



The Aromatic Message

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Essential Oils for Pain Relief, Part 2

Part one of this article discussed [using analgesic and anti-inflammatory essential oils to relieve pain](#).

Essential oils that treat the nervous system and bring down swelling may be only part of the picture when dealing with pain relief. Joint pain and muscle injury or chronic stiffness may also require bringing more circulation into the area and removing toxins. Essential oils that are considered detoxifiers and rubefacients and are known for their anti-rheumatic effects can boost even the best massage technique and help provide lasting relief. Part two explores the use of anti-rheumatic, detoxifying and rubefacient essences.

Anti-rheumatic properties provide relief for joint pain in conditions such as osteo- and rheumatoid arthritis and gout. They may be chosen for their anti-inflammatory action, as in the case of German and Roman chamomile, but detoxifiers and rubefacients, which increase circulation in the muscle tissue and skin, are frequently required. Detoxification is an important factor in conditions of chronic inflammation to help restore the immune system and help the body heal. Some essences known for their ability to detoxify are carrot seed (*Daucus carota*), sweet fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), juniper berry (*Juniperus communis*) and lemon (*Citrus limon*). Other essences that could be included are grapefruit (*Citrus paradisi*) and rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*).



Carrot seed works with the liver and kidneys to help process and release toxins. It is said to purify the blood and help restore liver cells. Most commonly used for skin conditions where inflammation or ulceration is present, soothing carrot seed can also be added to blends to generally support the liver function and as a diuretic aid.

Sweet fennel has a long history as a digestive aid, but it is also a diuretic that assists in elimination of excess water and a lymphatic decongestant that relieves blockages and helps the body release toxins. Traditional aromatherapy cautions against the use of sweet fennel for people with epilepsy and during pregnancy. This may be due to the levels of the ketone, fenchone, and the estrogen-like action of trans-anthole. Some aromatherapists, such as Battaglia and Tisserand, feel that this would be true for ingestion, rather than a drop or two in a treatment blend.

Juniper berry is aromatherapy's most famous and commonly used detoxification essence. A powerful diuretic and decongestant for lymph, juniper is known to bring down uric acid levels, making it especially helpful for joint pain. The diuretic action includes some irritation of the renal epithelium and so it is best not to use juniper on a continuous basis or in cases where there is kidney infection or inflammation. It is also generally contraindicated during pregnancy.

Lemon is a mild diuretic essence which is considered cooling and recommended to clear heat, dampness and phlegm. As such, it is considered a helpful detoxifying oil. Expressed lemon oil is not used before prolonged exposure to sun due to phototoxic properties. Steam-distilled lemon oil does not have this contraindication.

Grapefruit is a lymphatic stimulant that is cleansing and decongesting for the liver, and rosemary, particularly *Rosemary ct. verbenone*, is a tonic to both the liver and gallbladder. A classic detoxifying blend (diluted into one ounce of carrier oil) for arthritis:

- Juniper - four drops
- Lemon - four drops
- Rosemary - two drops
- Fennel - one drop

Juniper and rosemary also have rubefacient properties that increase circulation and bring a feeling of warmth to relieve stiffness. Other rubefacient oils are black pepper (*Piper nigrum*), ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and thyme (*Thymus vulgaris ct. linalool*). The rubefacient oils might not be used during the acute inflammatory onset of joint pain but are very helpful during chronic stages.

Black pepper warms as it increases circulation and also stimulates the spleen to produce new blood cells. It is recommended for muscle and joint stiffness. Ginger is a circulatory stimulant that is a tonic to the heart and recommended especially for poor circulation in hands and feet. Pine's stimulating effect on circulation has made it a familiar ingredient in liniments for joint pain and for muscle ache due to overexertion. It also has diuretic properties. Pine oil, if oxidized, can cause skin irritation so older pine essential oil must be used in high dilution. Thyme is a very warming oil that is said to remove blockages in joints and restore mobility to both joint and muscle tissues. It is particularly indicated for sports injuries. Thyme oil is also an immune-stimulant, as it increases production of white blood corpuscles. This helps strengthen the immune system where there has been repeated infection. A warming blend (diluted into one ounce of carrier oil) that promotes detoxification and pain relief:

- Pine - four drops
- Spike Lavender - four drops
- Juniper - two drops
- Thyme - one drop

Generally speaking, the subtle aromatherapy qualities of the warming, rubefacient oils bring courage and stamina which can be very much needed when dealing with both acute and chronic pain. The anti-inflammatory, analgesic essences relieve tension, anxiety and a feeling of anger about circumstances. The detoxifying oils clear the mind, remove a sense of burden, with juniper particularly helpful for clearing excess emotions and the citrus oils for creating optimism. Taking the client's mental and emotional state into consideration always helps indicate the right oils for a massage blend.

Editor's note: For more information on essential oils and treatment blends, log onto www.massagetoday.com and click on "[Aromatherapy Central](#)."

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