

AROMATHERAPY IN LABOUR - A GUIDE FOR BIRTH PARTNERS

Methods of application during labour:

Inhalation: 1-2 drops undiluted on cotton pad

Massage/skin application: choice of 1-3 essential oils and 1 drop each in 10-15ml carrier oil or unscented lotion.

Foot-bath: 4-6 drops in carrier oil and then add to warm bath. Soak feet for minimum of 10-15 minutes.

Diffuser: 1-2 drops of essential oil or blend.

Spritz/spray bottle: 4-6 drops of essential oil in distilled water. Spray around room.

All body/skin applications (massage/sprays) are 1% in pregnancy, essential oils are first diluted in carrier oil before adding to a bath so they'll mix with the water. 1% dilution = 3 drops essential oil to 10ml carrier oil.

Labour - first stage

- A bath will be very soothing. To a warm bath add 2-3 drops of True Lavender essential oil diluted in carrier oil (10ml) agitate the water to disperse the oil. Relax and soak for at least 10 minutes.
- Massage mother paying attention to the lower back - gentle circular movements.
- Blending a choice of 1-3 essential oils: Roman Chamomile, Clary Sage, True Lavender, Jasmine, Frankincense. Inhalation on a cotton pad and massage to lower abdomen and back in a lotion blend.

Advanced first stage

- You may find that spending long periods soaking in the bath offers pain relief at this stage.

For pain relief try the following compress:

To 1/2 pint of warm water, add 3 drops (total) of Clary Sage, Jasmine or True Lavender essential oils diluted in carrier oil (10ml). Agitate well, then swish a suitable cloth in the water, squeeze out and place on either the lower back or abdomen. Leave it on for as long is comfortable or until it loses warmth. Repeat if needed.

The second stage

- Massage can still be soothing, but may be too distracting at this stage of labour.
- A calming cloth for your partner to dab her face will be very welcome: to a warm bowl of water, add 2-3 drops of True Lavender essential oil diluted in carrier oil. Agitate the water to disperse the oil. Use to mop up any perspiration or just give a soothing dab to the face.
- Try placing undiluted 1-2 drops of Frankincense essential oil on a tissue and inhale as needed. This will encourage the breath to deepen, focus the mind and centre/ground the body. (Frankincense oil is known as The Rescue Remedy of essential oils).

- Stalled labour - a blend of 1-3 essential oils: Clary Sage, Rose, True Lavender. Massage lower abdomen and ankles, inhalation on cotton pad.

The birth and third stage

- When the baby has been delivered a compress of 1-3 drops of Jasmine oil diluted in 10ml carrier oil can be applied to her lower abdomen can help expel the placenta.

Postpartum

- Sore perineum - 3 drops of True Lavender in 10 ml carrier oil to warm sitz bath soaking for 15 minutes two times a day for three days after vaginal birth to ease perineal discomfort and support skin and tissue healing.
- C-section pain - True Lavender inhalation on a cotton pad and 3 drops in 10ml carrier oil or lotion, staying at least 2 inches away from suture line. Helps to decrease muscle tension and post-op discomfort.

Women's Health Aromatherapy, A clinically evidence-based guide for Nurses, Midwives, Doulas and Therapists, Pam Conrad. 2019.