

## CLINIC

### THERAPY FOCUS

#### Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is a very popular form of complementary medicine, both for home use and as a therapy.

For thousands of years people have used flowers to sweeten their homes. Now we have the opportunity to use these scents throughout the year by using essential oils. Essential oils are a concentrated extract of a herb. They are volatile, which means that they evaporate easily, spreading the scent (and properties) of the oil. However a great advantage of using essential oils is that as well as smelling good they also have therapeutic properties.

A great number of studies have shown the benefits of essential oils in different circumstances. They most commonly enter the body via inhalation (by placing in an oil burner or through steam inhalation) or by being absorbed through the skin (in oils, creams or soaps).

Essential oils can be uplifting, relaxing or stimulating, and may be diffused through a room to help affect the mood. Some essential oils have been shown to be highly antiseptic, having these in the bedroom when someone is sick is advantageous.

More often they are applied to the skin, in a massage oil or a toiletry product, making the product smell good and giving it the properties of the essential oil (such as relaxing or invigorating, detoxifying or anti-inflammatory).

Clinical aromatherapists study the therapeutic properties of essential oils, in order to apply them to a wide range of situations. They can blend oils for an extensive range of conditions, including skin problems (i.e. sensitive skin, eczema or acne), headaches, joint pain or stress.

Often the application of the essential oils is combined with a massage. A widely held misconception is that this massage is a gentle form of massage. As with all holistic

therapies, the massage combined with the oils will be the one the therapist feels is suitable for that client, in that moment. This means that if the therapist believes that a deep massage is required they will perform one. With the additional benefit of the essential oils (which may be chosen to relax tight muscles or reduce inflammation) the massage can be very useful for muscular problems and injuries.

There are several aromatherapists practicing out of this clinic. As you may see many of these therapists have other strings to their bow.

**Kim Atherton** practises aromatherapy, therapeutic massage and reflexology. As well as several years experience as a practitioner Kim is in her fourth, and final, year at the Scottish School of Herbal Medicine, training to be a medical herbalist.

**Angela Donnelly** is a physiotherapist, but training did not stop once she qualified. She now has a number of additional qualifications including aromatherapy and acupuncture, both of which she regularly uses in her physiotherapy sessions.

**Michelle Donnelly** uses her knowledge in aromatherapy, reflexology, massage (including Indian head massage) and reiki to balance individuals and enhance their well-being. She has also studied stress management and uses these therapies in combination to help keep her clients "stress free".

**Anna Hill** is often behind the counter in the shop, sharing the knowledge she is gaining while training to be a medical herbalist. She is also a qualified therapist, practising therapeutic massage and aromatherapy.

**Maureen Russell** and **Katrina Telford** are both medical herbalists and aromatherapists. As such they have the opportunity to use essential oils when devising herbal prescriptions.



Herbal Dispensary and Complementary Medicine Centre

### MILK THISTLE

Milk Thistle received its name as nursing mothers used it to increase their milk production<sup>1</sup>. Nowadays, it is more often used for its beneficial properties to the liver<sup>2</sup>, and is much loved for the infamous 'detox' that many of us talk about (but few of us get round to doing!).

Milk Thistle (*Carduus marianus* or *Silybum marianum*) is a gentle bitter<sup>2</sup>, that was recommended in the middle ages for the liver and blood<sup>3</sup> (as well as those bitten by serpents!). Historically it was also used for melancholy, a condition which had strong association with the liver.

The flowerheads were eaten in the spring when they were fresh. They are eaten as a vegetable, but having the added advantage of acting as a gentle liver stimulant (and therefore detoxing herb).

More recently an extract from the seeds (silymarin) has been scientifically shown to protect liver tissue from toxin damage and even to regenerate liver tissue<sup>2</sup>. In Germany (where many health professionals prescribe herbs) silymarin has been used to treat a number of liver disorders.

The liver is the major organ of elimination within the body. It is full of enzymes which

breakdown the toxins within the body. If the liver is not healthy, or if the levels of toxins within the body are high, then it may not be able to keep up. It is at these times that some people use milk thistle seed.

#### Uses of Milk Thistle:

Milk thistle seeds are commonly taken when people feel the need to support their liver. This may be because:

the liver is required to work harder during a detoxification period.

the liver has been put under strain for instance during a period of excess with high fatty foods and excessive alcohol drinking (it is often used to help prevent/reduce hangovers).

the liver is damaged (note: the treatment of liver damage should only be done under the direction of a health professional).

Milk thistle can be taken in a number of forms. Tinctures are very popular and easy to use, as are capsules. The seeds themselves can be used, either as a decoction or eaten whole, possibly as a few seeds in your breakfast cereal.

**Possible Contraindications:** There is no written evidence of any contraindications for the use of milk thistle. It is advisable however, to consult with a doctor or medical herbalist about its use concurrently with medication, or with certain chronic illnesses.

#### Bibliography

- 1 GRIEVE M, 1931. *A Modern Herbal*.
- 2 CHEVALLIER A, 2001. *Encyclopaedia of Medicinal Plants*.
- 3 GERARD J, 1597. *Gerard's Herbal*.

CLINIC OPEN EVENING  
THURSDAY 29<sup>th</sup> JANUARY

6pm to 9.30pm

Taster sessions

Demonstrations

Meet with Therapists

**Disclaimer:** The information in this leaflet is to assist in the use of herbs. It is not intended to replace the advice of a professional.

