Using Essential Oils for Psoriasis Relief

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The Benefits, Guidelines, and Limits of Using Essential Oils for Psoriasis

Aromatherapy can be a great way to relax and recharge, but advocates insist mood enhancement and anxiety relief are just the tip of the iceberg.

Drawing from traditional plant-based medicine, aromatherapy principles, and personal experience, practitioners match specific essential oils to specific ailments — everything from insomnia to immune deficiency — to avoid pharmaceuticals.

While mainstream medicine has not embraced its claims or practices, there is some evidence to suggest using essential oils therapeutically could be helpful for some conditions, including skin conditions. Despite the lack of scientific support, you may want to explore certain tinctures to help manage your condition and nurture your skin.

Most Promising Essential Oils for Psoriasis

The essential oils used most often for psoriasis have anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, and soothing properties to tackle the uncomfortable skin irritation and inflammation. They can also be instrumental in your fight against stress, which tops the list of psoriasis triggers.

Tea Tree

This widely used oil pops up in all sorts of beauty products, skin care products, and holistic concoctions, since it can clarify the skin so well. The oil is said to have antifungal, antibacterial, and antiviral properties, which may help to ward to psoriasis complications, like skin infections.

Tea tree oil’s anti-inflammatory properties make it a popular treatment for athlete’s foot, acne, and nail fungus, as well as psoriasis.

Peppermint

Though it’s typically used to energize the mind and calm digestion, peppermint oil has lesser-known qualities that can be especially useful for psoriasis sufferers. The menthol in the plant helps to relieve itch and irritation around psoriasis patches.

In fact, it’s also known to tame irritation around bug bites and blisters. Peppermint oil is potent, so don’t put the pure product right on the affected area of skin — you’ll need a carrier oil or water to thin it out first.

Lavender

The gentle fragrance of lavender is a treat for the nose, but it can have immediate physical effects, too. From

headaches and muscle pain to stubborn infections, lavender is a bit of a wonder herb.

The antibacterial properties team up with the relaxing compounds to fight the symptoms as well as the emotional source of psoriasis flare-ups. Lavender is also very versatile, so you can enjoy it in a number of ways.

Pine Bark Extract

One 2014 study reported that a specific type of pine bark extract, taken from the French maritime pine, can help make your other psoriasis treatments work better. It may also be able to reduce the number of treatments you need to manage your symptoms, which might be owed to its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Keep in mind that the research is limited, and curative consequences aren't guaranteed.

Essential oils have a variety of medicating compounds, but you might also recruit some everyday oils into your psoriasis care for more gentle relief.

Olive oil and coconut oil for psoriasis treatment are particularly useful as moisturizers for flaky, dehydrated skin and scalps. The best part is you can use them liberally either externally or internally, and they're very affordable. Either would make a good carrier oil for your essential oil applications.

Next page: how to use essential oils on your skin.

Using Essential Oils on the Skin

Applying concentrated essential oils directly to the skin is rarely a great idea. Instead, you'll want to restrict your dose to a few drops mixed into a cream, oil, water, or other neutral solution to help you spread it out on your skin evenly and safely.

Every oil is different, but it's usually best to start with two or three drops in a spoonful of carrier oil, or a bowl of water, and apply sparingly until you know how your skin will react. Make the most of your therapy with these tips for safe and effective use:

Join Forces

If you want to calm your skin, why not drop a bit of oil in a warm bath, and soak your skin for a while? You'll hydrate your body, treat your problem patches, and breathe in the soothing (or energizing) scent while you get rid of any stress that may have built up over the day.

Alternatively, try an aromatherapy massage to trigger the relaxation response while you treat your skin. If you've never tried therapeutic massage for psoriasis, or you're worried about friction on sensitive patches, look for a registered massage therapist who has worked with psoriasis patients before, or is familiar with skin issues and knows how to work around them.

Dilute Wisely

Essential oils may be plant-based, but they're also highly concentrated compounds that are more powerful than they seem. Many oils, including tea tree and peppermint, are simply too string to put directly on the skin — they can cause more irritation, or other surprisingly unpleasant side effects.

Using a carrier oil or cream is a good practice when applying essential oils to the skin, and be sure to follow the recommendations on the bottle (along with your doctor's guidelines) so you aren't adding too much. Often, just a few drops mixed into a neutral base will be all you need to enjoy the effects.

Research Each Oil You Use

Different oils are derived from different plants, and will therefore bring different benefits — and potential reactions. Do your homework, and thoroughly read up on any oil you plan to use on your skin, and don't be afraid to consult with your doctor about possible drug interactions.

If you treat essential oils like medicines, you are less likely to run into trouble.

Balance the Risks With the Rewards

One of the major problems with aromatherapy treatments for chronic conditions is the lack of solid evidence.

Very few studies have been undertaken to determine just how safe and effective essential oils are for medical conditions like psoriasis, and even fewer have been well-controlled.

In turn, most of the success stories come from other patients who have found relief, which is helpful, but not exactly scientific.

If you're ready to give essential oils a go, keep in mind they may not work as well for you as they did for someone else. If your skin is particularly sensitive, proceed with extreme caution: essential oils are technically volatile organic compounds, a category that includes a range of fragrances and powerful natural chemicals, and they can trigger even more inflammation in susceptible people.