



Essential Oils



What are essential oils and why are they a poisoning risk?

Essential oils are distilled from plants and used in clinical aromatherapy and homeopathy. Some examples of essential oils are lavender, eucalyptus, tea tree, wintergreen, lemon, and peppermint. Oils may be applied to the skin, breathed in, or spread in the air. Incorrect use of essential oils can cause serious poisoning. Natural does not mean harmless. Common misuses: swallowing oils, applying more frequently than recommended, and not lessening the strength of oils before use. Children under 6 are most at risk, especially those 1-3 years of age. Adults tend to make more severe mistakes with essential oils.

Typical essential oil poisoning scenarios

- A visiting 3 year old sprays peppermint oil in his eye.
- A 2 year old drops essential oils into his 7 month old sister's mouth.
- A 21 year old mistakenly puts undiluted lemon & eucalyptus oil in her homemade lip balm.
- A 55 year old inhales a combination of essential oils poured on a cloth. Her lips swell and she feels like her throat is closing.

Signs & Symptoms



Nausea, vomiting, irritation



Eye irritation, pain



Skin flushing, redness, irritation



Confusion, dizziness, drowsiness, seizures

Did you know that essential oils are also found in room sprays, cleaning products, and liquid potpourri housed in reed diffusers, oil warmers, and plug-in products?

Prevention Tips

- ✓ Essential oil bottles often do not have child-resistant safety caps. Keep up and locked away and out of the sight of children.
- ✓ Label essential oils with name, date, and strength. Improper labeling is common.
- ✓ Know the concentration/dilution of each oil. Be sure to do the math when preparing the strength.
- ✓ Avoid using undiluted essential oils on the skin.
- ✓ Consider doing a patch test to look for allergies and sensitivities before putting larger amounts on skin.
- ✓ Avoid ingesting essential oils.
- ✓ Call the CT Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 if someone has been poisoned by essential oils.
- ✓ For more information visit <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/aromatherapy>