

Aromatherapy for Childbirth

An information guide



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What is aromatherapy?

Aromatherapy uses oils called 'essential oils' which are extracted from plants, and used in a variety of ways for therapeutic benefit.

Essential oils can have impact on the emotions and psychological wellbeing of a person as well as physically in the way that conventional medicines work.

Aromatherapy can help lift mood and promote relaxation which is very helpful in labour.

Challenging symptoms such as nausea, headaches and pain can often be eased by aromatherapy.

Who can use aromatherapy for childbirth?

Women are free to self-administer aromatherapy; however it is advisable to seek advice from an aromatherapist or a midwife who has received training in using aromatherapy.

Women who have given verbal consent to use aromatherapy, and are cared for by a midwife who has received training to use aromatherapy.

Women who have been assessed and have contraindications excluded.

How is aromatherapy provided?

Lavender water can be spritzed in the air to calm and cool.

Simply inhaling scent of essential oil placed on card used as a fan or on a cloth.

- Baths or footbaths ease tension
- Compress can be given hot or cold to ease pain and tension
- Vaporisation fills the air with aroma
- Essential oils can be used in showers too.

Massage blends can be created by trained midwives to provide therapeutic benefits in the pre-labour and the labour period. These are discussed and made specifically to suit individuals.

Are there any side effects?

Amounts of essential oils used are very small and are unlikely to cause any irritation.

If a reaction did occur, the oil would be washed off with soap and water. In this case massage can be provided without essential oils to good effect and essential oils can still be used via non-direct touch methods such as vaporisation.

Avoid citrus oils if sensitive or allergic.

Women with heart disease or epilepsy bleeding and premature labour are advised not to use aromatherapy for childbirth.

Clary sage is contraindicated in pregnancy until 37 weeks gestation.

Ask your midwife for further information

Safety note: Essential oils are not to be taken internally – never eat or drink them.

If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service

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