

# Aromatherapy Patient Course



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*Florida Blue*  
Foundation



# About the Aging and Integrative Pain Assessment and Management Association (AI-PAMI)

AI-PAMI is a comprehensive project addressing non-opioid pain management in adults ages 50 and older living in Northeast Florida. The overall goal of AI-PAMI is the advancement of innovative pain education and patient care through the development of provider and patient workshops focused on integrative pain management.

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Visit [pami.emergency.med.jax.ufl.edu](http://pami.emergency.med.jax.ufl.edu) to learn more.

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# Today's Presentation



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# Disclaimer

The Pain Assessment and Management Initiative has provided this material for your information to use as an educational resource. It is not intended to substitute for the medical expertise and advice of your health care provider(s) or prescribed medications and treatments.

We encourage you to discuss any decisions about your pain management or medical treatment with your regular health care provider.

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# Did you know?

There are hundreds of varieties of essential oils. They have been in use for thousands of years.

Let's uncover why they have been around for so long and how they are used to help manage pain, stress or other symptoms.



# What is Aromatherapy?

- Aromatherapy is the use of essential oils from plants (flowers, herbs, or trees) as an integrative health approach to medical treatment.
- The essential oils are most often used by breathing them in or by rubbing a diluted form to the skin. It is the promotion and harmonization of emotional, physical and spiritual health through the application of these extracts.



# What is an Essential Oil?

- Essential oils are extracted from flowers, fruits, leaves or seeds to capture the aromatic "essence" of the plant.
- These oils are obtained through mechanical pressing or distillation (steam process).
- They are concentrated plant extracts that retain the natural smell and flavor of their source.
- The result is a super-concentrated oil that can be breathed in, massaged in, or diluted and added to lotions or bath water.



# Case Scenario 1



Two older adults seek arthritis pain relief

# Meet Mr. Thompson

Mr. Thompson is a gardener by trade. He recently retired and set out to landscape his own home after many years of working for others. Unfortunately, after a few months of working with his hands, his Rheumatoid Arthritis became too painful to continue.

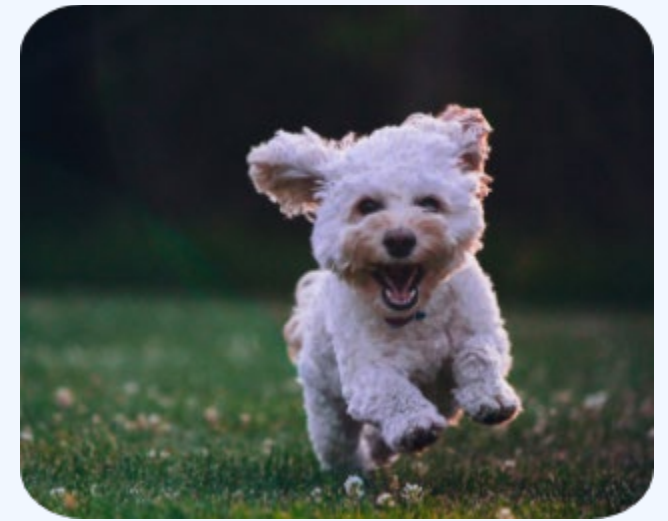
Mr. Thompson has been going to the same clinic for years to receive routine care, massage and attend patient support groups. At his recent appointment, his doctor mentioned adding aromatherapy to his weekly hand massage treatment as it could potentially lower pain and help improve his activity level.



# Meet Mrs. Leary

Mrs. Leary is a retired kindergarten teacher. She loves to be outside by taking her dog for walks, visiting with other retirees, and shopping at the local mall. Lately, she has had to cut back on her walking because her Osteoarthritis has been causing her knees to ache.

Mrs. Leary attends the same Clinic as Mr. Thompson and her doctor also recommends aromatherapy. He says it could help her with staying active and may reduce her pain.





# What the Research Says



# What the research says: Can it help with pain management?

- Lavender is associated with reduced pain when used before or during routine shots, IV insertions and trigger point injections.
- Aromatherapy massage with essential oils (lavender, juniper, ylang ylang, rose) has shown a reduction in pain and fatigue for patients with rheumatoid arthritis.
- Post-operative knee replacement patients had reduced pain and blood pressure with inhalation of eucalyptus oils.



