

There's an oil

An essential oil primer



Sabrina Lamberth, essential oil consultant for DoTerra, discusses the benefits of using essential oils.

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Liquid gold. Elixir of the Gods. Snake oil. Whatever your stance, essential oils are a booming business. A recent report by Grand Review Research, Inc., projects the U.S. essential oil market to reach \$7.34 billion by the year 2024. Yes, that's billions of dollars!

But what are essential oils? What do they do? How do you use them? Are they beneficial to your health? Can you save money using them versus other store-bought products?

What Are Essential Oils?

Essential oils have historically been used for their healing powers. Ancient cultures in China, India, Egypt and Rome frequently used them for therapeutic purposes. Today, essential oils are used to scent cosmetics and cleaning products and to flavor food. But essential oils are gaining favor as alternative wellness treatments as people look to add more natural products into their daily lives.

An essential oil is a highly concentrated liquid that contains a plant's chemical properties. The oil is "essential" because it contains the plant's natural "essence"—or its fragrance and aroma. Most essential oils are removed from plants by steam distillation or a cold pressing process. They are then combined with a carrier oil so they can be preserved for use.

"Essential oils are made up of volatile aromatic compounds of a plant that come from the seeds, leaves, shrubs and even the bark. They are the life blood of the plant," says Sabrina Lamberth, a nurse and essential oil consultant for DoTerra. "Just like our blood clots a cut or oxygenates our hearts and provides nutrients, that is what the essential oil does for the plant."

What Do Essential Oils Do and How Do You Use Them?

Based on a quick internet search, you can find an essential oil solution for almost every condition and problem. People use essential oils to treat anxiety and insomnia to acne and stomach issues. Essential oils can be used topically or aromatically, in food and cleaning products, as fragrances or as part of a massage.

"Essential oils enter the body in three ways: topically, aromatically and internally," explains Lamberth. "Probably the most popular method is aromatically. You can simply open a bottle and smell the oils, you can put them into a diffuser or even pour some drops into your palm and just inhale."

Essential oils can be applied topically to the skin but diluted first with a carrier oil such as coconut or jojoba oil to avoid any adverse reactions. An easy dilution is one drop of essential oil to one teaspoon of the carrier oil of your choice.



Sabrina Lamberth demonstrates an essential oil for Terresa Sekhar.

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Essential oils can be taken internally by mixing a few drops in water, juice or plant-based milk, or placed in a capsule and swallowed.

“Essential oils can be taken internally, as long as they have been tested for quality and purity,” adds Lamberth. She suggests using only pure, unadulterated essential oils if ingesting them.

How Can Essential Oils Benefit Your Health?

There are roughly 90 different types of essential oils, each with its own unique smell and potential health benefit. For example, some essential oil users believe that inhaling certain smells can ease stress and anxiety and help with depression. Others find that applying certain oils to the skin can help with headaches and migraines. Some believe ingesting other oils can help fight certain inflammatory conditions. Others use different oils for their antimicrobial effects.

“I had many health issues and love being able to grab an oil first to help support occasional head tension, nausea or even discomfort after a long shift at the hospital,” says Lamberth.

Despite their widespread use though, very little is known scientifically on the effectiveness of essential oils in treating health conditions. While prescription drugs are rigorously tested for safety and effectiveness before being approved, essential oils are not. In fact, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration classify essential oils as cosmetics, so manufacturers of essential oils don't have to prove their effectiveness, purity or potency.

Can Using Essential Oils Help You Save Money?

Proponents of essential oils believe that investing in quality oils can save you money in the long term. Quality essential oils have a long shelf life if stored properly.

Suggested storage guidelines include:

- Storing the oils at room-temperature
- Avoiding exposure to direct sunlight or other sources of UV rays
- Preventing prolonged exposure to oxygen to prevent oxidation
- Securing caps tightly after each use to prevent evaporation and exposure to oxygen

Because of their high concentrations, only a few drops of an essential oil are generally needed per use. For example, four to seven drops of an oil in a diffuser will generally last for four hours.

Lamberth agrees. “Essential oils are highly concentrated, and I always tell people to start with just one drop. That means you are spending pennies per drop for the therapeutic benefits of an oil.”

Essential oils can also be used to make DIY products such as candles, air fresheners, bug repellents and more.

“You can use essential oils as cleaning products,” adds Lamberth. “By using a couple of drops of lemon essential oils in some water, you can create a chemical-free, economical cleaner. For every oil you use, there is a chemical that you're not using.”

If you regularly use essential oils or want to try them, keep these tips in mind and choose only high-quality oils:

- **Purity:** Look for oils that contain only aromatic plant compounds without any additives or synthetic oils.
- **Quality:** Look for a chemical-free essential oil that has been obtained by distillation or cold pressing.
- **Reputation:** Buy a brand that has a reputation for producing high-quality products.

