Aromatherapy for Late Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond

Aromatherapy, the science and art of using essential oils from aromatic plants for their therapeutic properties, can be a wonderful tool during late pregnancy and birth, and after delivery. Throughout history, botanical sources have offered a holistic approach to health. Essential oils can calm, balance and rejuvenate the mind, body and spirit.

Essential oils are used at Aurora Health Care as a comfort-measure option. Aromatherapy is a free service available when you are in the hospital.

Some of the important ways that essential oils can help you enjoy your pregnancy and new baby are that they:
- Can help you deal with stress
- Aid in relaxation and have anti-anxiety effects
- Are uplifting and promote a positive outlook
- Balance mood and dispel negative feelings and emotions
- Help with insomnia
- Give a sense of empowerment, peace and tranquility
- Are antiviral, antibacterial and antiseptic

Caring touch, such as massage or stroking, either from a qualified caregiver or partner, is highly therapeutic. Women who appreciate the touch and care received while being massaged are more likely to bond well with their babies using the sense of touch. (England, 2000)

Currently, six essential oils are available at Aurora hospitals for aromatic inhalation and diffusion:

- **Citrus limon (lemon)** promotes uplifting mood support, aids concentration and boosts the immune system. It is a wonderful antiseptic that cleans the air, especially during cold and flu season. It is antiviral, antibacterial, invigorating and refreshing. It is also anti-nausea and neutralizes unpleasant odors.

- **Lavandula angustifolia (lavender)** is the most versatile oil used today. Known for its relaxing and gentle properties, it is used for stress, anxiety, insomnia, eczema, depression, burns, wounds, bruises, insect bites, thrush, ear infections, sore throats and head lice.

- **Citrus bergamia (bergamot)** has a citrus aroma and is used as a flavoring for tea. It is antiseptic and antibacterial, and is used to relieve anxiety and depression, and also as a sedative. It is uplifting, stimulates the immune system, and assists with shingles, chickenpox, herpes and eczema.

- **Citrus reticulata (mandarin)** is one of the gentlest and safest of essential oils impacting the body, mind and spirit. Mandarin offers a calming influence, promoting restful sleep. It is recommended for pregnant women and children because it is very gentle. It is anti-nausea, digestive, a relaxant and sedative.

- **Eucalyptus Globulus (Eucalyptus)** The aroma reminiscent of “Vicks Vaporub.” Used for centuries for colds and wounds. Useful with bronchitis, common cold, cough, genital herpes, skin infections, low back pain, sinus congestion, arthritis.

- **Zingiber officinales (ginger)** offers a peppery, sharp and yet warm aromatic scent. Ginger settles the digestive system and relieves nausea, including morning sickness. The warming sensation of ginger is good for joint swelling associated with arthritis. It also helps with motion sickness.
Even though therapeutic-grade oils are pure and natural, care and caution is used with certain medical conditions, such as asthma, seizure disorders, high blood pressure, estrogen-based cancers or tachycardia.

The six oils offered at many Aurora hospitals are of therapeutic quality versus cosmetic or food-grade quality. They have a high degree of safety and low risk for sensitivities. However, if you have a high-risk pregnancy, pre-term labor or threatened miscarriage, consult with your doctor or midwife and avoid essential oils during the first trimester.

Aromatherapy has been used in the hospital setting in England, France and Germany for more than 20 years. A study in England evaluated the effect of aromatherapy on 8,058 pregnant mothers over eight years. Mothers in labor were offered aromatherapy to relieve pain, anxiety and nausea, or to strengthen contractions. More than 50 percent found aromatherapy useful, while 14 percent found no benefits from its use. The amount of adverse reactions was 1 percent. Reactions included symptoms commonly found in labor, such as headache, nausea or itchy rash. The amount of medications needed by the aromatherapy group was greatly decreased versus the control group.

Aromatherapy can bring comfort, relaxation and an improved sense of well-being to women during the childbearing years. For more information, the books referenced below describe the use of essential oils for pregnancy and birth, including precautions and oils to avoid.

References:


