

# aromatic Healing™

## using essential oils for health

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*This month we take a short vacation from our exploration of Sacred Perfumery to look at anti-viral essential oils.*

Since I am not a physician, I do not diagnose or prescribe. If you are pregnant or under a physician's care, consult your doctor before using the oils or supplements. The information I share with you in this newsletter is from using essential oils for me and my family to our benefit.

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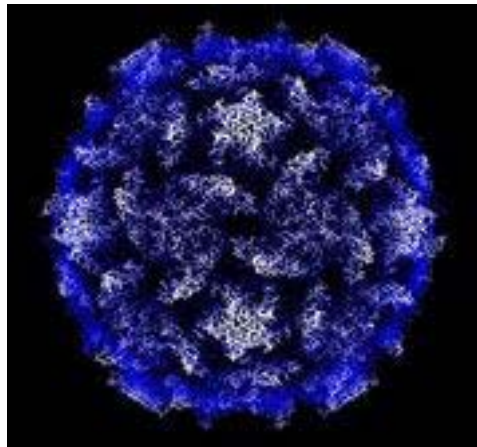
### Anti-Viral Essential Oils

Western medicine, having thought it had conquered such viral villains as smallpox and polio, has been humbled in recent years with the advent of a number of potentially epidemically disastrous new viruses such as the ebola and West Nile viruses. Having thought we could control all infectious agents through the development of a series of vaccines, scientists are discovering that viruses are much more complex than we might have originally thought. The good news is that, as aromatherapists, we have a number of essential oils to work with.

#### How Old are Viruses?

Viruses were first documented in 1898 when two doctors discovered that the infectious agent of foot and mouth disease was too small to be a bacteria. Initially, there was some debate as to whether we could consider viruses as living organisms. Indeed, the debate continues to this day since viruses exist in the netherworld between the living and non-living.

Some scientists think viruses may explain some of the mass extinctions that have occurred in the past – the extinction of the dinosaurs comes to mind. Others feel that viruses are a more modern phenomenon and represent the Earth's need to detoxify itself by sloughing off excess genetic material. Since we have yet to discover a fossil or the genetic remains of an ancient virus, the debate will continue for some time.



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#### A Capsule of Genetic Material

Viruses are basically a capsule of genetic material (either DNA or RNA) enclosed in a protein coating, called a capsid. Viruses may have an additional membrane around them which is called an envelope.

Viruses attach themselves to a host cell at receptor sites on the host's membrane. Different viruses seem to prefer specific types of host cells – not only in terms of whether the host is human, animal or plant, but also the type of cell it will attach itself to. Viruses attack not only plants, animals and humans, but bacteria and fungi as well.

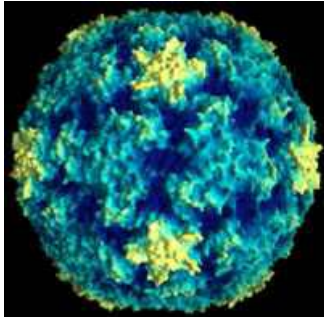
Once attached, the virus injects its genetic material into the host cell. At this point the virus may stay dormant for days, weeks or longer. At some point, the virus activates itself and begins to take over various aspects of the host cell's

metabolism: cellular reproduction is the key of course, because this is how the virus replicates itself in order to create a bona fide infection.

### Viruses as Master Genetic Engineers

Viruses are natural genetic engineers. Having successfully taken over the host cell, viruses begin to replicate their genetic material. Often, portions of genetic material from the host cell are combined with the viral DNA/RNA, producing a virus with a new genetic pattern. Thus, a virus can constantly re-engineer itself in a very short period of time.

It is for this reason scientists have such a difficult time devising an antidote to something



as common as the common cold. With viruses constantly adjusting their DNA and including pieces of the host's DNA, it is literally impossible to

come up with one vaccine to attack all the permutations of some virus families.

More research continues to be done to understand exactly how viruses activate themselves once inside a host cell. Other research is focusing on destroying viral envelopes and with it, the virus itself.

### Your Mother was Right – Eat Your Vegetables!

I recently listened to a report on NPR discussing the success researchers have had in engineering vegetables to produce anti-viral vaccines! YES! It's true! Researchers have produced a tomato that produces a SARS vaccine. Just by eating the tomato, people are inoculated against the SARS virus. Another report had potatoes producing another type of vaccine.

Don't wait, however, for these genetically engineered veggies to arrive at your local supermarket! The FDA hasn't a clue what to do with these foods and so, understandably we will have to wait for the bureaucrats come up with regulations and standards to be met.

### Essential Oils to the Rescue

The good news is that we have essential oils! We have known for some time that essential oils are effective anti-viral agents. We just don't know why they are effective. Many scientists think it's because of their chemistry while others think it is their biology. In other words, is it the chemical interaction of the essential oil with the virus that helps keep a viral infection at bay or is it the interaction of the essential oil with our biology that keeps us healthy? For now, the debate continues.

