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AROMATHERAPY FOR ALOPECIA AREATA

What is aromatherapy?

Aromatherapy refers to the use of aromatic plant-based essential oils for massage into the scalp. A well conducted study from almost 2 decades ago showed benefit of aromatherapy in the treatment of the autoimmune disease alopecia areata.

Dr Hays and colleagues set out to investigate the efficacy of aromatherapy in the treatment of patients with alopecia areata. They conducted a randomized, double-blind, controlled trial over 7 months.

86 patients diagnosed as having alopecia areata were divided into 2 groups. The active aromatherapy group massaged essential oils (thyme, rosemary, lavender, and cedarwood) in a mixture of carrier oils (jojoba and grapeseed) into their scalp daily. The control group used only carrier oils for their massage.

Remarkably, 19 of 43 patients in the aromatherapy group (44%) showed improvement compared with just 6 (15%) of 41 patients in the control group. This remarkable study suggested a benefit for essential oils for some individuals with alopecia areata.

How do we advise to prepare the aromatherapy mixture?

I advise patients to rub the following essential oil mixture on their scalp 7-15 drops daily (depending on the size of the area)

1 ml lavender,
1 mL thyme,
1 mL rosemary,
1 mL cedarwood oil
in 100 mL jojoba (carrier oil)

Reference

Hay IC, et al. Randomized trial of aromatherapy. Successful treatment for alopecia areata. Randomized controlled trial. Arch Dermatol. 1998

