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AROMATHERAPY FOR A HEALTHY HEART

Many are mindful of how diet and exercise affect heart health, but aromatherapy offers complementary support with essential oils **By Cheryl Cromer**

The right scent can calm stressed souls. It's this ability to impact anxiety—one risk factor for high blood pressure—that makes aromatherapy a heart-healthy habit you can incorporate into your daily wellness regimen to fight coronary disease.

Essential oils are composed of various innate chemical properties that act to help keep the cardiovascular system running in tip-top shape. Keep your heartbeats steady by tapping into the sedative properties of **LAVENDER** (*Lavandula angustifolia*) and the soothing scent of **CYPRESS** (*Cupressus sempervirens*) as antidotes to acute stress.

Lavender battles hypertension and is an excellent addition to any blend. Cypress has a woody fragrance that can gently lift away fatigue. Add several drops of each to a diffuser for a relaxing evening scent.

Some studies indicate that **BASIL** (*Ocimum basilicum*) and **GINGER** (*Zingiber officinale*) boost the cardiovascular system by supporting healthy arteries and limiting the buildup of bad cholesterol, otherwise known as LDL (low-density lipoprotein). If you prefer a sweeter, quieter herbal aroma than basil, choose essential oil of **HOLY BASIL** (*Ocimum*

did you know...
Holy basil works gradually, but effectively, in lowering cholesterol in the body.

sanctum)—equally energizing, but less aggressive. Both herbs blend well with spicy ginger, a warming essential oil especially suited for the winter months. Mix with a drop or two of richly stimulating **CINNAMON BARK** (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*) for an aromatic balm for the chest and solar plexus that will increase circulation.

In addition to its anti-clotting effect on blood platelets, cinnamon offers anti-inflammatory properties. Natural healing occurs in the body when inflammation is reduced. For an after-shower moisturizer that will support overall cell health, mix

4 ounces of unscented body lotion and 1–2 drops of cinnamon bark with several drops of **JUNIPER** (*Juniperus communis*), a crisp aromatic that is a cleansing and balancing tonic that will aid blood circulation.

One last essential oil known for lowering blood pressure is earthy **CLARY SAGE** (*Salvia sclarea*). Clary sage's bitter scent may take some getting used to, but it offers the highest natural concentration of ester, a chemical property that calms anxiety.

Battling hypertension? Avoid stimulating essential oils of rosemary, sage, and thyme, which may increase blood pressure.

Make Your Own Essential Oil Blends

Antistress Balm

Apply as needed to the chest and solar plexus and breathe deeply.

- 1 oz. carrier oil (grapeseed or sweet almond oil, for example)
- 6 drops lavender
- 12 drops basil or holy basil
- 8 drops ginger
- 4 drops cinnamon bark

Heart Healthy Massage Oil

Use as a relaxing massage oil or add a capful to your bath for a soothing soak.

- 2 oz. carrier oil (grapeseed or sweet almond oil, for example)
- 12 drops ylang ylang complete
- 10 drops rose otto
- 10 drops sandalwood
- 8 drops vanilla CO2 extract
- 16 drops clary sage

Refreshing Body Tonic

Spritz post-shower or -bath for an invigorating tonic.

- 4 oz. lavender hydrosol or distilled water
- 12 drops lavender
- 18 drops cypress
- 10 drops cinnamon bark
- 16 drops juniper



Aura Cacia Clary Sage Essential Oil



Simplers Botanicals Organic Cypress Essential Oil



Life-Flo Health Care Pure Almond Oil

Cheryl Cromer is an Atlanta-based writer specializing in aromatherapy and the spa lifestyle. She has more than 17 years' experience as an artisan aromatherapist. When she's not writing or creating blends, Cheryl enjoys traveling, interior decorating, and life with her Pembroke Welsh Corgi, Elle.