a bath of water (not over-hot).
3. Massage : the essential oils are mixed in a carrier oil, 2 drops essential oil to 5 ml(1 teaspoon) carrier oil.
4. During labour a flannel can be rinsed in a solution of essential oil and water (3 drops per basin) and used to wipe the mother's face, taking care not to go too close to the eyes or mouth.



A carrier oil can be a variety of oils – grape seed oil, almond oil, coconut oil, avocado oil and many more – with grape seed being the cheapest and most widely available.

A body lotion can be used to mix in the essential oils (2 drops per teaspoon). This is absorbed by the skin easier and does not stain the clothes.

MASSAGE.

Back.

Although it is possible to give a back massage with the woman lying on her side, it is more comfortable and efficient if the woman sits on a chair backwards and rests her folded arms against the back of the chair and leans her forehead on her arms. The masseuse then kneels on the floor behind her.

Abdomen.

Massage very lightly in this area during the first four months – or not at all if the mother has any hesitation – but after this time massage is not only beneficial, but also very enjoyable. Always massage in a clockwise direction, this aids digestion and the condition of the skin.

“Very often, the developing child responds to the massage given to it’s mother. A lively baby which may be causing the mother some discomfort through the amount that it kicks and moves around, will calm down and be still for quite a while when it’s mother has been massaged with a soothing, calming oil. Babies whose mothers have received regular massage throughout their pregnancy are generally very peaceful when born”-

(Quote by Patricia Davies.)

Foot and Hand.

Can be very relaxing and good during labour. Always massage towards the heart, i.e. up the foot and legs, up the hand and arm.

LABOUR.

Oils useful during labour:

1. **Basil** – helps tired, tight, overworked muscles and helps to strengthen contractions.
2. **Jasmine** – helps to strengthen contractions but has a very strong smell. (1drop per 5mls).
3. **Lavender** – blends well with basil. Good for calming and soothing and can be a mild sedative.
4. **Chamomile** – properties are soothing, calming and anti-inflammatory.
5. **Rose** – rose oil responds to the emotional needs of women. It is a gentle but potent anti-depressant, and is valuable in helping women suffering from post-natal depression. (1 drop per 5mls).

Generally, massage with one oil or a mixture of oils, is a wonderful form of relaxation and distraction during labour. Just make sure the woman likes the smell of the oil!

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References:

Davies P., Aromatherapy An A-Z

Susan Sedden of butterflies Clinic Wargrave(Alternative Therapies)