

# Scented serenity

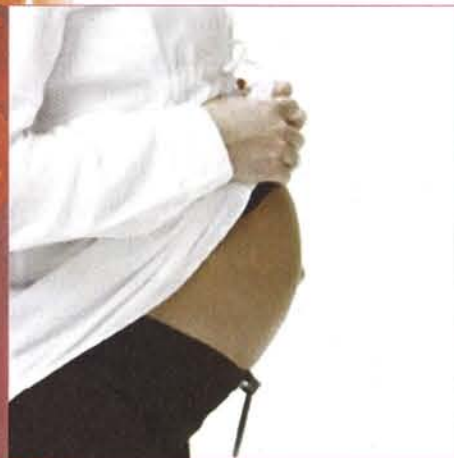
## Essential oils for pregnancy and childbirth

Bev Gray, RA, CH

Childbirth is an exciting time in a woman's life and one of her most natural and primal experiences. It can also be stressful and exhausting. Aromatherapy's relaxing and calming benefits can help women enjoy this wonderful time, as well as ease the newborn's transition from womb to room.

### During Pregnancy

As your body and hormones change during pregnancy, specific essential oils in low dilutions can help with common ailments. Bergamot (*Citrus bergamia*), through inhalation, may act as an appetite regulator, while mandarin (*Citrus reticulata*) can be diluted in a carrier oil to help avoid stretch marks, and petitgrain (*Citrus aurantium*) can be used in a bath with a carrier such as whole milk powder for relaxation and calming.



### Childbirth

A calm and aromatic birthing atmosphere is beneficial, not only to the mother, but to all

involved in the birth. The subtle use of essential oils, soft music, and lights can create a peaceful environment to welcome your new baby.

### Birthing environment spritzer

- 10 drops lavender (*Lavendula angustifolia*)
  - 10 drops rose geranium (*Pelargonium graveolens*)
  - 5 drops camomile (*Anthemis nobilis*)
  - 5 drops petitgrain
  - 125 mL distilled water
- Mix essential oils in the spritzer bottle, then add the distilled water. Shake before use.

Essential oils not appropriate for use during the first stages of pregnancy can be used in the last phase of birthing for their anti-septic, stress, and pain-easing properties.

During the birthing process, the perineum can be torn or surgically cut (episiotomy) and the healing process can be long and painful. Essential oils used in a sitz bath can help to speed up the healing process, prevent infection, and reduce discomfort. Lavender helps to relieve discomfort and helps with cell regeneration. Cypress also offers pain relief and can help to reduce hemorrhoids after the birth.

### Sitz bath

- 2 drops lavender
- 2 drops cypress essential oil (*Cupressus sempervirens*)
- 1 Tbsp milk, cream, or milk powder

### Diaper rash oil

- 2 drops lavender oil
  - 1 oz (30 mL) olive oil
  - 2 drops tea tree oil (*Melaleuca alternifolia*)
- Mix essential oils with olive oil. Use as a barrier oil to prevent diaper rash or when rash has occurred.



jasmine

Add essential oils to milk, stir. Fill extra-large stainless steel bowl with warm water, add the essential oils/milk combo, stir in, then sit and soak.

### Newborns

Newborns have very sensitive skin and an acute sense of smell. Many essential oils can be too intense for babies under six months old. However, massaging your newborn using a cold-pressed olive oil is very nourishing.

### Breastfeeding

Avoid using perfume-strength essential oil blends on the skin when nursing. Some essential oils can be too stimulating for young babies and may disturb their sleep patterns. Do not use essential oils directly on nipples.

Sore nipples can be caused by yeast or excessive suckling; a poultice of calendula flowers or a calendula ointment can be applied between feedings.



wild rose

### Stretch mark oil

- 12 drops mandarin
  - 1 1/2 oz (40 mL) sweet almond oil
  - 3/4 oz (20 mL) avocado oil
- Mix essential oil with carrier oils and apply a small amount to the areas prone to stretching such as the buttocks, thighs, breasts, hips, and abdomen. Avoid exposing skin to direct sunlight after applying citrus oil.



### Aromatherapy for babies and young children

Diffusing small amounts of essential oils such as lavender and camomile into your home environment can be very calming for babies and all family members. A scent ball diffuser can be plugged into the wall.

### Essential oil safety

Using therapeutic-grade essential oils

### Labour massage oil

- 6 drops lavender
  - 3 drops rose (*Rosa damascena*)
  - 3 drops jasmine (*Jasminum grandiflorum*)
  - 2 oz (60 mL) sweet almond oil
- Gently massage onto the lower abdomen and lower back between contractions to help with anxiety and pain relief.



lavender

can be beneficial during pregnancy—but use with caution. Essential oils are pure volatile plant extracts derived from medicinal plants. They are very potent and require care at any time, but especially during pregnancy. Essential oils should never be taken internally or orally without the specific guidance of a medical professional. Many essential oils have emmenagogue properties that promote menstruation. If there is a history of miscarriage or a problem pregnancy, avoid all essential oils during the first trimester and choose carefully thereafter with the help of a qualified aromatherapist. **a**

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