

# Safety Guidelines

Every book you will ever find on essential oils has a section of cautions and safety guidelines, a fact that could be considered very helpful if any of them agreed on anything and if they were based on facts gleaned from valid studies! On page 3, we discussed the major schools of thought concerning essential oils. Most of the books published and sold in America lean to the British way of thinking. Perhaps this is because of the language barrier between texts written in French and the English-speaking people who are reading them.

If you follow the studies quoted in the majority of aromatherapy books written from the British point of view, you will find that the studies were done on animals, or were done with single components of an oil (essential oils which were broken down, and therefore, altered in a laboratory before the testing began), or were done using non-therapeutic, perfumery grade oils for the test. The concerns raised as a result of these tests are of very questionable validity when discussing the subject of pure therapeutic grade essential oils. In fact, I doubt it applies at all.

Please refer back to the discussion on page 3, and always consider the bias of the book you are reading. There are books full of cautions that really do not apply to your every day use of therapeutic grade essential oils. On the other hand, essential oils are very concentrated plant material and are biologically active. They penetrate into the tissues and cells of the body. Because they are active agents, essential oils can, of course, be misused and even over-used. The relative safety of essential oils is different depending on the method of use.

It would be difficult, probably impossible, to inhale a lethal dosage of any essential oil, or to absorb such a dosage through the skin. You may irritate your nostrils or lungs, break out in a nasty rash, or trigger a cleanse response by the body, but you will not do yourself serious harm if the oils you are using are pure and nonsynthetic. The drugs you have taken play a factor in the nastiness of a cleanse reaction.

## *INTERNAL USE*

The oral ingestion of essential oils is another matter altogether. I do not recommend the taking of essential oils internally. The proponents of internal ingestion will tell you that when serious overdoses (meaning death) have occurred it was either deliberate on the part of the person or was an accident with a child. The death of a child is always a tragedy and being accidental does not mitigate that. In addition, the “accidents” I have read of with children would be better termed “criminal stupidity”. When a substance is making a child seriously ill it is time to stop using it and find an appropriate antidote and a way to cope with the overdose! Nevertheless, because essential oils are very concentrated, enough of an overdose to cause illness and harm to a child with internal use would be very easy to accomplish. Even with an adult, a great deal of caution and thought should be taken.

The rest of the story is that in studies conducted at universities in both Germany and Austria, essential oils were placed on the feet and then detected on the tongue in 20 minutes. Essential oils absorb so readily into the body and pass through the cells to the needed areas so efficiently that it would rarely be of any additional benefit to take them orally. There are even studies indicating that the rate of travel and the site targeted are responsive to the thoughts and intents of the user.

I have been using essential oils for many years with grand results, and I have never felt the need to use them internally. I brush my teeth with them. I gargle with them, and occasionally, I even use them in a water pick. If I need them somewhere internally I trust the oil itself to find the best path there from use in an external application of some kind.

The purity of the oil does not change the fact that they are extremely concentrated plant material and can be easily overdosed when taken internally. Being a therapeutic grade essential oil does not make that oil automatically safe to be taken internally. Therapeutic grade does eliminate a host of ills unrelated to concentration and strength. Synthetic, man-made versions are extremely dangerous taken internally and just plain dangerous used otherwise!

With that said, I would like to add that the essential oils sold by Butterfly Express, llc, are therapeutic grade essential oils. The choice, and the responsibility, for their use internally is all yours. Just remember, they, and certainly I, do not advocate internal use of essential oils.

I can find no record of recent deaths, or even serious injuries, linked to the proper use of essential oils. This is true in spite of the fact that more and more people are using them every day. The American Medical Association, in reports of their own, admit that hundreds (some claim thousands) die every year from properly applied pharmaceutical drugs. Essential oils are among the safest and most effective of all therapeutic modalities. They are safe enough for amateurs and novices to use with only the remotest possibility of causing harm to themselves and others. As always, the more you know the more effective and safe you will be.

## **A FEW GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SAFE USE OF ESSENTIAL OILS**

### ***CHILDREN***

The very first rule is, of course, to keep your oils out of the reach of children. Think of and store them just as you would any other therapeutic product containing active ingredients. This means that you do not leave bottles of oil sitting on the side of the tub or anywhere else.

When applying oils to infants and small children, always dilute with a carrier oil. 1 to 3 drops of essential oil in 1/2 teaspoon (or even more) of a carrier oil will do the job nicely without the risk of skin irritation or overdose. If a child does get hold of a bottle of oil and either dumps it in the tub or all over themselves, the solution is carrier oil applied liberally and frequently. The carrier oil will dilute the oil, slow down the rate of absorption into the body, and relieve much of the discomfort of the skin irritation.

Vegetable protein oil (carrier oils) such as olive, almond, grapeseed, safflower, etc., are excellent to use whenever too much oil has been used or an oil has reached the wrong place (the eyes, the mucous membranes of the nose, or other sensitive areas). Do not use water. Water amplifies the effects of the oils and carries it even more quickly into the body.

### ***PHOTOTOXICITY***

Many oils which contain furanoids are phototoxic. This means that if the skin where the oil was applied is then exposed to a source of ultraviolet light, it will absorb more UV radiation at a faster rate. This is true even when the oil was diluted with a carrier oil to be applied. Please note that the oil must have been applied to skin which is then going to be exposed. Putting a phototoxic oil on your chest or feet and then exposing your arms and face to sunlight does not create a problem.

Apparently, furanoids can resonate with UV light in two opposing ways, either to magnify the UV waves, or the furanoids can result in the destruction of the UV radiation. In myrrh oil, for example, there are compounds that quench the solar amplifying properties. Ancient Egyptians applied myrrh oil on their skin daily. Myrrh is an example of how the compounds of living things change their behavior according to the company they are in. Testing individual components for toxicity does not tell you much of anything useful!

Oils which are considered to be phototoxic include angelica, bergamot, orange bitter, grapefruit, lemon, lime, petitgrain, and rue. Some sources include fennel, anise, and cumin on this list. Notice that not all of the citrus oils are included. Oils of mandarin, orange sweet, tangelo, and tangerine are NOT considered phototoxic.

### ***PREGNANCY***

Essential oils are very beneficial for many of the conditions of pregnancy, but caution, of course, should be used. Pay close attention to the lists of oils which are contraindicated for pregnancy, but do factor in the bias (British, French, or German) of the book you are consulting. Always begin with only half the dosage that you would ordinarily use. Remember that blends, because of the smaller percentage of the stronger oils, are usually safer than single oils, especially during pregnancy.