



Truth Behind Essential Oils

By Abby Slater

The use of essential oils has become a popular practice in the ever day life of many people. This includes high profile YouTubers and celebrities, such as [Kerry Washington](#). Essential oil use also includes the average everyday person, such as moms wary of cleaning chemicals, those seeking health benefits, and those who simply enjoy the fragrance.

Pure essential oils are compounds of chemicals extracted from plants, such as lavender or eucalyptus, through processes such as distillation or pressing. A common use of essential oils is aromatherapy in which a few drops of oil are placed in a diffuser and meant to fill the room with lovely scents. Other uses include mixing essential oils with different beauty products, as different oils are claimed to have different affects on the skin; or they can be used to make homemade cleaning supplies when mixed with ingredients such as castile soap, vinegar, or baking soda. Essential oils also have some health benefits, for example, Lavender is widely known to help with sleep and relaxation.

While most of these uses and practices seem beneficial, a lack of knowledge and understanding about essential oils can lead to harmful effects. On the website, the Food and Drug Administration ([FDA](#)) warns users of the regulation and safety of essential oils;

“Sometimes people think that if an ‘essential oil’ or other ingredient comes from a plant, it must be safe. But many plants contain materials that are toxic, irritating, or likely to cause allergic reactions when applied to the skin.”

For example, lemon essential oil has been claimed to reduce dark spots and acne scars on the face. This may be true, as lemon does have a lightening effect; however, wearing lemon essential oil on your face in the sun, especially without sunscreen can damage and burn the skin. Therefore, it is important to do research and fully understand both the potential benefits and harms of specific oils.

Aromatherapy may seem the least risky of the different ways in which essential oils can be utilized. However, [Dr. Axe](#), who is a both a clinical nutritionist and a certified doctor of natural health medicine, claims that 8 hours is the maximum amount of time in which one should run an essential oil diffuser. Axe also recommends only using essential oils that are “diffuser-friendly” in his YouTube video [Dangers of Essential](#)

[Oils: Top 10 Essential Oil Mistakes to Avoid](#). Some safe essential oils that he suggests in this video includes Lavender, Frankincense, Lemon, Peppermint, and Tea Tree oil.

Axe is a beneficial resource to all essential oil users, both long term users and beginners, because he includes facts about essential oil uses and harms that are backed by research. A major issue concerning essential oil practice is utilization without education and the spreading of misinformation. There is very little research or scientific evidence surrounding the benefits of essential oils in comparison to other methods of self-care, therapy, and medicine.

Online there maybe claims of essential oils helping people struggling with depression, or curing someone of a certain disease or symptom. Despite that fact that it is illegal for those selling essential oils to make such claims, the idea that essential oils can cure certain ailments still seem to arise on platforms such as *Facebook* and *Pinterest*. While the idea that something as simple as essential oils could cure a person of cancer, depression, or dementia is wonderful – it simply is not based on scientific fact. Essential oils can be used alongside medical treatment to help alleviate specific symptoms if cleared by an educated and certified professional.

For example, aromatherapy alone will not cure someone of their anxiety. However, adding aromatherapy alongside traditional treatment methods can be beneficial. The most effective way to treat a disorder like anxiety depends on the individual, however, active treatment through counseling and medication is more scientifically based than alternative means.

So how do you discern from what is fact and what is fiction? Look at the research that has been done. An easily accessible website which helps outline the facts and findings is National Institute of Health ([NIH](#)) website which bullet points research results on multiple topics including specific essential oils.

<https://www.marieclaire.com/celebrity/a7566/whats-on-kerry-washington/>

<https://www.fda.gov/cosmetics/productsingredients/products/ucm127054.htm>

<https://draxe.com/about-dr-josh-axe/>

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<https://search.nih.gov/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&affiliate=nih&query=essential+oil&commit=Search>