

Aromatherapy for Pregnancy and Labor by Demetria Clark

Pregnancy has always been a time when I have been so thankful for my knowledge of essential oils and aromatherapy. I am not one of those women who carry pregnancy beautifully. I gain tons of weight, have heartburn and gas, swell up and sleep all of the time. Even though I am not the perfect pregnancy specimen, I still feel like one with aromatherapy.

When I lived with midwives as a teen, I first saw the results of aromatherapy on pregnancy. For my own pregnancy, I expanded upon this knowledge. I discovered that a wonderful thing about aromatherapy when pregnant and after the babies are born is that it gives you a reason to take the time to heal and pamper yourself. What could be better than pampering “medicine”?

I originally formulated the following blends for myself more than five years ago. Pregnant women, midwives and doulas in the United States have since used them.

Leg Cramp Oil

This oil is so soothing and relaxing on tired muscles. It is not only great for leg cramps, but also for varicose veins, varicosities and sore backs. Put the following ingredients into a container and shake well before using:

2 ounces St. John’s Wort oil
5 drops neroli essential oil
5 drops grapefruit essential oil

Belly Balm or Stretch Mark Prevention Oil

This oil feels wonderful going on. It is smooth and moisturizing and can help with the itching that so often happens when the skin starts stretching. In a double boiler, melt the carrier oils listed below. Carrier oils are nut or seed oils, like almond oil, shea butter, coconut butter and olive oil, for example. These are pressed and not distilled.

1 cup coconut oil
¼ cup cocoa butter
1/8 cup apricot, almond or grapeseed oil
1/8 cup Kukui nut oil, shea butter or mango butter (I love using mango butter.)

When these oils have melted completely, remove the mixture from the heat. Allow it to cool for 15–20 minutes, then add the essential oils listed below. Essential oils are distilled from leaves, seeds, roots and flowers that are very concentrated and fragrant. Transfer the blend to a container and allow it to cool completely before using.

10–20 drops sandalwood (try to purchase from an ethical source*)
15 drops patchouli
15 drops sweet orange essential oil

There are additional options for essential oils. Use what you like and/or can find locally. You can also try rosewood, rose, lavender, tangerine and neroli. If you blend your own mixture, be sure to keep the amount of essential oils used at less than 50 drops total.

Massage the balm all over thighs, breasts, stomach and anywhere else that needs nourishing and moisturizing. I have also used this on my face. Living in the Green Mountains, I often need a protector from the frigid winds for my fair skin.

Nausea Spray

Add the following to four ounces of distilled water and use in a spray bottle:

20 drops spearmint essential oil
15 drops lemon essential oil
5 drops sweet orange essential oil

Shake the mixture well and mist the air with it when a woman feels nauseous. You may find that different women prefer other types of scents, so you can also try ginger, neroli and rosewood. Experiment to find the mixture that works best. When making an alternative blend, keep the amount of essential oils used at less than 60 drops.

Labor Mists

The point of using mists during labor is to be as noninvasive as possible. Every person is different and has individual needs. Make sure that you understand and know the person you are making a blend for because the wrong blend can assault the senses. In our need to help, we do not want to create something not so beautiful for a mother.

Relax and Focus

This is a relaxing blend to promote clarity and focus. Fill a four-ounce spray bottle almost full with distilled water and add:

20 drops grapefruit essential oil

15 drops sweet orange essential oil

10 drops spearmint essential oil

Shake well and mist labor room. You can also make a compress by misting a wet cloth with the blend and applying it to the laboring mother's forehead or back. This mist is great for fathers, too.

Uplift

Transition can be a trying and tiring time for the mother. We want to support her and use a mist blend that will ground and calm her and help lift her spirits. Add water to spray bottle as above and add:

15 drops mandarin essential oil

10 drops bergamot essential oil

10 drops lavender essential oil

10 drops Clary sage essential oil

This is a strong blend and it should be used away from the mother. Never spray the mother directly.

Always remember to use essential oils with education and care. Research each oil before use, especially in regard to pregnancy and labor.

* Companies that are ethical sources try to use plants that are sown and harvested for essential oil use specifically. When plants are taken from the wild, these companies insist that they be taken from a sustainable source only.

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Originally printed in BirthKit www.midwiferytoday.com