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Health & Happiness

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build an aromatherapy toolkit

Get back to basics with these 7 must-have essential oils.

For centuries, aromatherapy has been a key component to traditional healing, growing into a mainstream wellness modality that leverages the benefits of essential oils, from biomedical uses to natural skincare. While most complex aromatic remedies are best left to the experts, building a starter kit with seven foundational essential oils will help you begin incorporating aromatherapy into your everyday life and open you to a whole new world of aromatic energy.



1. Lavender

Start building your personal kit with the *grande dame* of essential oils, **lavender** (*Lavandula augustifolia*). Besides its calming herbal scent, lavender provides a plethora of benefits—including a healing effect on burns, which launched modern aromatherapy when discovered by French chemist Rene Gattefosse in the 1930s. If nothing else, lavender can be a gateway to restful sleep. To create a soothing mist, add 12 drops per ounce of distilled water in a spray bottle and mist your bedroom and pillows to help instill a relaxing slumber. Blend this versatile essential oil with any other aromatic and you will soon realize how indispensable lavender is to daily wellness for its balancing properties and ability to enhance the aroma of other essential oils.

2. Bergamot

Next stock your kit with **bergamot** (*Citrus bergamia*), an orange-scented oil that, like lavender, will blend well with any of the oils in your aromatherapy kit. Balancing and uplifting, bergamot has a subtle citrus aroma perfect for diffusing; add six drops to a light ring diffuser (before turning on the lamp!) to spread its sweet aroma throughout a room.



3. Peppermint

You may already enjoy the uplifting, cooling effects of **peppermint** (*Mentha piperita*) in your favorite breath mint or herbal tea. Add peppermint to your kit for a go-to energizer; inhale deeply directly from the bottle when you need to add a little oomph to your day. Mix a few drops with jojoba oil and rub on temples and stomach to settle an upset stomach or combat nausea. And for the dog days of summer, soak overheated, tired feet in a pan filled with cool water and 12 drops of peppermint.

4. Clary Sage

Need an extra lift? Reach for **clary sage** (*Salvia sclarea*), an herbal powerhouse offering naturally euphoric properties. Clary sage is often used to combat depression and anxiety, and plays well with other oils. Just a few drops with lavender or bergamot will create a stress-busting aromatic inhaler.

Did you know?

In the true sense of the word 'synergy,' essential oils take on deeper scents and more beneficial results when blended with one another. Indeed, the sum is greater than the whole! Try experimenting with blends of two or three oils from your wellness kit.



5. *Eucalyptus*

If you're battling a nasty summer cold, open and inhale **eucalyptus** (*Eucalyptus globulus*), a bright, light oil used for its respiratory properties. Toss two tablespoons onto your shower floor for an invigorating, sauna-like morning wash that will surely clear your sinuses.

Healthy Tip

To build more complex mists, switch from distilled water to hydrosols, or floral waters, such as lavender. And turn that simple evening bath into a spa treatment by adding 12 drops per essential oil to 1 cup Epsom salts. Combine lavender and bergamot for a relaxing bath, or eucalyptus and rosemary for an anti-inflammatory muscle soak.

6. *Rosemary*

Round out your starter kit selections with energizing **rosemary** (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), one of the earliest plants to be used in aromatherapy. Blend a few drops with lemon and eucalyptus for a natural germ-fighting household mist that will freshen the air, ward off germs, and lift flagging spirits.

7. *Lemon*

Like lavender, essential oil of **lemon** (*Citrus limon*) will be a staple in your aromatic pantry. Mix 3–4 drops with a drop of jojoba oil and massage on your forehead to boost energy levels. Blended with aloe gel, lemon acts as an anti-microbial hand sanitizer.

Remember that essential oils are concentrated—never use “neat,” or directly on the skin. Always mix carriers or blending agents with your oils—jojoba oil for massage blends and distilled water for face and room mists are excellent staples for your starter kit.

Aromatherapy is no substitute for the medical expertise of your family physician, but it offers a natural healing therapy for



skincare and daily living. Although gifts from nature, essential oils should never be ingested. And keep them out of reach of children and pets.

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