

# Let's Talk About...

## 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 reticulata*) 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.

Purpose	Essential oil
Lifting mood	Lavender
Calming	Lavender, Mandarin
Relieving stomach pain	Mandarin, Peppermint, Spearmint
Offering comfort	Lavender, Peppermint

### 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.

