

Using Essential Oils in the Hospital

What is an essential oil?

Essential oils come from flowers, trees, and herbs. The essence (scent) is drawn out of the part of the plant that produces scent (bark, flower, leaves, skin of a fruit, sap, roots, or seeds).

Each oil is a different chemical that can be used to support well-being. However, they may not be good for everyone and can cause harm if not used correctly. In addition, they cannot be used in every area of the hospital. This is because some people do not like certain scents or may be sensitive to them.

How can essential oils help me?

Your care team has 3 essential oils that can be used if you experience certain conditions.

- **Lavender** (*Lavendula angustifolia*) is taken from the flowers of the lavender plant. It is a very popular essential oil and is used to calm, comfort, or lift your mood.
- **Mandarin** (*Citrus reticulata*) is taken from the peel of a mandarin orange fruit, but may not smell exactly like a fresh mandarin orange. Mandarin is used to provide a calming affect and to relieve stomach discomfort.
- **Peppermint** (*Mentha x piperita*) comes from dried peppermint leaves. It is also used to flavor food, cosmetics, and soaps. Peppermint calms and comforts, and is widely used to relieve stomach upset.



Essential oils have been used in healthcare for thousands of years in many cultures. They are made from flowers, trees, and herbs.

How are essential oils used at Intermountain Healthcare hospitals?

Intermountain Healthcare uses only high quality, pure essential oils. The oils:

- **Must be provided by the hospital.** You may not bring your own.
- **Are placed on a cotton ball so you can breathe in the scent.** It may not be mixed into a lotion or put onto the skin. Instructions on how to do focused breathing are on [page 2](#).
- **Cannot be used with a diffuser.** Diffusers are not allowed in most areas of our hospitals, including Intermountain Women and Newborn units.
- **Cannot be used on newborns or children under 2 years old.**

How do I use essential oils with deep, focused breathing?

Deep breathing can help your body relax. It also helps to get oxygen to your lungs, where it enters the blood stream and is taken to the rest of your body. Deep breathing exercises are effective with or without essential oils. You can adjust these instructions for your specific needs or limitations.

- 1 Lie down or sit in a comfortable position. Make sure your tummy and back are supported so your body can relax.
- 2 Close your eyes so you can focus on the air going in and out of your body. Breathe in (inhale) with your nose (or your mouth, if your nose is stuffy or clogged), and breathe out (exhale) through your mouth.
- 3 Put one hand on your upper belly. Your hand should go up each time you inhale and go down when you exhale. Your upper chest should move only a little.
- 4 Count to at least 4 as you inhale, and to at least 8 as you exhale. You will begin to relax as you focus on the sound of your breath and the feeling of long, slow, deep breaths.
- 5 Do this for 5 to 10 minutes, or longer if you need it. When you are done, take a few minutes to lie still. Get up slowly. The deep breaths may make you feel light-headed.

You may ask your care team to help you get started with your deep breathing exercises. They can also help you choose an essential oil to help with relaxation or relieve discomfort.

Are essential oils safe?

If used properly, essential oils can be safe. To prevent harm:

- Don't eat or drink essential oils
- Keep them out of the reach of children
- Avoid getting essential oils in the eyes
- Use with caution if you or a family member:
 - Is pregnant
 - Gets migraines
 - Has breathing or lung problems
 - Has seizures



Questions for my healthcare provider

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