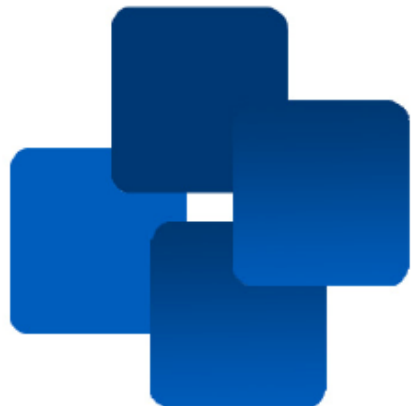


Patient Information

Aromatherapy and massage during labour and birth

Women's Services



Introduction

This leaflet is for women with a low-risk pregnancy, who are planning to give birth on the Midwife Led Unit (MLU) at the Lister Hospital. It is designed to give you and your birth companions more information about the use and benefits of aromatherapy and massage as an additional choice for relaxation and pain management during your labour and birth.

What is aromatherapy?

Aromatherapy is a complementary therapy involving the use of essential oils (concentrated extracts from plants) to achieve a therapeutic effect. Aromatherapy is most often used together with massage therapy.

How might aromatherapy and massage help during labour and birth?

- By reducing stress/ anxiety and aiding relaxation;
- By helping to alleviate discomfort and pain;
- It can help facilitate normal birth;
- It may reduce the need for further analgesia;
- It may help to enhance contractions;
- It can help ease physical discomfort, for example, nausea and headaches.

Can anyone use aromatherapy during labour and birth?

- Some essential oils are not suitable for everyone. The midwife caring for you will be able to advise which oils and methods of use are suitable for you.
- The service is optional and requires your informed consent.
- If you choose to use essential oils they will be provided by the hospital.
- Women may occasionally experience mild symptoms when using essential oils such as nausea, headache or local skin irritation, your midwife will discuss this with you.

How are the essential oils used?

The oils can be administered in various ways including:

- Massage;
- Bath/footbath/sitz bath or perineal wash;
- Compress;
- Inhalation (taper, cotton ball, droplet on forehead/palm).

Who will administer the essential oils?

Midwives who have been trained to use aromatherapy during labour and birth will discuss and recommend the most suitable oils and method of administration. Your midwife or a clinical support worker can administer the oils or show you how to use them safely.

Your birth supporter can also be shown some simple massage strokes which may help.

What essential oils are used and how might they help?

- **Lavender** - analgesic, anti-inflammatory, calming, relaxing, reduces stress and anxiety, may help to relieve perineal pain.
- **Clary sage** - analgesic, relaxing, may help to enhance contractions.
- **Bergamot** - citrusy fragrance, uplifting, relaxing, reduces stress and anxiety.
- **Frankincense** - warming, calming, may alleviate anxiety and feelings of panic.
- **Peppermint** - excellent analgesic, has a cooling effect, may help to alleviate headaches and nausea.
- **Jasmine** - can reduce stress and anxiety, may alleviate pain, may enhance alertness and contractions.
- **Rose** - anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory, relaxing, uplifting, calming, reduces stress and tension.

Can I use Aromatherapy during my pregnancy?

Aromatherapy can be beneficial during pregnancy (after 12 weeks) for both relaxation and alleviation of troublesome pregnancy symptoms. However, some essential oils may be harmful during pregnancy, therefore, it is best to seek advice from a qualified aromatherapist or midwife with specialist knowledge in complementary therapies during pregnancy and birth.

Useful contact telephone number

For evidence-based information and advice on the safe use of complementary therapies during pregnancy and childbirth, please contact:

Annabel Bradburn, Midwife

☎ 07584 466667

Additional information

NHS Choices:

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/complementary-alternative-medicine

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