Essential oils to use during pregnancy

Lemon , lavender, ginger, peppermint, chamomile, frankincense

To avoid during pregnancy

Even if you've zeroed in on a set of essential oils you can trust, you should still proceed cautiously if you're using them when pregnant. For example, if you're allergic to certain ingredients, you shouldn't use them in aromatherapy either, Galper says.

In addition, many essential oils are specifically harmful during pregnancy, either because they can cause complications (like uterine contractions) or because experts are just not sure about how they'd affect the pregnant mom or fetus. These include:

- Aniseed
- Basil (estragole CT)
- Birch
- Camphor
- Caraway
- Cinnamon
- Clary sage
- Fennel
- Hyssop
- Mugwort
- Parsley seed or leaf
- Pennyroyal
- Sage

- Tansy
- Tarragon
- Thuja
- Wintergreen
- Wormwood

The Best Essential Oils for Pregnancy

With good essential oils and expert guidance, you may find that aromatherapy can make you feel a lot better. Galper makes the following recommendations for her patients, but again, check with your health provider before trying them on yourself.

- **To relieve nausea:** Lavender, chamomile, peppermint and ginger. Sniff them directly from the bottle, or sniff a cotton ball or tissue treated with a drop or two. “They ease belly upset and are good essential oils for morning sickness,” Galper says.
- **To soothe muscle aches:** Lavender, ylang-ylang, ginger, chamomile and frankincense. Add a total of 12 drops of essential oil to 2 tablespoons of a base oil, like jojoba or almond oil, Galper advises.
- **To treat hemorrhoids:** Cypress, geranium and lavender. “These can soothe the swelling and irritation,” Galper says. Blend together all three essential oils (for a total of 8 drops altogether) and add the mix to 2 tablespoons of aloe vera gel; apply the concoction directly onto the affected area with a cotton ball or tissue.
- **To improve sleep:** Lavender, ylang-ylang and mandarin. “Add a total of 12 drops of essential oil to 2 tablespoons of distilled water in a spray-mist bottle, and mist pillows before bed,” she says.

Essential oils in trimester one

During the first 13 weeks of pregnancy a woman will undergo a variety of changes as her body begins to support her growing baby. These changes occur physically, emotionally and physiologically.

Although not all pregnant women will experience all symptoms, there are many common changes and complaints that can be experienced, such as nausea, fatigue, headaches, emotional vulnerability, hormonal swings. There is also a mixture of excitement and anxiety about pregnancy and birth.

With these changes in mind we need to find essential oils that are soothing and relaxing but also uplifting and revitalising. It is really important to use essential oils only if really needed during the first trimester – less is more. Safety is really important in this trimester especially.

- For nausea – cardamom, mandarin, lemon, orange, ginger; and for headaches lavender or lemon.
- For emotional health – lavender, patchouli, orange, vetiver, mandarin, bergamot, grapefruit, palmarosa, petitgrain, lime. These oils have soothing, refreshing, uplifting, tranquil qualities.
- To counteract anxiety – petitgrain, bergamot, lavender, neroli, orange, grapefruit, mandarin., lemongrass (in low dosages), rosalina, vetiver, chamomile.

Essential oils in trimester two

As the pregnant woman enters into the middle of her pregnancy, weeks 14 to 27, she may find pregnancy symptoms begin to ease. She will begin to feel her baby move and often embrace the joy of her pregnant body and her baby growing inside her.

Common conditions that may arise in the second trimester include increased energy, sinus aggravation, less stable joints/muscles causing pain, spider/varicose veins, heartburn and constipation.

The oils that will offer the most benefit during this time will target the digestive system, balance and focus, easing pain.

- For digestion or indigestion – ginger and lavender, sweet orange, coriander, mandarin, cardamom
- Aching muscles – lemon, ginger, rosalina, myrtle, cardamom
- Sinus – Rosalina, myrtle, lemon
- Overall balancing – lavender, geranium (not for use in early pregnancy), mandarin, petitgrain, neroli.

Essential oils in trimester three

The last 13 weeks of pregnancy are known as trimester three. During this time the baby has grown so much it is having a significant impact on the pregnant woman's physicality.

The common changes and complaints that occur include a decrease in energy, anxiety for impending birth, oedema, leg cramps.

- For inspiration and to invigorate – geranium, lemon, ginger, lemongrass
- To promote sleep – a citrus base such as orange, tangerine or bergamot blended with lavender
- To unwind, destress, relax – a citrus base of orange, bergamot or lime blended with geranium, patchouli, ylang ylang, or petitgrain, lemongrass, lavender, chamomile, rose geranium.

Essential oils during labour and birth

Essential oils can offer support and calmness to the birthing woman, assisting her through each stage of labour, providing nurture, strength and positivity.

- Inner power – mandarin, frankincense, ginger, rose, patchouli
- Meditation – a citrus base or tangerine or bergamot, with lavender, frankincense, vetiver
- Feminine – orange, ylang ylang, lavender, geranium, jasmine
- Promoting contractions – clary sage, sweet marjoram, ginger, rose.

The baby can be greeted at birth by a mild pleasant aroma. The use of essential oils should be stopped close to birth to provide a more aromatically neutral environment as babies are very sensitive to smells. It is best for the baby to smell mum's own scent to help with bonding.

Essential oils for the postnatal period

Common changes and complaints that occur after pregnancy and birth include exhaustion, physical tiredness and pain, emotional adjustments, hormonal changes, healing, breastfeeding issues.

- Breast engorgement – geranium
- Healing emotions – lavender, patchouli, mandarin
- Emotional tension – neroli, palmarosa, mandarin, chamomile.

Postnatal application of essential oils to the skin:

- To help reduce stretch marks, help the skin keep its suppleness and elasticity by deeply moisturising using rosehip oil, helichrysum, lavender.
- To assist with healing the perineum (tears, fissures, etc.) a lavender compress or lavender in water in a spray bottle can be applied to the perineum after going to the toilet.
- Soothe the skin for calming and relaxing – lavender, rose, roman chamomile.

Oils should be blended with a base oil or cream, diluted.

Always remember:

- No ingestion of essential oils
- Essential oils should always be packaged in dark glass and be 100% pure
- Discontinue use immediately on an allergic reaction and seek professional advice
- Do not ingest oils or apply undiluted on the skin
- Keep essential oils out of reach of children
- **Oils contraindicated in pregnancy are: angelica, basil, bay, clary sage, cedarwood, cypress, eucalyptus, fennel, jasmine, juniper berry, myrrh, marjoram, peppermint,**

rose, rosemary, spearmint, Spanish sage, sandalwood, thyme, yarrow.