

# Simple Essential Oil Remedies to the Most Common Ailments



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The ways of the world today are very different from the ways of our ancestors. Before the pharmaceutical industry there were still headaches, illnesses and bacteria. Our ancestors had no choice but to seek nature's answers to their problems, looking to the plants and fruits of the earth. Natural remedies had been the only way until they were pushed aside and the age of science quickly moved its way into our everyday lives. Now we find it so routine to drive to the store to pick up a quick, convenient, over-the-counter drug or pharmaceutical.

Although over-the-counter drugs and pharmaceuticals may give the relief we are seeking, there is certainly a downside to using them. We are getting much more than we acknowledge, including fillers, emulsifiers and preservatives. Advil alone has twenty inactive ingredients and only one active ingredient. Let us not forget the risks of possible side effects, which accompany every drug. For example possible side effects of Ibuprofen include: dizziness, headache, shock, hives, facial swelling, seizures, mouth ulcers, rapid weight gain, ringing in the ears, and the list goes on. If taken with other drugs, effects can become even more dangerous<sup>1</sup>.

Due to an increasing awareness of negative side effects inflicted by modern day drugs "few people today truly have confidence in conventional health care and medical science"<sup>2</sup>. Many are seeking natural, safe remedies to alleviate their ailments without the unnecessary side effects and high costs of conventional medicine. With the growing interest in alternative medicine, studies have been performed to show that "aromatherapy can be used with an allopathic approach, often having very specific medical effects quite similar to those of conventional medicine"<sup>3</sup>. This article will discuss safe, easy solutions to a

variety of everyday health problems without unnecessary additives or side effects.

Headache is one of the top ten complaints of patients seen in primary health care practices today. Up to eighty-eight percent of women and sixty-nine percent of men experience headaches caused by stress or tension in their lifetime. "Three percent of the general population...experience chronic tension-type headache, defined as more than one hundred eighty headache days per year"<sup>4</sup>. That's half of a year! An astounding twenty-eight million Americans suffer from migraines, fifty-three percent of which require bed rest because of intensity<sup>5</sup>. Annually, for every one thousand people, one thousand ninety workdays are lost on account of headaches<sup>3</sup>.

So what is a headache? The two main types are tension headaches and vascular headaches, otherwise known as migraines. According to the National Headache Foundation, about ninety percent of all complaints are tension headaches. Tension headaches are muscle contractions mostly caused by tension and stress. A migraine headache is caused by hyperactive nerve cells which send impulses to blood vessels causing them to constrict. They then expand and release inflammatory substances<sup>1</sup> which cause excess pressure on the membranes surrounding the brain causing the pulsation to be painful<sup>6</sup>.

In order to effectively eliminate a headache with essential oils one needs to focus on the cause. As stated above regarding tension-type headaches, stress is a major component causing muscle contractions. "Mental stress alone can elicit muscle contraction through the limbic system"<sup>3</sup>. Since the sense of smell is directly connected to the limbic system, one may

rationalize that inhalation is an effective means of treatment along with absorption through the skin. Components that show antispasmodic and stress relieving capability would be favored in this case to attain desired results. According to Kurt Schnaubelt, "oils with high ester content, such as clary sage, [salvia sclarea] and Roman chamomile, [anthesis nobilis]... reduce tension in stressful situations..." and are "equally effective antispasmodics."<sup>2</sup> Roman chamomile is noted to contain eighty percent ester content making it highly antispasmodic and calming to the central nervous system<sup>2</sup>. Clary sage is also high in esters, containing seventy-five percent linalyl acetate. The oil's main effects are relaxing and antispasmodic<sup>2</sup>. Lavender (lavandula angustifolia) would also be an appropriate essential oil. Lavender's high content of linalol and the ester linalyl acetate are attributed to its antispasmodic and sedative properties. It also has a balancing effect and relieves tension and pain<sup>2</sup>. The oil of Peppermint (mentha x piperita) is useful for headaches because of its cooling, analgesic and anti-inflammatory effects<sup>7</sup>. These facts considered, an effective recipe to treat a tension headache would be a synergy of fifteen drops lavandula angustifolia, nine drops salvia sclarea, six drops anthesis nobilis, and two drops mentha x piperita added to one ounce carrier oil or unscented lotion applied to forehead and anywhere else pain and/or stress is felt.