### Secondary Metabolites

When I first became an aromatherapist, we weren't even sure where and how essential oils are produced inside a plant. In the last decade or so, much research has been done to study how essential oils are produced. More research remains to be done, but what we do know is that essential oils are part of a group of chemical compounds called *secondary metabolites*. What that means is that these are compounds that are derived from primary products produced within the plant. They are produced in small amounts and in many cases, have no immediate functions within the physiology of the plant. What we do know is that these secondary metabolites do interact with the plant's environment, including animals and humans.

Since these secondary metabolites are produced in such small quantities, they were initially ignored by researchers as unimportant. More than 200,000 different secondary metabolites that are produced in quantities of less than 1% have so far been documented.

While we still don't fully understand their functions within the plant, we are beginning to understand that these secondary metabolites are critical to human health and well being. Much research is going on to discover more about their healing properties.

### Global Immunological Breakdown

One of the first recommendations when you read a bit about combatting viruses is how critical a healthy, functioning immune system is. Many scientists propose that the reason we are seeing so much viral infestation in the world today is because our immune systems have been overwhelmed by environmental pollution, the

general sedentary lifestyle, the collapse of our dietary and nutritional support, the overuse of antibiotics and endemic stress placed on our bodies. The rise in auto-immune diseases such as RA, lupus, etc. is additional evidence, these scientists would argue.

Clearly, viruses have always been extremely dangerous, producing pandemics such as the 1918 influenza epidemic and threatening public health in the form of the ebola, HIV or SARS viruses. Some types of cancers have been traced back to viruses as well. While I have always tended to think of viruses as nuisances that cause colds and cold sores, viruses are clearly becoming a major health threat again. From hepatitis to HIV to herpes, etc. , viruses are something we all need to be aware of.

### Our Wonderful Lymphatic System

Our lymphatic system is our first line of defense against viruses. The lymphatic system has a number of functions critical to life: it manages our fluid balance, draining water and proteins from our interstitial fluid, returning them to the

blood stream. Through our lymph nodes, it filters out harmful pathogens from our blood and other fluids. Unlike the circulatory system which has a powerful pump (the heart) to move blood around our body, the lymphatic system relies on muscle contractions (i.e., skeletal movement) to move lymph through the system. With our sedentary lifestyles, it is no wonder then, that we see more immune system problems in modern society.

In addition to getting more exercise on a regular basis, we also have Manual Lymph Drainage, or MLD, which can move lymph around the lymphatic system. A good massage on a regular basis will also assist our lymphatic system to drain and cleanse itself.

There are also studies that suggest that many viruses attach to the same receptor sites as neuropeptides – evidence some scientists propose that we when we are happy we are less able to get ill!

And, of course, we have wonderful essential oils to help cleanse and purify our immune system.

## Essential Oils to combat Viruses and Support our Immune System

When you research anti-viral essential oils, you will most likely find discussions of oils that support the immune system. Only recently has research on the secondary metabolites discussed above shown the effectiveness of essential oils and their constituent compounds against viruses. So, let's divide our exploration of specific essential oils into two categories: those that support our immune system and those that are specifically anti-viral.

### Immune Booster Oils

As I mentioned above, there is much more research available to us on the ability of essential oils to boost our immune system. Studies show that oils such as **bay laurel, basil, frankincense and angelica** invigorate and stimulate the immune system. Most of these oils stimulate the lymphatic system. **Bay laurel**, in addition to stimulating the formation of lymphocytes also regulates the lymphatic system. **Peppermint** stimulates the movement of lymph fluid. Clearly this is of benefit when we are in the throws of an infection of any kind.

### The Endocrine Connection

There is a new branch of medicine that combines the interaction of our immune system and our endocrine system. We know that our endocrine system acts as a communication system in our body, directing and triggering a number of metabolic activities based on information it receives from all our other physiological systems. We have a number of essential oils that are known to balance and harmonize our endocrine system including **geranium, fennel, myrtle, sage, vitex, rose and helichrysum**. In Chinese medicine, these oils are described as *yin nourishing* and as such, they nourish and balance our endocrine system helping it to better respond and coordinate our body's response to infection.

### Decongesting and Cleansing Lymph

Another concept you will read about when looking at essential oils to support the lymphatic system are oils that help to decongest or cleanse the lymphatic system. Since the lymphatic system filters and drains impurities (cellular waste including viruses and bacteria), it is not uncommon for lymph nodes to become congested or stagnant. Swollen glands are a common manifestation of lymph nodes that have become overwhelmed with the infection. We have a number of essential oils that can help move that congestion out of the lymph glands to allow our lymphatic system to get back to the process of filtering and draining impurities from our bodies: **cypress, grapefruit, juniper, lemon, cajeput, ravensara, ravintsara and pine** oils are just a few to consider. I apply the oil or blend directly over the swollen glands in a warm compress.

