

## What is an Emulsifier?

You see this on our website and throughout our Tips and Newsletter. So what exactly is an emulsifier?

An emulsifier is used when ever you want to mix two components and keep them from separating. Emulsifiers are used where one part is oil based and the other is water based.

Most folks know and understand that oil and water do not mix. But you can MAKE them stay blended together by using an agent called an emulsifier.

There are many different types of substances that can be used to 'emulsify' depending on what you are mixing together and the purpose or end use.

Typically the commonly used emulsifiers used in Aromatherapy are to help blend essential oils into water based sprays. But you may need to use them to make other products like bath salts and to scent some lotions, creams and hair care products. In the rest of the cosmetic industry they help not only to keep the product from separating they may also help to thicken the final product.

Emulsifiers help the essential oils stay blended and suspended into your product. There are several emulsifiers that can be used. We commonly suggest our Coconut oil based Emulsifier as it is easy to use and is safe to use since it is made from coconut oil. Polysorbate 20 is also a mild emulsifier and can be used similarly to the Coconut oil emulsifier. The Polysorbate emulsifiers (40, 60 80 and beyond) come in varying strengths but the stronger the product the more chance of skin irritation being a problem for those products used on the skin.

Some folks like to use alcohol for emulsifying their essential oils into room sprays. The problem is that alcohol can irritate your lungs and for success in keeping your spray from separating you have to use a lot of alcohol.

Another option is Turkey Red oil - this is a type of sulfonated castor oil. Works great in bath oil products but in some cases you will see the red coloring. Turkey Red oil is rarely used in other cosmetic products. But it is an option for use in bath oils and can be purchased in many health food stores and pharmacies.

The emulsifier need to be mixed with your essential oils BEFORE you add them to your water based spray or product. You want to make sure the essential oils are well blended with the emulsifier first. So blend the emulsifier with your essential oils then let them sit for a few hours to see if any separation occurs. If not then you are ready to add it to your water base.

Most emulsifiers are blended at the rate of one part emulsifier to one part essential oils. Some essential oils may not need as much emulsifier and others will need more emulsifier in order to be blended.

Unfortunately there is no set rule as to how much emulsifier will be needed to be used with your blend of essential oils and you will have to experiment. All is not lost though, if for some reason, your essential oils do separate and float to the top, simply just shake or stir them back in. Just remember to write down in your 'recipe' that you need to use more emulsifier next time.

As with anything you add essential oils to, it is best to use them within a few weeks. You always want to use the freshest made items to see the best results.

Have fun blending.

PS. If you need recipes see our recipe book - [Aromatherapy Recipes using Pure Essential oils Volume 1](http://www.birchhillhappenings.com/recipebook.htm), it is available on the following page <http://www.birchhillhappenings.com/recipebook.htm>

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Aromatherapy Tip of the Week

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