

## Aromatherapy Tip of the Week - #13

April 15, 2008

### What is TOXIC? PhotoToxic?

Toxic - it is a pretty scary word and it should be!!

In aromatherapy this is a very big consideration when it comes to essential oils.

The two types of toxicities are Ingestion and photo toxicity.

Not every essential oil is toxic as many of them are used for food and flavoring. You must remember though that essential oils are used in small quantities in foods and beverages.

The danger occurs if ingested in too large of quantities and then they can be lethal (fatal).

Keep essential oils **OUT of the REACH of CHILDREN!!!** Small amounts of certain essential oils in a child can potentially cause death.

As we always say - this is AROMA-THERAPY meaning you need to inhale (breathe in) not ingest them. So as long as you aren't eating them (in large quantities), you will be okay.

But the main purpose of this article is to let you know about Photo Toxicity. This is serious. Photo Toxic or Sensitization can cause the skin to have anywhere from a slight color change to serious deep and weeping burns.

There are a few essential oils that when they are **used on the skin, then exposed** to sunlight or UV lights, such as in a tanning bed, can cause these reactions.

The discoloration or sores may never heal or may heal extremely slowly. So what essential oils are we talking about? The following essential oils that can cause photo-sensitization or Photo-toxicity include: Bergamot\*\*, expressed (but not the FCF - Bergapten free bergamot), Angelica ROOT, Caraway, Cassia, Cedarwood-Virginian, Cinnamon BARK, Cumin, Ginger, Grapefruit, Mandarin expressed, Orange expressed, Rue\*\*, Verbena. There may be others, but these listed are considered mild to moderate to Severe\*\*. (They are not listed in any particular order in this list).

To avoid sensitization or photo toxic reactions, one should remember to avoid bright sunlight or use of tanning beds for 6 hours after using essential oil **on the skin** but absolutely avoid for those listed above!

Again, the warnings or cautions are about **USE ON THE SKIN** or Ingestion (eating), not inhalation or diffusing of any essential oil.

So, if you make your own Massage oils, Lotions or use essential oils in Soaps, Shampoos or even make your own perfumes, and If you use any of the known phototoxic essential oils stay out of the sun and tanning beds. OR better yet, just use essential oils known to be safe for use on the skin.

This caution is extremely important for massage therapists and other folks that may use essential oils mixed with lotions, creams, etc that are applied to their client's skin. BE sure they are not going to a tanning bed or out into the sun for several hours.

If you are unsure about an essential oils safety for use on the skin that will be exposed to sunlight or tanning beds - omit it from your products that will be used on the skin.

Essential oils are wonderful and safe - when used properly. They are packed with lots of goodness in small amounts. Don't be afraid to use them, just use them with respect!

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