A slightly different version would be needed for the relief of a migraine-type headache. Anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, calming oils would be fitting in this case to alleviate the painful pulsation and inflammation.

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Sesquiterpene hydrocarbons are “primarily anti-inflammatory”<sup>2</sup>. Aldehydes are also noted as sedative and anti-inflammatory<sup>2</sup>. The sesquiterpene alcohol, bisabolol, is the strongest anti-inflammatory substance in the essential oil of German chamomile (*matricaria recutita*)<sup>2</sup>. Combined with the sesquiterpene chamazulene, German chamomile is one of the strongest anti-inflammatory oils in the aromatherapy industry<sup>2</sup>. The essential oil of helichrysum (*helichrysum italicum*) is another to consider. “The high content of anti-inflammatory, calming sesquiterpene hydrocarbons, [thirty percent], is complimented by the presence of approximately forty percent spasmolytic esters...” It is also noted to be a pain reducing analgesic<sup>2</sup>. Based on the information and chemistry given, an alternative remedy for migraine headaches would include ten drops *lavandula angustifolia* (for its balancing, tension and pain relieving properties,) as well as twelve drops *matricaria recutita*, eight drops *helichrysum italicum*, and two drops *mentha x piperita* (for its pain relieving, cooling, anti-inflammatory properties.) Once again, this synergy may be added to a carrier or base product and applied to painful areas on the head.

As the seasons change and winter months approach, the common cold and other infections seem to sneak their way past the immune system and make one quite miserable, causing congestion, coughing, and many related symptoms. A common over-the-counter remedy is “Vicks VapoRub.” Indications are: “for temporary relief of nasal congestion and cough associated with a cold”. The product’s active ingredients include the isolated constituents of camphor, menthol and eucalyptol, all of which can be found in particular essential oils. Studies have been performed to analyze the effectiveness of isolated constituents and the results have shown the components to be weaker when isolated. For example: the antibacterial constituents, geranial and neral are considered active in the essential oil of

lemongrass (*cymbopogon citratus*), while myrcene is considered inactive. Interestingly enough, the antibacterial activities were not as effective when the constituent myrcene was taken out<sup>8</sup>. This shows that the chemical components which make up an essential oil are complimentary to each other and actually perform better as a whole.

The following are only a few of many essential oils effective for combating infection as well as relieving the most prevalent ailments associated with the common cold:

Rosemary (*rosmarinus officinalis*) ct. verbenone has the main constituents of the ketone verbenone, having mucalytic action, the oxide cineole, an expectorant, and the monoterpene pinene, which is antiviral and immune supporting<sup>2</sup>.

Peppermint (*mentha x piperita*) has antiseptic properties due to its constituents of menthol (found in Vicks) and menthone. It is also well known as an expectorant and antispasmodic, clearing the nasal passages and soothing a spasmolytic cough.

Eucalyptol, another active ingredient in Vicks is found in the essential oil of eucalyptus (*eucalyptus globulous*) along with the antiviral constituent, pinene, and expectorating limonene. Eucalyptus has been shown effective in treating “respiratory infections causing congestion or excess mucous in the respiratory passages, coughs, catarrhal conditions, sinusitis, asthma and throat infections”<sup>9</sup>.

A combination of these oils may be added to a carrier oil (five percent dilution) and applied to the sinuses, along the respiratory tract, and on the chest, or diffused into the air to provide substantial relief and support the immune system.

