

What Should I Do with Old and/or Expired Essential oils and Carrier oils?

by Penny Keay

You have purchased several essential oils over the past few years and wonder what you should do with them when they are beyond their best “therapeutic” age.

There are several uses for those essential oils when they have become ‘too old’. Maybe we should first address the age or shelf life of essential oils and carrier oils.

Carrier Oils:

To start we will cover carrier oils, as many of them have a varied shelf life. If kept refrigerated and tightly capped they can last about 18 months to 2 years. Beyond that, they will start to turn rancid as they oxidize.

If they start having a rancid odor, get rid of them. Do not use them. They are more detrimental to your health when they are rancid, besides they just smell nasty..

The Exception in the Carrier oils is [Jojoba](#) and the [Coconut oils](#). Both of these have a shelf life of about 5 years. Most folks though use them up and never have to worry about them going bad. Personally, we have never smelled spoiled or rancid Jojoba and Coconut oil, as we just don’t have them around long enough.

To dispose of them:

Probably best not to empty in the kitchen sink. Our best suggestion is to take them to an oil recycling center. Recycling - they may be used for heating, automobiles or other non-human uses.

Possible other uses might be to help remove bugs and tar/road spatter from your auto. Be sure to use gloves. Or if you have to deal with pine pitch, a little soaking with a carrier oil may help to make it easier to remove.

Essential oils:

There are a few Essential oils that have a very short shelf life – less than 6 months and others can have a fairly long shelf life if kept in a cool, tightly capped bottle – up to 10 years (maybe more).

Eventually all essential oils will become ‘non-therapeutic’ and should not be used to treat any type of ailment or condition as you will just not get good results.

You need to use Fresh oils when they are to be used for any skin condition. And especially if you are treating any kind of rash, lesion etc. Don’t use old essential oils and do not use old carrier oils on the skin!

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Essential oil when blended with any carrier oil or lotion will have the shelf life of the shortest shelf- life item in the blend. If the carrier oil is only good for 1 year, then the massage or skin oil is only good for 1 year.

Our suggestion is to mix or purchase only what you can use up in 1 year. After that – throw it out and buy fresh.

The Citrus (Orange, Lemon, Lime, Grapefruit, etc) and Conifer needle oils (Pine, Spruce & Fir) can be used on the skin when mixed properly for up to one year. After one year, oxidation causes too many chemical changes in the constituents, causing any of these to become skin irritants.

Most all other essential oils can safely be used for Therapeutic applications either blended into a carrier or used in diffusing/inhalation for up to 3 years, again provided they are kept tightly capped and cool.

Now, What do you do when Essential oils are OLD?

If not too old you can still use them for diffusing, just don't use them in anything applied to the skin or if you need to have a therapeutic result.

You can use them in the cleaning bucket, in the garden to deter pests – insect and furry creatures, you can use them in the closet or storage buildings. The list really is endless.

In the garden, add your old essential oils to [Fiber Bits](#) then sprinkle around your plants. Old [Geranium oil](#) is great to use as it deters most garden insect pests. The Fiber bits are organic material and will eventually compost in your garden.

Again, it is best not to pour essential oils down the drain. If you cannot find a use for them then, again either take them to recycling or find out if your garbage service allows disposal through them

We replace our personal use essential oils every year at vacation time. We always want to use fresh oils.

If we have a ml or 2 left in a bottle we soak them into the [Fiber bits](#) and sprinkle them around our house and yard. It makes the outdoors smell pretty good and hopefully keeps the nasty insects away!

In conclusion:

If you have old oils – What? You need to know you are purchasing in too large of quantities!! Buy smaller amounts so you can always have fresh. Date the bottles when they arrive and replace in one year. As I stated, if you have too much in a bottle after one year, buy smaller.

If time slips by – you can always use essential oils in your cleaning bucket. Does your sidewalk or deck need a scrubbing or maybe even the house, trailer, boat, etc – you get it, don't you? Mix them with soap and water and get to scrubbing!

And don't forget to buy [NEW FRESH OILS](#) for your Therapeutic needs!!

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