# What the research says: Can it help with pain management?

- For labor and delivery pain specifically, research has identified the benefit of many types of essential oils in reducing pain intensity during early labor pain.
- There is promising evidence in pain reduction for patients using aromatherapy essential oils with conventional medication therapy for renal colic (kidney stones), hemodialysis and neck pain.

# What the research says: Can it help with stress, anxiety or sleep?

- Essential oils may be promising to use before medical procedures that cause stress and anxiety.
- In a study of intensive care unit patients, stress was reduced with the use of lavender essential oil, as was heart rate and blood pressure, signs that it may be a useful tool for relaxation and calming.



# What the research says: Can it help with stress, anxiety or sleep?

- Labor and delivery patients using multiple oils have experienced reduced anxiety during the early stages of labor.
- Lavender improved sleep quality for patients in intensive care when inhaled prior to sleep times.

# Applications for Essential Oil



# Inhalant



Inhalers, often called aromasticks, are plastic tubes that contain fabric already soaked in the essential oils. The lipstick-sized container has a cap that needs to be unscrewed before you inhale the oils.

- **Advantages** personal inhalers are very low cost and are long lasting.
- **Disadvantages** personal inhalers are easily misplaced and the product requires some manual skill to use. For example, opening can be difficult for patients with arthritis.



# Aromatherapy Tab/Patch

Aroma tabs/patches are small single use adhesive squares designed to adhere to the skin or clothing. Each square has a small pouch, which contains several drops of either a single essential oil or a blend. Patches are applied generally on the upper chest, so that vapors will rise and be inhaled.

- **Advantages:** easy application and removal; essential oils do not touch the skin
- **Disadvantages:** possible skin irritation from the adhesive, and cost of the device. Each patch is single use only and lasts up to 6 hours.





# Skin Application



The application of properly diluted (no greater concentration than 3-5%) essential oils on the skin is practiced in massage therapy.

It can be diluted in an appropriate cream, lotion or salve for the oil chosen, and then applied to the skin

- **Advantages** stress and anxiety reduction, pain relief, decreased swelling, helping maintain skin quality, and improved muscle tone and joint mobility
- **Disadvantages** full-body massage may be limited by time or physical conditions

# Diffuser

The most common method to actively diffuse essential oils is by use of an ultrasonic diffuser, a device with a container to hold water and the oils that produces a fine mist. There are also options that do not use water.

- **Advantages** ability to quickly fill a room with scent
- **Disadvantages** affecting others nearby who may be sensitive to smell, potential for bacteria growth if not refilled and cleaned properly and potential for electric shock if water is spilled on the cord



Image: Tisserand Institute

# Common Varieties and Purpose/Use

Tea Tree <i>(Melaleuca alternifolia)</i>	Bacterial, fungal, and viral infections	Rosemary <i>(Rosmarinus officinalis)</i>	Stimulant and anti-infective agent
Peppermint <i>(Mentha piperita)</i>	Headaches, fever, nausea, and fatigue	Eucalyptus <i>(Eucalyptus globulus, Eucalyptus radiata, Eucalyptus smithii)</i>	Respiratory infections
Lavender <i>(Lavandula angustifolia)</i>	Minor burns, insomnia, pain relief, and wound care	Ginger <i>(Zingiber officinale)</i>	Nausea and inflammation
German chamomile <i>(Matricaria recutita)</i>	Inflammatory skin problems	Lemongrass <i>(Cymbopogon citratus)</i>	Fungal infections
Bergamot <i>(Citrus bergamia)</i>	Mild antidepressant and tonic	Mandarin	Stomach upset and

\*University of Minnesota Center for Spirituality and Healing

# Safe Use of Essential Oils



- Always talk to your regular health care provider before using essential oils. Certain medical conditions are not safe to mix with aromatherapy.

- Always read every label carefully to ensure safe use of a product.

- **Do not eat essential oils.** Some oils may cause serious health effects if they are consumed, such as Wintergreen or Clove oil in children. Some food grade extracts and oils may be safe to consume. The Food and Drug Administration maintains a list of food grade extracts and oils generally recognized as safe for food additives when cooking, such as pepper and vanilla. If in doubt, always ask your health care provider.