Did you know that each year one in ten Americans is affected by Athlete’s Foot<sup>10</sup>, otherwise known as *tinea pedis*? This skin

disease creates symptoms such as itchy, flaky skin that can become sore and even bleed<sup>11</sup>. All in all, it is a great discomfort and inconvenience for many people around the world. Athlete’s foot can be caused by several different fungus species, and the presence of more than one species is not uncommon. To make matters worse, a secondary bacterial infection can potentially develop taking advantage of the already damaged skin<sup>10</sup>.

When using essential oils to treat fungal infections, there is a double benefit. Some essential oils not only have the chemical ability to attack the fungi and/or bacteria, but they also increase the body’s natural ability to fight the infection “by increasing the activity of the organs and cells” involved in the immune system<sup>12</sup>.

Over and over again the essential oil of Tea tree (*Melaleuca alternifolia*) has shown antimicrobial activity against many bacteria<sup>13</sup> and has “a remarkably wide spectrum of activity against fungi”<sup>14</sup>. Tea tree is also an immune stimulant<sup>6</sup> and safe to use over long periods of time<sup>2</sup>. All of these factors make it ideal in the treatment of Athlete’s foot as it is not always quick to cure. The aldehyde citral has been found to be an important antifungal component in lemongrass (*cymbopogon citratus*) when tested against four different skin-infecting fungi<sup>15</sup>.

Lemongrass is also antibacterial, antimicrobial and antiseptic<sup>6</sup>, covering all grounds of secondary infections. The phenol thymol is one of the greatest fungicides according to Dr. R. Deininger (P.I.A. proceedings 1995)<sup>16</sup>. Thymol can be found in the essential oil *Thymus vulgaris*. It acts powerfully against bacteria and “aids the production of white blood cells...supporting the body’s natural defense mechanism”<sup>6</sup>. In one research report it was found that *Palmarosa* (*cymbopogon martini*) and Eucalyptus oils were “lethal” to a wide range of fungi at a very low 0.1 percent dilution<sup>17</sup>.

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For the treatment of Athlete's foot an undiluted application would be most effective although a patch test should definitely be carried out before hand over a twenty-four hour period. If no reaction, continue application on affected area twice a day for five days on, two days off, and repeat. If reaction does occur, wash area with soap and water, wait twenty-four hours, and try a dilution of thirty-five drops per half ounce of carrier oil. If condition shows no improvement after four weeks, discontinue. To create the synergy, combine thirty drops melaleuca alternifolia, twenty drops cymbopogon citratus, twenty drops thymus vulgaris ct. geraniol, fifteen drops cymbopogon martini, and fifteen drops eucalyptus globulosus.

We live in a world full of good and bad bacteria. An obvious growing apprehension concerning bad bacteria is apparent. The number of products containing antibacterial properties has escalated from "a few dozen products in the mid 1990s to more than seven hundred today"<sup>18</sup>. Americans are very concerned with cleanliness. They want their houses, clothes, bodies and children to sparkle, smell good and be germ free. True, a clean household is a healthy household, but there will always be bacteria in the home<sup>19</sup>. What most people don't realize is that the presence of some bacteria actually supports good health. There are many species of bacteria in the human body helping promote natural immunity<sup>20</sup>. If the beneficial bacteria were not present, bad bacteria would be filling these spaces with rapid multiplication<sup>21</sup>. The same goes for external exposure to bacteria in the home. Complete sterilization of oneself and ones environment is not necessary<sup>18</sup> and has not demonstrated any added health advantages<sup>17</sup>.

Scientists are concerned with another negative effect: that the overuse of antibacterial substances, much like antibiotics, will create a greater number of resistant bacteria and microbes. Moreover,

the recent overuse of surface antibacterial agents is thought to contribute to the resistance to antibiotics. If exposure to antibacterial substances alters a person's micro flora, "they may negatively affect the normal maturation of the T helper cell response of the immune system to commensal flora antigens; this change could lead to a greater chance of allergies in children"<sup>17</sup>.

