

## Obstetrics & Gynaecology

# Aromatherapy and Complementary Therapy in Pregnancy and Labour within the Lucina Birth Centre

### What is aromatherapy?

Aromatherapy is a complementary therapy which involves the use of concentrated pleasant-smelling plant oils which all have different properties. Complementary therapy is something that might be used alongside any medical treatment you may be receiving. Some oils have relaxing properties, others are stimulating and some can uplift your mood. There are some oils which contain pain-relieving natural chemicals and others which can affect your blood pressure.

### How can aromatherapy help?

Aromatherapy can be beneficial during pregnancy, it can help you relax and can be used to ease discomfort such as backache, swollen ankles or carpal tunnel syndrome. Research has shown that using aromatherapy regularly towards the end of pregnancy can help your body to work more efficiently, increasing the chances of your labour starting naturally and for you to have a normal labour and birth.

Within the Lucina Birth centre, there are a number of midwives who have been trained to prescribe and administer aromatherapy during labour. In labour, aromatherapy can ease pain and aid contractions. It can also be used for relaxation and to help prevent nausea and vomiting.

### How are the aromatherapy oils applied?

- **Massage:** The most popular method of receiving aromatherapy is via a massage. This could be performed by your midwife in labour or by your birthing partners if you choose. You can choose to have your hands and feet massaged, your neck and shoulders or you could have a full back massage. During the massage the oils are absorbed into the skin into your bloodstream, passing to your internal organs and also crossing the placenta to your baby.
- **Diffusers:** Oils can also be used via one of the diffusers supplied in Lucina Birth centre, as a compress or inhaled through a cloth or gauze. Whenever you smell the oils, you are also inhaling the chemical properties which have the desired effect on your body. They also stimulate the mood centre in your brain which affects your emotions.



## Patient Information

### Oils for labour which are used in the Lucina Birth Centre

- Grapefruit, bergamot and orange are gentle oils which can boost your mood and help you to relax. Please tell your midwife if you are allergic to citrus fruits.
- Lavender is good for relaxation.
- Frankincense is effective for calming you if you are feeling particularly anxious, especially in the transition stage of labour which is at the end of the first stage of labour.
- Black pepper is a pain relieving oil and can be used as an analgesic during labour.
- Peppermint is often used as it can help to calm the feeling of sickness and nausea.
- Clary sage is a popular oil as it is thought to help with your contractions and labour progress. It must be used with extreme caution though as if it is used incorrectly it could potentially cause harm.

The oils can be used on their own or they can be combined together to help achieve two or more desired effects. Your midwife will be able to provide more information and make suggestions as to which she thinks would be suitable for your needs.

### Are there any risks to be aware of?

Essential oils are strong and act in the same way as drugs, so it's important to only use one or two drops at a time. Many essential oils are not safe to use during pregnancy and childbirth. Your midwife will guide you on the oils which have proven to be safe during labour.

### Who can use aromatherapy?

If you meet the criteria and have no predisposing risk factors or medical conditions then you may be suitable to receive aromatherapy whilst using the facilities within the Lucina Birth Centre. It will also depend on whether an appropriately trained midwife is on duty at that time.

### Further Information

If you have any more questions, please speak to your midwife or contact the Lucina Birth Centre on 024 7696 7425.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 7425 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

### Document History

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