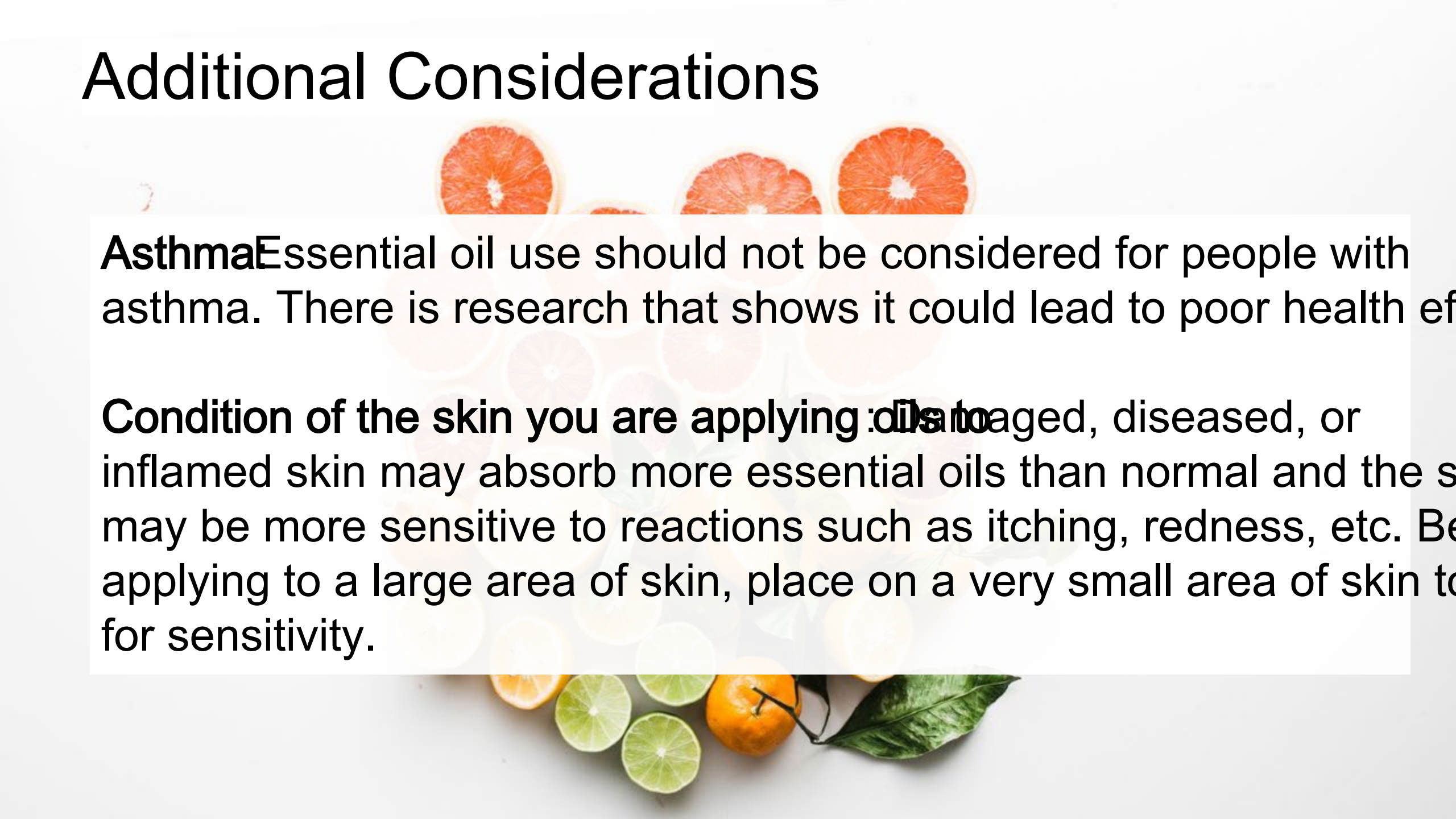
# Safe Use of Essential Oils

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a small, purple, cylindrical essential oil bottle. The bottle has a silver-colored cap and a label with some text and a logo. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a person's arm and a dark surface.

