

← have been poorly carried out.

“The fundamental issue is that it’s extremely hard to test the effectiveness of aromatherapy,” explains Lauren.

“When mainstream drugs are made, compounds are isolated that are proven to have certain effects. But in aromatherapy there are many natural elements that make up a plant. These can vary depending on region, climate and subspecies, so measuring precisely how effective they are (and which bits of them work best) is difficult.”

“Some small studies suggest that aromatherapy has measurable benefits in people with chronic pain and arthritis”

Some small studies, however, do suggest that aromatherapy has measurable benefits in people with chronic pain and arthritis.

In 2008 a study of 59 older people with knee pain showed that massage with aromatic ginger and orange essential oil provided short-term knee pain relief (published in *Complementary Medical Research*).

In 2013, a group of 40 people who received acupoint massage on peri-arthritis of the shoulder were found to have better pain relief and improved activity of the joint than other people who received electroacupuncture or transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) therapy (published in *Chinese*

Acupuncture & Moxibustion).

“Aromatherapy helps support the wellbeing of the individual rather than focus on disease,” says Lauren. “In other words the emphasis is on increasing the body’s overall ability to heal.”

Choosing an aromatherapist

The relationship between you and the therapist plays a significant part in the success and enjoyment of the therapy.

“An aromatherapist should make a specially blended preparation for each individual,” outlines Lauren.

“The therapist should be fully insured and belong to a professional association such as the International Federation of Aromatherapists or the Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council. Therapists should be happy to answer questions before committing to a course of treatment and give a realistic outline of what can be achieved.”

Cost

Aromatherapy is already widely used in hospital settings in the UK to assist patients and in some areas is integrated into the NHS system so costs are met by NHS budgets

When not available on the NHS, the cost of aromatherapy varies depending upon the treatment programme and where you live (London is usually more expensive than elsewhere).

Another option is to try a do-it-yourself aromatherapy session as essential oils are widely available on the high street and online. Be sure to buy from a reputable source and do thorough research into how to use them safely first.

Fran Johnson, aromatherapist and formulator of Neal’s Yard Remedies, recommends:

● **Back pain** – ginger, juniper, lavender, marjoram and rosemary. Combine three drops of each with 50ml of a suitable vegetable oil base and massage over the painful area.

● **Cartilage injury** – thyme, sweet marjoram, rosemary and lavender. Add 10 drops of essential oils to 100ml of water and soak a large piece of clean cotton or lint in the solution. Wring thoroughly and place as hot as possible (without burning the skin) onto the affected area.

● **Fibromyalgia** – melissa, bergamot and neroli. Add two drops to a base oil and gently massage into the skin.

● **Leg/foot cramps** – aniseed, basil and sweet marjoram. Add two drops to 20ml of a base massage oil and rub it into the area.

● **Muscle pain** – chamomile, lavender and marjoram. Add two drops to 20ml of a vegetable oil base and gently massage into the affected area. Alternatively, add one drop of each to the bath for a relaxing soak.

● **Osteoarthritis** – black pepper, ginger, marjoram, rosemary, nutmeg, pine or thyme. Combine with a suitable carrier oil and massage into the affected area.

● **Osteoporosis** – nutmeg, clove, lavender and helichrysum blended with a base oil. Gently massage to relieve pain.

● **Rheumatoid arthritis** – juniper or pine. Add three drops to a base oil and put in a bowl of warm water. Bathe the affected area or use as a compress. Alternatively, add three drops of benzoin, eucalyptus, lavender, marjoram and rosemary to 50ml of comfrey macerated oil or any vegetable base oil and massage into the affected area.

