Let's Talk ABOUT...

Essential oils and deep breathing

What is an essential oil?

Essential oils are the scented part of different plants (flowers, trees, and herbs). They are from the plant with nothing added. Each oil is a different chemical that can be used to treat certain problems. Not everyone can use essential oils in the hospital; some people do not like certain scents. Artificial fragrances and products do not have the same effect as pure essential oil from plants. Primary Children's Medical Center uses only high quality pure essential oils.

How can essential oils help my child?

Nurses and child life staff have four essential oils your child can smell to help relieve pain, anxiety, nausea, and difficulty sleeping. These oils may also help your child relax. The four oils are lavender, mandarin, spearmint, and peppermint. Often, the oils work better with deep, or "focused," breathing techniques described later in this handout.

What oil should my child use?

The following chart shows the oils that might help with certain problems.

Lavender oil (L. angustifolia) is distilled from the flowers of the Lavender plant. It is a very popular essential oil and has many uses.

Mandarin oil (Citrus reticulata) is from the peel of the mandarin orange fruit. It may not smell exactly like a fresh mandarin, but many children prefer the smell of the oil.

Spearmint oil (Mentha spicata) is distilled from the fresh flowering tops of the spearmint plant. It is used to flavor candy, gum, and toothpaste.

Peppermint oil (Mentha x piperita) is steam-distilled from the partially dried peppermint leaves. It is widely used in food flavoring and soaps.

Are there any safety issues when using essential oils?

Use the following safety precautions with essential oils.

 Do not take essential oils by mouth unless directed by a healthcare provider experienced in using essential oils.

Essential Oil	What It Is Used For
Lavender (L. angustifolia)	 Calms mental and emotional anxiety Uplifts and revives for someone emotionally depleted and depressed Helps with sleep problems due to mental stress and anxiety Helps relieve muscle aches and pains
Mandarin (Citrus reticulata)	Helps calm nausea Calms restlessness and anxiety
Spearmint (Mentha spicata)	Helps calm nausea and indigestion Uplifts during stress and mental strain
Peppermint (Mentha x piperita)	 Helps calm nausea and motion sickness Decreases pain from muscle aches, bruises and bumps Helps with mental fatigue and poor concentration

- Keep bottles of essential oils out of the reach of children.
- Avoid splashing essential oils in the eyes.
- Use essential oils with caution if you or family members are pregnant, have migraines, have active respiratory diseases, or have poorly controlled seizures.

How can deep or "focused" breathing used with essential oils help my child?

Deep breathing helps the body relax and helps oxygen get to the lungs and body. Your child can use deep breathing with or without essential oils. Adjust these instructions for your child's age and needs.

- 1 Lie down or sit in a comfortable chair, with good posture. Your body should be as relaxed as possible. If you close your eyes it can help you focus on your breathing.
- **2** Breathe through your nose. If your nose is stuffy or clogged, breath through or your mouth.
- **3** Pay attention to your breathing. Place one hand on the part of your chest or belly that rises and falls the most with each breath.

- **4** Notice how your chest or belly rises and falls.
- 5 Inhale deeply and slowly through your nose or mouth. You should feel your belly rise with this inhalation and your chest should move only a little.
- **6** Exhale through your mouth, keeping your mouth, tongue, and jaw relaxed.
- **7** Relax as you focus on the sound and feeling of long, slow, deep breaths.
- **8** Try to deep breathe for 5–10 minutes.
- **9** Notice any differences in how you feel after deep breathing.

You can ask your nurse or a member of the child l ife staff to help your child with deep breathing techniques. They can also help your child choose an essential oil to treat pain, anxiety, difficulty sleeping, or nausea.