What makes essential oils different? Recently a test was performed in France by Dr. Jean-Claude Jamouille comparing in vitro a new synthesized antibiotic with essential oil blends against the bacteria Staphylococcus aureus. He found that "antibacterials and antibiotics have a specific action" and "offer to bacteria the opportunity to develop a resistance by genetic modification, whereas the essential oil component (probably phenolic) is non-specific, so the bacteria cannot develop a specific resistance mechanism"<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, it can be said that essential oils have a broader range of action and do not induce bacterial tolerance.

So, why continue to be exposed to potentially harmful chemicals and fumes? Sure, "Clorox Formula 409" kills 99.9 percent of bacteria but it also states on the bottle, "Hazardous to humans and domestic animals" and requires safety glasses and protective gloves. Health hazard data also states that with any contact of the product and skin, eyes or inhalation, medical attention is advised<sup>23</sup>. All of this is entirely unnecessary when safe, natural, non-hazardous alternatives have been available for centuries.

Essential oils are extremely useful because they have the ability to attack invading organisms, either killing them or reducing the rate at which they multiply<sup>11</sup>. Used synergistically, many different components may be combined to create a very effective disinfectant. In the case of cleansing and eliminating bad bacteria in the home, tea tree (Melaleuca alternifolia) is unbeatable. It is renowned for its antibacterial, anti-

infectious, antifungal, antiviral, and immune stimulating properties<sup>6</sup>. Tea tree's antimicrobial qualities are "unbelievable"<sup>2</sup>, showing activity against E. coli, Staphylococcus aureus, Candida albicans, and many others<sup>12</sup>. Phenols have shown strong antibacterial and immune stimulating action.<sup>2</sup> Thymol and carvacol, found in thymus vulgaris, are reportedly "highly toxic to a wide range of bacteria"<sup>14</sup>, thymol proven effective against Staph bacteria, E. coli and Candida albicans to name a few<sup>2</sup>. Eucalyptus and Niaouli are both strongly antiviral<sup>2</sup>, bactericidal, and antiseptic. Niaouli's high content of phenols and monoterpene alcohols also create strong immune support<sup>6</sup>. The essential oil of Lemon is perhaps the most effective oil for disinfecting room air, preventing contagious illnesses such as colds and flu<sup>2</sup> as well as giving that lemon fresh scent so commonly associated with cleanliness.

The oils mentioned here are safe, effective and non-toxic for general household cleaning and disinfecting. Create a synergy including twenty drops each of Eucalyptus globulus, Niaouli MQV and Thyme ct. thymol, combined with twenty-five drops each of Melaleuca alternifolia, and Citrus limonum. Pre-mix a ready to use disinfectant spray with one drop synergy per half cup water (don't forget to shake synergy well first) in a dark glass spray bottle and store away from heat and light. Use on surfaces in the kitchen, bathroom and wherever needed or simply spray to kill germs in the air. Although this spray is non-toxic, try to avoid over exposure to skin and shake well before each use.

In conclusion, let us not forget that each individual has control of his or her health care decisions. Essential oils provide safe, easy, effective and practical solutions to everyday ailments, leaving no toxins behind and creating a clean, pleasant atmosphere. They fight infection and bacteria while simultaneously supporting the body's

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natural ability to heal itself<sup>2</sup>. This is something that cannot be said about conventional drugs and cleaners as they tend to only weaken us. While we can become immune to current medicine, we cannot become immune to nature. Hundreds of years before science, natural medicine was in practice all around the world. Mother Nature provided us with everything we need, and its time to get back to basics.

### About Tami Wright

Tami has been practicing Aromatherapy on friends and family since she was eighteen years old and graduated from the Institute of Dynamic Aromatherapy with Jade Shutes in the fall of 2002. She lives near Seattle, WA, where she practices aromatherapy with great enthusiasm. She hopes to forever continue her education and practice in aromatherapy and other forms of natural health care throughout her life. You can contact her at: 360-941-0256.

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