- **Essential oils should never be put directly on the skin.** A carrier oil (avocado, olive, grapeseed) must be used when applying to the body. Many essential oils (single/blends) often recommend a dilution of 1-5%.
- **Allergies are a possibility.** Always test a small patch first if applying a dilution to your skin to test any unwanted reactions before applying to larger areas of the body.
- **Sensitivity to smells.** If you are smell sensitive and dislike an oil you try use a rubbing alcohol wipe to quickly remove the odor safely.



# Additional Considerations

The background of the slide features a decorative border of citrus fruit slices. At the top, there are several slices of grapefruit or orange. At the bottom, there are slices of lime and a whole orange with a green leaf. The central text is contained within a white rectangular box.

**Asthma** Essential oil use should not be considered for people with asthma. There is research that shows it could lead to poor health effects.

**Condition of the skin you are applying oil to:** Damaged, diseased, or inflamed skin may absorb more essential oils than normal and the skin may be more sensitive to reactions such as itching, redness, etc. Before applying to a large area of skin, place on a very small area of skin to test for sensitivity.




A close-up photograph of eucalyptus leaves, showing their characteristic silvery undersides and green upper surfaces, arranged in a cluster.

# Additional Considerations

**Age** young children and older adults can be more sensitive to essential oils. It is important to use a more diluted blend to avoid reactions. Remember to store essential oils out of reach of young children to avoid a potential harmful exposure.

**Sun exposure** can cause phototoxicity (severe burns or skin cancer) if there is exposure to natural sunlight or UV radiation following oil application to the skin, especially citrus oils.

A clear glass bottle, likely for essential oils, with a small amount of liquid inside, positioned at the bottom left of the slide.

# Let's Return to Mr. Thompson

The therapist used an ointment containing Lavender & Spearmint essential oils for his hand massage. Mr. Thompson likes the relaxing smell and warmth the oils gave to his tired, sore hands. Once finished, Mr. Thompson was given the remainder of the ointment and instructed to use 2-3 times daily.

Upon his return, for a 4-week follow-up, Mr. Thompson said after using the Lavender & Spearmint essential oil ointment daily, he felt it was more helpful than massage alone.

He's happy to report he's now finished his front flowerbeds and will be starting on his backyard soon.



# and Mrs. Leary

The therapist used an ointment of black seed oil and 2.5% each of Ginger & Rosemary essential oils. After treatment, Mrs. Leary was instructed to use the ointment 3 times per week.

Upon her return for a follow-up visit, Mrs. Leary stated that use of the ointment was more beneficial than simply massage alone.

Mrs. Leary stated she couldn't believe how much further she can comfortably walk since starting the Ginger & Rosemary essential oil regimen.



# How Do I Safely Buy Oils?



# Considerations for evaluating oils



**Review the label:** It should include the Latin name of the plant, information on purity or other ingredients added to it, and the country in which the plant was grown. Be wary of false claims that an oil is “pure, therapeutic or aromatherapy-grade” as there is no regulating body verifying these claims.

**Look at the company details:** Review the information about the company to see how many years they have been in business and what credentials or certifications they hold to qualify them to understand and sell oils responsibly.

**Container type:** Preferred companies package oils in small brown or blue glass bottles to protect the quality. Plastic can break down over time and light can break down and evaporate the oils.



# Considerations for evaluating oils



**Choose oils not fragrances:** Fragrance or perfume oils are made from essential oils combined with chemicals or entirely from chemicals. They're not suitable for aromatherapy —instead, look for bottles that contain 100% of a single essential oil rather than a blend.

**Pricing:** Essential oils range in price based on how much plant matter it takes to produce the oil. There should be a wide variety of prices—rose absolute or sandalwood oils will be more expensive, while sweet orange oil will be on the less expensive end. Companies with a flat cost are likely selling oils containing additives.

When shopping online, consider companies that can provide a batch analysis from an independent lab to verify quality. This analysis is called a GC/MS and helps show how pure an oil is or if it contains other



# Discussion and Questions

**Have you ever used aromatherapy before?**

**Did you find any specific benefits when using essential oils?**


**Do you see yourself exploring this topic further?**

**Would you feel comfortable asking your health care provider about aromatherapy?**

# Thank you!



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