Inflammation plays both good cop and bad cop in your body’s immune system. It is a key component of your body’s defense arsenal. An accidental cut will trigger an army of white blood cells called B lymphocytes, macrophages, neutrophils, and T lymphocytes to protect you against infection. This process causes two indicators of inflammation — swelling and redness.

Dr. Chilton calls out-of-control inflammation “too much of a good thing.” Inflammatory diseases are a hyper-exaggeration of the normal immune response. Chronic inflammation is now understood to be linked to an increasing number of diseases. The other bad news about inflammation is it also accelerates the aging process. The list of inflammation-induced health concerns is an incredibly long one, including asthma, allergies, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, gout, lupus, psoriasis, inflammatory bowel disease, heart attack, congestive heart failure, Alzheimer’s disease, diabetes and chronic infections.

How is the inflammation response triggered in the body? In addition to microbial infections, environmental toxins and stress, a poor diet plays a major role in provoking inflammation. Our diets contain too many omega-6 oils that create an overabundance of the inflammatory messengers called prostaglandins and leukotrienes. Bringing omega-6 to omega-3 ratios back into balance is a key factor in keeping inflammation within the normal range. This is more difficult than it seems as today the diet of most Americans has an omega-6 to omega-3 ratio of 20:1 or as much as 50:1.

With half of all American adults facing inflammation disorders, some scientists have looked to ancient remedies for help.

Therapeutic-Grade Essential Oils

While essential oils have been known and used by man for thousands of years, it has only been since the 1990s that medical researchers around the world have documented their effects. Today, we know that essential oils have tremendous benefits when inhaled, ingested, or applied topically. Essential oils have potent effects against inflammation.

Helpful Hints for Selecting Essential Oils

When looking for an essential oil, demand 100% pure therapeutic-grade oils, carefully studied and tested for quality. Therapeutic-grade essential oils are of the highest therapeutic quality. They are free from the large amount of purification processes to avoid the destruction of any active compounds. They are of the highest quality and contain potent amounts of the active ingredients that are biologically active.

Therapeutic-Grade Essential Oils

Therapeutic-grade oils are the purest oils available. The term “therapeutic-grade” refers to a pharmacetically acceptable oil that is free of impurities. Therapeutic-grade oils are prepared in a way that maintains the high concentration of the active ingredients. Therapeutic-grade oils are certified by manufacturers and may be sold by dermatologists, pharmacists, and other health care providers.

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Essential Oils & Inflammation


Frankincense  This essential oil is recognized throughout the world for its anti-inflammatory action.12,13 Japanese researchers found that triptolide compounds in *Boswellia carterii* “exhibit marked anti-inflammatory activity,”4 while a study at the University of Maryland School of Medicine showed that frankincense’s boswolic acids alter production of the inflammation messengers interleukin-2 and gamma interferon and also have immunomodulatory activity.4

Ginger  A Danish study determined that ginger inhibits prostaglandin and leukotriene creation with no adverse effects reported in the patients, some of whom were in this study for 2.5 years;5 ginger is a potent anti-inflammatory,5 and strongly affects the biomarkers of inflammation.6

Geranium  A study at Teikyo University Institute of Medicine showed that this fragrant essential oil can “suppress the inflammatory symptoms with neutrophil accumulation and edema [swelling].”6

Tea Tree  Australian research discovered that the main component of M. alternifolia, terpinen-4-ol, “can suppress pro-inflammatory mediator production by activated human monocytes”7 and can reduce histamine-induced skin inflammation in just 10 minutes.7

Peppermint  Several studies confirm that this cooling essential oil is a strong anti-inflammatory agent.13,14

Lavender  One should not be surprised that multi-faceted lavender has anti-inflammatory properties. A study at the Isfahan University of Medical Sciences in Iran confirmed “the traditional use of Lavandula angustifolia for the treatment of painful and inflammatory conditions.”15

Laurus nobilis  An animal study at the Institute Pasteur of Iran found that “the analgesic and anti-inflammatory effect of the essential oil was comparable to reference drugs: morphine and piroxicam.”16

Eucalyptus globulus  Studies have shown that Eucalyptus globulus has “neutrophil-dependent and independent anti-inflammatory activities,”17 “has the anti-inflammatory effect on chronic bronchitis” in an animal study,18 and can ameliorate inflammatory processes because it can “interfere with leukocyte activation.”19

Eucalyptus citriodora  (lemon eucalyptus and rosemary) has “potential beneficial use in therapy as an anti-inflammatory and analgesic agent.”20

Myrrh  This oil of antiquity decreases inflammatory cytokines.13,19

Nutmeg  An animal study at the College of Medicine, University of Ibadan in Nigeria showed that nutmeg had anti-inflammatory and analgesic effects.21

Thyme  Since nitric oxide plays a major role in inflammation, thyme was studied along with Eucalyptus globulus and documented to show “significant scavenging of NO [nitric oxide] radicals.”22

Cardamom  A Saudi study of cardamom oil determined anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and antiapoptotic action.23

Rosemary  This essential oil was found to “have a therapeutic potential in treatment or prevention of bronchial asthma, spasmodenic disorders, peptic ulcer, inflammatory diseases” and other conditions.24

Essential Oil Constituents  Research has shown several chemical constituents of certain essential oils to have anti-inflammatory action.

Methyl salicylate  (wintergreen) inhibited leukotriene formation.25

1,4-cineole  (eucalyptus and rosemary) has “potential beneficial use in therapy as an anti-inflammatory and analgesic agent.”26

Linalool  (also known as linalool according to the FDA) and linalyl acetate (lavender, bergamot, cardamom, and rosewood contain one or both of these constituents) have anti-inflammatory effects.27

Chamazulene  (blue tansy) and German chamomile flavonoids were found to inhibit the leukotriene synthesis.28,29

ESSENTIAL OILS BENEFICIAL FOR INFLAMMATION

Knowing which essential oils are anti-inflammatory is armoring yourself with 50% of the battle. The other half of the inflammatory story is oxidation, the damage caused by free radicals. Neuroscientist James Joseph of Tufts University warned, “Inflammation is the evil twin of oxidation. Where you find one, you find the other.”30 Free radicals are created in our bodies every moment of the day by our metabolic functions. Dr. Bruce Ames of the University of California at Berkeley estimates that the DNA of our cells is attacked by free radicals over 10,000 times per day. And then add in the free radical insults that come from pollutants in our environment and you will see how important antioxidants are!

You only have half the prescription!

ANTIOXIDANT ESSENTIAL OILS

- Clover
- Coriander
- Geranium
- Oregano
- M. alternifolia
- Myrrh
- Mountain savory
- Ginger
- Fennel
- Rosemary
- Citrus oils
- Myrtle
- Basil
- Nutmeg
- Melissa
- E. globulus
- Tarragon
- Laurus nobilis

Frankincense  Topically — apply to rashes, burns and other inflamed areas.

Ginger  Topically — offers wonderful healing properties for tissues and supports cellular growth.

Geranium  Internally — ingest to protect DNA and support cell growth.

Along with single oils, the following oil blends are effective against inflammation. Blends can be purchased as pre-blended products formulated by a master aroma therapist using therapeutic-grade essential oils.

Muscle and Joint Pain Blend  (Wintergreen, Helichrysum, Clove, Peppermint) — topically — apply to affected tissues as needed.

Antiaging/ Antioxidant Blend  The following blend is as essential as a daily multivitamin. It provides intra-antioxidant protection of awesome proportions.

Thyme  Thyme contains thymol. Research says thymol protects and increases levels of DNA in the body, a vital fatty acid crucial to overall health. (Continued on back)