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## NEWS & VIEWS

### DETOX

#### What is a 'detox'?

A detox is a regime designed to reduce the toxin levels in our bodies. This may be achieved by: reducing the levels of toxin taken into the body (i.e. cigarettes, alcohol and chocolate); increasing the elimination of the toxins within the body; or both.

Spring is traditionally the time to detox, when the days are getting longer and there are plenty of fresh salad vegetables available. The New Year however, is rapidly becoming a more popular time. This appears to be due to two reasons: New Year's resolutions often include reducing many of the toxins we live with and getting into a healthy regime; the excesses of the Christmas period having left many of us feeling sluggish and slow. Others decide to fit a simple detox regularly into their regime (for instance not drinking alcohol, tea or coffee one day a week).

How you go about a detox depends on what you want to achieve and what you think you will be able to achieve.

A simple detox may involve cutting out toxins (coffee, alcohol, cigarettes etc) and increasing your water intake for a few days. This is very simple and probably easier to achieve than more complicated detox programmes. It may even result in a permanent change in habits.

More complicated detox regimes often include a more radical change in diet. Some people will gradually cut out meat, dairy and cooked foods and eat raw fruit and vegetables for a few days, before reintroducing the other foods slowly back into the diet. This is often accompanied with herbs or supplementation to assist with the elimination of toxins.

These are not weight loss regimes (although a detox regime can often result in weight loss) and it is important that the body still receives an appropriate calorie and vitamin intake.

There are many different detox regimes discussed in books and magazines. If you are thinking of detoxing keep these points in mind:

- 1 Will you be able to keep the regime up? - completing a simple detox will be more beneficial than not completing a complicated extreme detox.
- 2 It does not matter how many supplements and herbs you take, reducing the toxin intake is important.
- 3 If you are on medication or suffer from a medical condition it is best to discuss your plans with your doctor.

### ANTIPERSPIRANTS

A recent report questioned the safety of one of the chemicals (paraben) found in some antiperspirants. This is not the first time that the safety of antiperspirants has been a story in the news.

These reports are not always substantiated, however as a result of these reports we are often asked about the alternatives to antiperspirants. There are two main reasons that people may decide to change to natural deodorants:

- because many commercial brands are 'anti-perspirants' preventing the skin from sweating;
- because they contain chemicals which have been implicated in health scares.

Perspiring, or sweating, is one of the major routes of toxin elimination in the body, especially in the armpit. It also aids in the regulation of the body temperature and in balancing the body's salt levels.

Body odour (commonly referred to as BO) is not due to this perspiration (sweat), but due to bacteria that breed in the sweat. Therefore it is not essential to stop sweating in order to avoid the odour, just reduce the bacterial growth.

Most natural deodorants act to prevent the odour (de-odorant) from occurring by preventing bacterial growth, rather than masking the smell (perfume) or preventing perspiration (anti-perspirant).

Natural deodorants use the ingredients listed below:

**Essential oils** are often used for their scent, but many are also antibacterial.

## NEWS & VIEWS cont.

**Alcohol** may be used as a solvent for the essential oils. As well as acting as a solvent, it is antibacterial and dries quickly.

**Aluminium salts** (Ammonium alum) can be bought as a crystal or in a liquid form. The salts prevent the growth of bacteria, but are too large to be absorbed by the skin or to block the pores (unlike the aluminium contained in anti-perspirants).

**Herbs** with antibacterial properties may also be included in natural deodorants.

### Make Your Own

You could always make your own deodorant from essential oils. Essential oils will not mix in water, therefore either mix them in alcohol (such as vodka) or oil (such as calendula oil).

### OPEN EVENING

On Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2004 we are holding a clinic open evening. From 6pm onwards you will have the chance to see demonstrations, sample taster sessions, meet our therapists and discuss any areas of interest.

### TALKS & CLASSES

Once again we are running courses throughout spring: introductory workshops to herbal medicine and a homeopathic first aid course. The classes have limited space so please let us know if you are interested.

#### Herbal Medicine Workshops

Ian Boyd will be running a series of workshops on herbal medicine. It will include discussions, tasting sessions, making ointments and guided walks. The workshops will take place on Tuesday evenings, 7.30-9.30, starting 23rd March 2004. The course of workshops last for 6 weeks, and costs £50.

#### Homeopathic First Aid

Joan Thomson will run the homeopathic first aid course on Tuesday evenings starting 11th May 2004. The course will include the homeopathic treatment of bumps & bruises, childhood ailments, coughs & colds and sports injuries. The course runs for 6 weeks and costs £60, and includes a homeopathic first aid kit.

## ESSENTIAL OILS

We have increased the range of organic essential oils that we bottle. By buying the essential oils in bulk from medical herbal supply companies we are able to offer quality essential oils at a reduced price.

We are currently able to offer sweet orange, lavender, eucalyptus, pine and tea tree, but are hoping to increase the range if needed.

To complement the essential oils, we have a large range of infused oils, including arnica, calendula, chickweed, comfrey, limeflower and capsicum. Infused oils are useful in their own right, but also make very good carrier oils for essential oils.

### GIFT CATALOGUE

For Christmas we put together a range of gifts. This has spurred us on to print a gift catalogue. This catalogue is designed for use throughout the year, and we hope you find it a useful aid when looking for solutions to some of your gift ideas. We have a range of wrapping choices, if you would like something wrapped, just ask.

### SPECIAL OFFER

The voucher below is valid throughout February and March.



January 2004  
Newsletter  
Herbs Offer

This voucher entitles the bearer to 10ml Essential Oil free with any purchase

**Terms & Conditions**

1. Not valid with any other offer
2. Essential oils from Woodland Herbs range only
3. Offer ends 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004