



Possible Benefits Of Aromatherapy Massage For Breast Cancer Patients

WHAT IS AROMATHERAPY?

Aromatherapy is a holistic practice which involves using plant oils in carefully blended combinations to support physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. The essential oils may be evaporated in an oil burner, added to bath water, or diluted in a carrier oil and massaged onto the skin.

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to be a global facilitator of health and wellness through access, education and advancement of Traditional & Complementary Medicine (T&CM). The World Health Organization (WHO) advises that lifestyle-related diseases (or non-communicable diseases) are responsible for more than 70% of deaths worldwide each year.

Knowledge represents empowerment. By sharing this evidence-based, peer-reviewed research, we aim to support everyday people to take ownership of their wellness, by making informed decisions and choices in conjunction with their health professional.

How This Study Could Help Support Your Cancer Treatment

Breast cancer affects about [2.1 million women annually](#), according to the WHO, and is responsible for more cancer-related deaths in women than any other form of the disease. This randomised controlled trial investigates ways in which aromatherapy massage may support cancer treatment, and is titled:

AROMATHERAPY MASSAGE FOR BREAST CANCER PATIENTS: A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL.

You can read the full study here: <https://bit.ly/2TDtlmB>



Why Is This Study Important?

Conventional cancer treatments such as surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy may be effective ways of fighting the physical illness itself, but often contribute to side effects ranging from fatigue to nausea. Conventional medicine often places less emphasis on these aspects of people's cancer treatment, which can have a significant effect on quality of life.

Many cancer patients report suffering from anxiety, psychological distress and other issues related to mental and emotional health. There is evidence to suggest [depression can have a negative impact](#) on a person's cancer prognosis. For this reason, supporting emotional health, as well as reducing fatigue, depression and anxiety, can be seen as important aspects of providing quality care -- but also, improving the likelihood of successful treatment.

What Does This Mean For My Wellness?

While this study did not show that aromatherapy massage may reduce pain or nausea, the evidence did suggest improvements in emotional functioning, as well as decreased anxiety and depression. Even though the reduction in fatigue noted by the authors was not statistically significant, it does suggest that this is one of the benefits aromatherapy massage may offer for some cancer patients.

The trial was not intended to investigate the effects of cancer treatment on mental health. However, when the results were analysed, it was found that the incidence of depression and anxiety increased in the participants who were not receiving aromatherapy massage.

This suggests that the side effects of treatment, as well as the symptoms of the disease itself, can take a heavy toll on emotional and psychological health. Feeling like you can cope can make a major difference to quality of life, so therapies such as aromatherapy massage may have an important role in making cancer treatment easier to manage.

How Does This Relate to Aromatherapy?

[Aromatherapy](#) massage involves diluting essential oils from plants in a carrier oil, which is then massaged into the skin. In addition to their soothing fragrance, the aromatic molecules responsible for the characteristic scent of essential oils may have physiological and emotional effects.

Although the exact percentage varies among different populations, a consistently high proportion of cancer patients seek T&CM therapies to support their treatment. Anxiety is one of the more common symptoms people need help with, and previous research as well as anecdotal reports suggest aromatherapy massage may be an effective way of reducing this, as well as physical discomfort.

In this study, published in 2018, researchers affiliated with the University of Exeter Medical School investigated the possible benefits of aromatherapy massage on a range of symptoms associated with breast cancer. The authors noted that most of the earlier studies evaluating aromatherapy massage as part of cancer treatment were small, and larger well-designed trials were recommended.

This study involved a total of 284 breast cancer patients, comprising 135 women who received six weeks of aromatherapy massage, and 149 women who only received standard care. While 58 women did not complete the trial (42 of them being from the group who received standard care), the trial was still considered to be “a large trial with adequate participant numbers”.



Key Findings About Benefits of Aromatherapy Massage for Breast Cancer Patients

- Aromatherapy massage is beneficial for improving emotional functioning and fatigue, as well as reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression among breast cancer patients after six one-hour sessions of weekly treatment.
- The researchers did not find evidence that aromatherapy massage was associated with a significant reduction in pain.
- In the control group not receiving aromatherapy massage, the number of people suffering from anxiety and depression increased during the six weeks of the trial.
- The study did not seek to pinpoint the specific cause of the positive effects. Nevertheless, the authors noted they could be due to one or a combination of the factors present during an aromatherapy massage: the essential oils, the massage itself or the opportunity to relax in a quiet environment with the undivided attention of the aromatherapist.

Disclaimer: The above does not constitute medical advice, and as with any exercise or wellness program, please consult your medical professional before commencing aromatherapy massage.

[Journal of Nursing and Women's Health](#) is an open access journal which covers high quality manuscripts both relevant and applicable to the broad field of health care sector, especially nursing and issues related to health of women at different stages of life ... Journal of Nursing and Women's Health is a peer-reviewed journal.

Quoted from journal description

References

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