

Information for Pregnant Women Family and Carers

**Safe use of aromatherapy
during pregnancy and labour**

Three horizontal, wavy bands of blue color at the bottom of the page, with the top band being a lighter shade of blue and the bottom band being a darker shade.

About this leaflet

This leaflet explains how using essential oils (aromatherapy) can help you feel better during pregnancy and labour. It explains how to use them safely, what they can help with, and what to expect. A midwife trained in aromatherapy will help and show you how to use them safely.

Who should not use essential oils

Please tell your midwife if you:

- Have epilepsy, heart problems, or asthma
- Take medicine to thin your blood
- Have diabetes and take tablets or insulin
- Have had bleeding or a low-lying placenta
- If there are any concerns about your baby's growth or movements

For the situations above, there is not enough evidence to confirm that essential oils are safe to use.

How aromatherapy can help

Essential oils may help you:

- Feel calm and relaxed
- Sleep better
- Feel less tired
- Ease sore muscles or back pain
- Help with tummy problems like feeling sick or constipated

Your midwife will check everything is safe before using oils. If you are using other therapies, tell your midwife.

Do not use any oils for 24 hours before your appointment.

Ways to use essential oils

You can use essential oils in different ways:

- **Massage:** Someone rubs the blended oil gently onto your skin
- **Smelling:** Put a few drops on a tissue or cotton ball and breathe in
- **Compress:** Soak a cloth in warm water with oil and place it on your skin

When you might be offered aromatherapy

You may be offered aromatherapy if:

- You are more than 12 weeks pregnant
- Your pregnancy is going well
- You and your baby are healthy
- You understand the treatment and agree to it
- You are 39 weeks or more and want help to get ready for labour

Taking essential oils home

If there is oil left after your treatment, your midwife may give it to you in a labelled bottle with instructions.

Keep the bottle in a cool, dark place (not in the fridge with food) and away from children and pets.

Getting ready for labour treatment

This treatment uses acupressure, massage, and essential oils to help your body get ready for labour. It is offered from 39 weeks or earlier if needed.

During your appointment, your midwife will:

- Do a routine pregnancy check
- Talk about and offer a membrane sweep (optional)
- Show you acupressure points
- Give you a relaxing massage with essential oils

Follow all aftercare instructions and tell your midwife if you are using other therapies.

Do not use other essential oils within 24 hours of treatment

What to bring to your appointment

- A small towel
- A panty liner
- Use the toilet before your appointment
- Please do not bring children with you

Acupressure points for your information

Look at the diagram provided. The red dot on the ankle shows where to apply pressure with your thumb.

The thumb on the hand photo shows where to apply pressure on the hand.

Your midwife will show you how to do this before you go home.



<p>Stimulate: <u>Spleen 6</u> 20-30 intermittent presses lasting 2 seconds</p>  <p>2-3 TIMES DAILY</p>	<p><u>Large Intestine 4</u> 20-30 intermittent presses lasting 2 seconds</p>  <p>3-4 TIMES DAILY</p>
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Image courtesy of Complementary Birth Ltd

What to expect after a treatment

You might:

- Feel sleepy or full of energy
- Have vivid dreams or feel emotional
- Get a mild headache or need to wee more

Tips:

- Drink lots of water, juice or herbal teas in the 24 hours following treatment
- Do not wash the skin where the oil was used for 4 hours
- Tell your midwife if you feel unwell

The symptoms above are common and usually resolve within 1–2 days

Safety tips

- If you feel unwell, contact your midwife or maternity unit
- If you experience skin irritation, wash with warm water and inform your midwife or maternity service

- Avoid using essential oils in the bath after your waters have broken
- Keep essential oils away from children, pets and people with serious medical conditions (e.g. epilepsy, heart disease)
- The oil is intended only for your personal use and should not be given to anyone else
- Store your blend in a cool, dark place (not in a fridge with food)

Show this leaflet to your partner or support person so that they know what to expect.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact your maternity care team.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware

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This leaflet was developed using materials provided by Complementary Birth Ltd, who supported the update of LTHTR aromatherapy guidance and contributed educational resources.

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking this will include Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal and the opportunity to speak to a nurse or advisor from the specialist Tobacco and Alcohol Care Team.

If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**.

Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.
This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:

patientexperienceandinvolem@LTHTR.nhs.uk

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