*Cellulite* is also a place where our bodies will store impurities that our lymphatic system has not been able to drain. We have a number of essential oils that are reputed to assist in the cleansing of cellulite including **carrot seed oil, cypress, fennel, ginger, juniper, grapefruit, geranium, lemon, lime, mandarin, sweet orange, rosemary, tangerine and sage** essential oils.

### White Blood Cell Production

In addition to the above oils that stimulate and decongest the lymphatic system, there are a few oils that have been proven effective in stimulating the production of white blood cells: **Lavender, bergamot, lemon, niaouli, rosemary, tea tree and ravintsara**.

### Specifically Anti-Viral Essential Oils

The good news is that over the past several years there has been more research regarding essential oils and their efficacy against specific viruses. Please note that it is critical to begin applying essential oils as soon as you begin to notice any symptoms. Research shows that the earlier we begin using oils, the more effective they are in stopping and slowing the infection.

**Herpes Simplex** (canker sores, cold sores, herpes labials) For those of us who suffer from

occasional cold sores, we know how physically and emotionally painful this virus can be. The good news is that there have been a number of studies of the effectiveness of essential oils against this stubborn virus. While no essential oil or combination of oils have been proven effective at curing a herpes simplex infection, essential oils can be highly effective at reducing, if not stopping an outbreak before it becomes overwhelming. In Europe an over-the-counter cream has been available for years whose active ingredient is an extract of **Melissa** essential oil. Other mint oils, such as **peppermint or spearmint** have also been reported as effective against this virus.

Other oils reported to be effective for cold sores include: **bergamot, black pepper, cassia and cardamom**.

**Genital herpes** (herpes genitalia) has proven more difficult when it comes to essential oils effectiveness. I think part of the reason is that applying essential oils to our genital region is more difficult and more sensitive. Therefore, we cannot use the stronger oils because of sensitivity. Again, **Melissa and the mint oils** are reported effective. Bergamot, because of its low toxicity is also reportedly effective. A new oil, **Australian Blue Cypress**, has shown some encouraging effectiveness against both genital herpes, HPV and genital warts.

**Shingles or herpes zoster** is especially painful to endure. **Ravintsara** (cinnamomun camphora)



blended with **calophyllum inophyllum** stimulates the immune system, specifically phagocytosis. French physicians recommend internal use of **peppermint** as well. For pain, a spray of **roman chamomile** will provide relief.

**Epstein-Barr Virus (EBV)** or mononucleosis is typically treated with **ravintsara** blended with **eucalyptus radiata**. For recurrent EBV, **rosewood, thyme thuyanol and bitter orange** oils combined with **calophyllum inophyllum** applied topically 3-4x's a day for 3 weeks could provide relief.

**Viral Hepatitis** Infections are another instance where aromatherapy has been used with success. **Peppermint, exotic basil and rosemary** are oils that are mentioned for use with hepatitis.

#### Anti-Viral Powerhouses

For other viral infections, the following oils are considered the strongest anti-viral essential oils:

**Melissa, tarragon and ravintsara** are considered the strongest of all essential oils for viral infections. Other oils such as **clove, cinnamon, oregano, thyme thuyanol, thyme thymol and cassia** are considered broad-spectrum anti-microbial essential oils. If you are not sure whether you are dealing with a virus or

other pathogen, these oils offer a good first line of defense against infection. They are all high in phenols and their complex chemistry can make them irritating when used topically. Care should be used when using these oils.

#### Essential Oil Insecticides

West Nile has become a serious worry, at least here on the East Coast of the US. The Center for Disease Control continues to recommend insect-repellants that have DEET in them, but this year they also began to endorse more ecologically and biologically friendly products based on essential oils. I make my own insect repellent spritzers using **citronella, lemongrass, cedarwood and ravintsara**. See below for the recipe.

### *Insect Repellent Spritzer Recipe*

Blend the following oils into a 4 ounce glass spray bottle of water:

3 drops cedarwood  
5 drops citronella  
4 drops lemongrass  
3 drops ravintsara

Close the bottle and shake before spraying yourself with the blend.

### *New! Calophyllum Inophyllum Oil!*

There is no English equivalent name for this oil that is a hybrid of essential oil and fatty oil. It is a modern addition to aromatherapy and as such, there is not much tradition to guide us in its use. Native to the coasts of the Indian Ocean, calophyllum has been used by the indigenous cultures as a universal healing oil. Introduced to aromatherapy through France, calophyllum is used for its **immune regulating properties, particularly stimulating phagocytosis**. It is blue-green in color and solid at room temperature until blended with essential oils. Blended in equivalent amounts with ravintsara, calophyllum can provide **relief for shingles**.

5ml is priced at \$ 5.00

10ml is priced at \$ 9.00

Call 1-800-943-6846 or visit [www.omnescence.net](http://www.omnescence.net) to order!