Essential oils and deep breathing

Treating a child with essential oils and deep breathing techniques may help them relax and heal. Essential oils are the scented part of different plants (flowers, trees, and herbs). Each oil is different and can be used to treat certain problems.

How can essential oils help my child?
Nurses and child life staff have four essential oils your child can smell: lavender, mandarin, spearmint, and peppermint. These can help your child if they are restless, irritable, or having trouble sleeping, mild pain, and stomach pain. The essential oils often work better with deep, focused breathing techniques.

What oil should my child use?

- **Lavender oil** (L. angustifolia) is distilled from the flowers of the lavender plant. It is a popular essential oil and has many uses.

- **Mandarin oil** (Citrus reticulate) is from the peel of the mandarin orange fruit. It may not smell exactly like a fresh mandarin, but many children prefer the smell of the oil.

- **Spearmint oil** (Mentha spicata) is distilled from the fresh flowering tops of the spearmint plant. It is used to flavor candy, gum, and toothpaste.

- **Peppermint oil** (Mentha x piperita) is steam distilled from partially dried peppermint leaves. It is widely used in food flavoring and soaps.

The following chart shows which oils might help with certain problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Essential oil</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifting mood</td>
<td>Lavender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calming</td>
<td>Lavender, Mandarin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relieving stomach pain</td>
<td>Mandarin, Peppermint, Spearmint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering comfort</td>
<td>Lavender, Peppermint</td>
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</tbody>
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Are there any safety issues when using essential oils?
Use the following safety tips when using essential oils:

- Only use pure essential oils. Artificial fragrances and products do not have the same effect as pure essential oil from plants with nothing else added.

- Do not let your child take essential oils by mouth unless a healthcare provider experienced in using essential oils tells you it’s okay.

- Keep essential oils out of children’s reach.

- Avoid splashing essential oils in the eyes.

- Use essential oils with caution if you or family members are pregnant or have migraines, active respiratory diseases, or poorly controlled seizures.
How can deep or focused breathing with essential oils help my child?

Deep breathing helps the body relax and helps oxygen get to the lungs and body. Your child can use deep breathing with or without essential oils. Adjust these instructions for your child’s age and needs. Help your child with their treatment by having them:

1. Lie down or sit in a comfortable chair, with good posture. They should be as relaxed as possible. The technique works best if your child can do the deep breathing for 5–10 minutes.

2. Have them close their eyes, it can help them focus on their breathing.

3. Breathe through their nose. If their nose is stuffy or clogged, have them breathe through their mouth.

4. Pay attention to their breathing by putting one hand on their chest or belly and feel the rise and fall with each breath.

5. Inhale deeply and slowly through their nose or mouth.

6. Exhale through their mouth, keeping their mouth, tongue, and jaw relaxed.

7. Focus on the sound and feeling of their long, slow, deep breaths.

You can ask your nurse or a child life specialist to help your child with deep breathing techniques. They can also help your child choose an essential oil.

Notes