

## Oil in a day's work

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**By Barkha Kumari**

*Essential oils are versatile and effective, and that's why they have stood the test of time. Find out how to use them*

Lavender, Tea Tree, Lemongrass. These are a few names that come to our mind immediately when we talk about essential oils. However, the world of essential oils is

quite expansive, says Divya Dinesh, founder & CEO of Vedaeath, which is an online brand of skin and personal care products as well as a vegan spa in Bengaluru.

"Every product in our portfolio is a blend of a minimum of eight different essential oils. One essential oil can't give you all the desired benefits; it's a myth. If you want effective results, use a blend of oils mixed in right proportions, which is what the science of Aromatherapy is about," she informs us.

### **How they work**

The young entrepreneur gives us a lowdown on the holy grail of personal care that essential oils are considered to be, busting another myth straight up: Essential oils are not just pretty scents that claim to beat stress, leave you joyous and more focused. There's much more to them – they offer plenty of physical and cosmetic benefits too, from removing acne marks to psoriasis and eczema, beating odour, relieving joint pain and easing urinary tract infections.

What makes them so sought-after, we ask. She begins with the basics: "Our skin is seven-layered. The upper layers are water-loving, whereas deeper layers need oil to stay healthy. The uppermost layer can be hydrated with regular moisturising agents but to get the ultimate benefits, the product needs to penetrate deep into the skin."

That's where essential oils come into play. "Essential oils are highly concentrated oils extracted from different parts of a plant (or grass and trees) such as flowers, fruits, herbs, leaves, roots and the bark using steam distillation. These oils are the vital life force in plants. The tiny molecules of essential

oils have the ability to reach deep down through our skin and enter our blood. So these oils truly work inside out." And since they pass on through our bloodstream after offering their healing properties, they do not accumulate in the body over time.

#### The oil debate

Essential oils score over common oils not only because of the many benefits they pack in, but also because they get absorbed quicker and show results faster. She explains why, "Essential oils are distilled from the aromatic portions of a plant. That's why they have a concentrated aroma, and evaporate. Carrier oils, on the other hand, are pressed from the fatty portions (seeds, nuts, kernels) and do not evaporate or impart a strong aroma. Due to the tiny molecular structure and volatile nature of essential oils, all they need is body temperature to get absorbed into your skin in few minutes even without much of a massage. Whereas carrier oils are thicker and require a bit of a massage."

Given their versatility and effectiveness, these botanicals have been revered for their beauty-enhancing, medicinal, spiritual, aromatic and therapeutic value throughout human history, for at least 5,000 years now.

#### Dos and don'ts

But care has to be taken of how you store them and for how long. "Essential oils oxidise when exposed to sunlight and lose their therapeutic benefits over a period of time but they don't go rancid as carrier oils do. Which is why it is best to store them in dark coloured amber or blue glass bottles."

Since essentials are so potent – "one drop of peppermint essential oil is equivalent to 26-28 cups of peppermint tea", it's always advised to dilute them in carrier oils (such as olive, almond or coconut oil). Or, you will be left with irritated skin or unsightly allergies.

One question that often leaves the essential oil users confused is "How much is too much and how less is too less when it comes to their application?" Dinesh offers a few basic pointers: "Use three-four drops in 15ml of carrier oil for massage. Use six-eight drops in a bathtub/bucket as a soak. Use six-eight drops in a vapouriser/diffuser along with water." For other usage, check with your beautician.

But not everybody can use essential oils, she cautions. "They aren't recommended for children below the age of 10 years as they have sensitive skin. And pregnant women must not use them because the baby is still developing in their womb and essential oils might cause allergies as they enter the bloodstream."

#### **How about trying these?**

***Frankincense:*** Reputed as the 'King Of Oils', it is known for removing wrinkles on the face.

*It also tightens pores, and improves skin tone by promoting regeneration of healthy cells.*



**Benzoin:** This balsamic resin has a strong vanilla aroma. It encourages skin renewal by toning up the skin and reducing wrinkles on the face. From cracks to burns and wounds, Benzoin is a great ingredient for skin treatments.

**Roman Chamomile:** It is high in antioxidants and works wonderfully in diminishing scars and spots on the skin.

**Wintergreen:** This minty herb eases inflammation and swelling. From sore muscles to headaches, bone pain, and migraine, it works as a potent painkiller.

**Rosemary:** It's the most coveted herb for hair care. A rich source of iron, it not only fosters hair growth but also delays greying.

#### **Non-cosmetic uses**

**Lavender oil:** It's good for calming down the mind and promoting sleep. Add a few drops onto your pillow at night or massage it onto your head.

**Peppermint oil:** It relieves stuffy nose as it opens up the sinuses when inhaled directly or when few drops are added to hot water and the steam is inhaled.

**Tea tree/Lemon oil:** They are natural disinfectants and can be added to water to wipe floors

and counters.

**Wintergreen/Eucalyptus oil:** They are good to relax sore muscles and reduce inflammation.

They can be used in a carrier oil to massage onto the affected area.