

Most people do not realize that essential oils, which are the basis of aromatherapy, enter the blood stream of the body via skin absorption or inhalation and act as catalysts to create balance in the cells and organs.

A molecule's journey through the body

To begin, the molecules of oil are small due to the distillation process. Their small size and polarity determine how fast the oil molecule will penetrate through the outer layer of skin, the epidermis. They often go through via a hair follicle or sweat gland. The oil molecule then travels to the dermis and enters the blood capillaries there. Eventually it passes to the arteries and veins throughout the body.

As the oil molecule moves through the blood stream, it finds the right cell receptor for binding. For example, a molecule of Rosemary travels to cell receptors on the liver. Finding the right cell receptor, it acts to regenerate and balance this vital organ. The oil molecule will leave the body in 4 to 24 hours. Usually, it is processed by the liver to become water-soluble. It then moves out of the body through the kidneys into the urine. That essential oils are so precise in frequency that they can find the correct cell receptor that needs their qualities of healing surpasses any lab-created medicine.

Skin absorption factors

- **Skin hydration** — a hot bath or shower can increase the absorption of essential oils.
- **Occlusions** — covering the skin with clothes, bandages, etc. increases the temperature and absorption of essential oils.
- **Temperature** — warmth of air or water increases blood capillary circulation and absorption of essential oils. Heat due to exercise increases absorption also.

Olfactory: the inhalation of essential oils

The other main path for essential oils to enter the body is through the olfactory system. As a person inhales the essential oil, the molecule of oil goes up into the back of each nostril to the postage-stamp-size epithelium patch. The molecules attach to receptors on the cilia hairs in the nose space. They turn into nerves on the other side of the mucous patch, which sends the odor information on to the olfactory bulb. This means the essential oil itself is not sent to the brain, but instead a neural translation of the complex essential oil. The millions of nerves enter through the bone to the olfactory bulb and merge into two large nerves that go back to the limbic brain in the inner center of the head. The right nerve goes back to the amygdala, a center for emotions in the limbic system. There the aromatic information is connected to the emotions of the situation.

Source: Heather Howell, Certified Clinical Aromatherapist; Aromatic Institute.

Because the limbic system is directly connected to parts of the brain that control heart rate, blood pressure, breathing, memory, stress levels, and hormone balance, scents can have physiological and psychological effects.

Essential oils are also absorbed through the skin when directly applied, such as with massage. They then travel into the lymphatic system, which circulates them into the blood stream, where again they can have physiological effects.

For example, a person smells a bouquet of fragrant roses and suddenly receives traumatic news; they will always have an uneasy feeling about the smell of these flowers. The opposite effect is true as well — if one were juicing fresh oranges and surprised by their partner with acts of affection, they will smile inwardly every time they smell oranges.

The nerve information is sent on from the amygdala to the hippocampus, a center for short-term memory in the limbic system. So, right away, the smell, emotion, and memory are commingled, as they are stored in the limbic system. Then this information goes on to the hypothalamus for long-term memory. It is passed on to the pituitary, or master gland, and eventually the whole endocrine system.

Recipes to Deodorize, Detox, Disinfect, Degrease, Polish, and Brighten Your Environment

Window Cleaner

1 cup distilled white vinegar diluted with ¼ cup water, 10–15 drops Natural Cleaner EO blend. Mix well in a spray bottle, apply to windows, and wipe with newspaper.

Floor Cleaner

Pour ¼ cup distilled white vinegar into a bucket of water (1 gallon); add 18 drops Natural Cleaner EO blend.

Wood Love

Add 4–5 drops Natural Cleaner EO blend to 1 oz. of olive oil. (Olive oil is a natural oil that helps to nourish and polish wood.) Mix, apply lightly to furniture, and buff for a perfect shine.

Everyday Disinfectant

Fill a 4 oz. spray bottle with water. Add a squirt of plant-based soap. Add 20 drops Natural Cleaner EO blend. Shake well and apply to all surfaces.

Mold and Mildew Spray

Pour 2 cups distilled white vinegar into a spray bottle. Add 4 drops Natural Cleaner EO blend. Shake well and spray on the affected area, let sit, and rinse when you shower next.

Source: Heather Howell, Certified Clinical Aromatherapist; Aromatic Institute.