



Using Aromatherapy in Pregnancy & Labour

Regular aromatherapy during pregnancy can help you relax & relieve many of the discomforts, such as backache or swollen ankles. However, do remember that the oils contain chemicals which act like drugs & many are not suitable for pregnant mums. These guidelines may help you to use aromatherapy oils safely at home or to find a therapist who can treat you appropriately, but if in doubt, ask your midwife or contact Expectancy.

- avoid using any oils in the first 3 months unless advised by an expert. Don't assume that, just because they're natural, they're automatically safe.
- many oils should be avoided in pregnancy, because of possible effects on your developing baby or on you, eg some may increase blood pressure
- suitable safe oils for pregnancy are lavender, citrus oils eg orange, mandarin, grapefruit, as well as ylang ylang, frankincense, chamomile & neroli
- use as little essential oil as possible: 2 drops in 5ml of carrier oil eg sweet almond; if you want to use more than 2 drops of essential oil increase the amount of carrier oil
- don't leave vaporisers on longer than 10 - 15 min in each hour – it's unnecessary & may cause nausea. You can't use candle vaporisers in the hospital labour ward, because of fire risks. Electrical vaporisers must be checked by the hospital electrician – so plan ahead
- in labour, aromatherapy can help you relax & relieve pain but check with your midwife to avoid complications especially if you need drugs to stimulate contractions
- don't add oils to the birthing pool if your waters have broken, to avoid risks to your baby
- ask someone to massage your feet, shoulders, tummy; use oils in a foot bath if you don't want to be touched, or make a compress to put over the small of your back.
- lavender and clary sage may ease pain, aid contractions and relax you; grapefruit is uplifting; spearmint or peppermint ease nausea. Other oils for labour include jasmine, bergamot, chamomile, frankincense, mandarin, neroli, rose, ylang ylang
- if you would like a private aromatherapist to be with you during labour, discuss it *in advance* with your midwife. Most maternity units will support your wishes but may require the therapist to confirm she has insurance cover.
- **Always inform your midwife if you are using any essential oils or other complementary therapies during pregnancy, and especially during labour.**