

Using Essential oils for Alzheimer's

by Penny Keay

Alzheimer's disease Awareness Month is in November.

November is Alzheimer's Awareness month. This disease affects millions of people around the world. It affects more than the just the person with the disease.

It is also National Caregivers Month as declared by the President. This goes hand in hand with the Alzheimer's awareness, as without the caregivers many Alzheimer's patients would have very little quality of life.

Caregivers are very special and can use essential oils to help both the Alzheimer patients and themselves.

What can Essential oils do to help? Where to start?



In recent studies and observances done in many nursing and care facilities they have seen the influence essential oils have had on the emotional and physical needs of their residents.

It can be as simple as diffusing *Lavender essential oil* that has changed and brightened the attitudes of those afflicted.

In several care facilities we have done consults with, not only the use of Lavender but also with Bergamot have done wonders. The combination of these two oils can have dramatic effects.

The persons inhaling the essential oils will be calm and less agitated. Using essential oils in massage oils or lotions will also help. The thoughtful and loving human touch in itself can also bring about results. Adding the oils to the massage will help it be more lasting.

We have found that Alzheimer patients have a tough time falling asleep and staying asleep. Diffusing Lavender in the room or using a misting spray with Lavender on the bedding or pillows about 20 minutes before bedtime does wonders.

Some essential oils we often suggest to start with are *Lavender, Bergamot and Ylang-Ylang*.

If using Lavender alone for a week doesn't seem to bring about any kind of noticeable change, try adding Bergamot essential oil to the blend. Then a week later, you may need to try adding Ylang-Ylang.

Sometimes you need to try a combination of two or more of these along with one or two of the others listed below. Most often, you will see a calmer, more accepting change in the individual. See the list below for some more suggestions of essential oils that have been effective.

It is not uncommon for a care facility to use essential oils on just one of their residents. Soon after they discover that, the small amount of essential oils that permeate the air will surprisingly bring about wonderful results with more of the residents. Moreover, many times we have seen the staff and other personnel benefit too!

You may have seen articles suggesting Lemon Balm. This is also known as *Melissa*. I mention it here because you will wonder if this works. I'm sure it does but due to the expensive nature of this oil and the high rate of adulteration, we won't suggest using Melissa.

Unless, of course, you find it is the only essential oil that is giving the desired outcome. Other less expensive essential oils have shown to bring about positive results and are more affordable especially for long-term use.

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In rare cases though, after others oils have been used and no results are seen, you could try a small amount of Melissa to see if you get results.

Please note that you need to be sure you buy your *Melissa* from a reliable source.

As I have stated before, the adulteration rate of Melissa aka Lemon Balm is extremely high.

Again, if none of the other oils have produced results then it is very possible Melissa will not either.

It may be that the patient has advanced to a stage where there is very little in the aromatherapy regimen to help and you may find that you must resort to prescription medications.

Let's hope this is never the case.

Restlessness & Sleep disturbances

Restlessness and interrupted sleep can usually be helped by using Lavender, especially at bedtime. Other helpful oils include *Rose, Neroli, Geranium, Jasmine and Roman Chamomile*. You can get suggestions of blends that may help in our articles about insomnia. Do a Search to find several articles on sleep.

Other oils than may be helpful for dementia and Alzheimer's include *Basil, Ginger, Rosemary, Black Pepper and Cardamom*. These oils should be tried during waking hours as they can evoke memories, excite the thought processes and in some cases cause too much stimulation to the brain if used to late in the day.

Appetite

We know Alzheimer's and Dementia patients also have poor appetites. Oils that may help to stimulate appetites and continue to help with memory include Lemon, Lime, Nutmeg, Clove bud, Coriander, Orange, Cinnamon, Ginger, Cardamom, and Black Pepper.

Methods of Diffusing

Our favorite suggestion is to pin a "flower" on the lapel of the resident and add a few drops of essential oils to this "flower". Actually, it is usually a cotton ball pinned on the collar. Often times Alzheimer's patients love the fact they have a boutonniere or corsage. If budgets allow maybe you, can use a real silk flower and just add the oils to that.

This in itself may stimulate memories of good times for these folks. (We now have 'Aromatherapy Lapel Dots' that are very easy to use just for this purpose and don't require pinning.)

What about "Smelling?"

The next question that comes up and is a known fact, the older we get the more likely we are to have a diminished sense of smell. Will aromatherapy still work, even if we can't smell? Well, yes and no.

If the response is strictly due to you actually being able to smell and differentiate the scent then No they probably won't work. An example would be if the smell of a skunk normally would trigger a response of 'dread' because of the smell but you can't smell the skunk, then there would be no response.

Now, since essential oils work on us at the cellular level and can help the body with chemical imbalances then they should work, whether or not you can smell them. Here an example would be - You are terribly congested and you can't smell or taste anything. However, after several inhalations and a little time for the essential oils to work at the cellular level reducing inflammation and fighting the infection, you will soon regain your sense of smell. Initially though, you could not smell anything and they were able to help you.

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Suggestions

You can always use any of our premixed massage blends or our synergy blends (for diffusing or 'flowers'). Several massage blends may work wonderfully for the Alzheimer's patient.

Some suggested premixed massage blends include *Calming massage oil*, *Attentive massage blend*, *Be Alert Massage blend*, *Uplifting Massage Blend*. See these under Massage Blends on our Shopping site.

Our Synergy blends that may be beneficial for calming and reducing agitation: *Calming*, *My Angels*, *Peaceful*, *Relaxing*, *Take Five*.

To help with extreme cases of sleeplessness - *Bedtime Bliss and Sweet Dreams*. Try pure Valerian essential oils as a last resort since it doesn't have a pleasant odor that may be rejected by many residents.

Then for enhancing concentration, alertness and memories, you could try: *Beautiful*, *Citrus*, *Concentration*, *Courage*, *Elation*, *Enlighten*, *For Women*, *Full of Life*, or *Inspiration*.



If you have a loved one that is dealing with symptoms associated with Alzheimer's, our thoughts and prayers are with you as you give them all the love and support you can. Take care.

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