

# Aromatherapy: An Adjunct Therapy for Pain

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## INTRODUCTION

- In light of the current opioid crisis in our country as healthcare workers we need to advocate for non-pharmacological interventions to aid in pain relief.
- Aromatherapy is the use of essential oils extracted from herbs, flowers, or plants as a complementary therapy for pain anxiety, nausea/vomiting, and insomnia.
- It is either inhaled or absorbed through the skin via massage
- According to the FDA aromatherapy is classified in the cosmetic class and safe for use.

## PICO Question

Is aromatherapy effective as a complementary therapy to pain meds in the adult inpatient population?

## METHODS

Data Bases	PubMed, Ovid Medline, Ovid Embase, Ovid Ebm, CINAHL, Joanna Briggs, and UpToDate.		
Search Terms	Aromatherapy, pain medication alternatives. Inhalation aromatherapy, massage aromatherapy, essential oils		
Results	12/36 articles were reviewed and appraised including three-systematic reviews, five-RCTs, one nonrandomized research study, one integrative review, one-systematic review with a meta-analysis, and one-literature review.		
Level of Evidence	I	10	4- Strong 5-Good
	II	0	0
	III	0	0
	IV	0	0
	V	2	Strong/Good

Thank you to Clarissa Vannier, Medical Librarian, and Sandra Vanice, EBP Specialist, for their help with this literature review.

Outcome Synthesis												
PICOT Question: Is aromatherapy effective as a complementary therapy to pain meds in the adult inpatient population?												
outcomes	Article Number											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Pain	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Pain meds used				↔							↓	
anxiety		↓	↓		↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓		↓
Vital signs					↔	↔						
insomnia		↓			↓				↓			
nausea	↓	↓			↓							
Procedural adherence						↔						
patient satisfaction				↑								

↓ decrease incidence of    ↑ Increase incidence    ↔ no difference



## Evidence Synthesis

- Articles reviewed show improvement in pain, anxiety, nausea, and insomnia for all essential oils studied.
- There was no difference in vital signs comparing aromatherapy to the control or standard care groups.
- Inhalation of aromatherapy is studied most. 1-5 drops on a gauze placed close to the patient head or with the use of a diffuser.
- Lavender oil is the most studied and has a positive effect on pain, anxiety, nausea and insomnia.
- Eucalyptus, Rosa Damascena, Peppermint, Clary Sage, Chamomile, Mandarin, Frankincense, and Sweet Orange were also studied and found to be beneficial

## DISCUSSION

- Aromatherapy is a low-cost complementary therapy that evidence has shown to be beneficial in increasing patients' perceptions of pain management and a decrease in patients' reported pain level when used with pain meds when compared to the use of pain meds only.
- The evidence presented illustrates a decrease in anxiety, nausea and vomiting when inhaled.
- Our recommendation is to **utilize aromatherapy in all patient populations.**

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