



The Intuitive Connection

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Essential Oils and the Sun

It's that time of year again. Time for tank tops, flip flops, barbecues, beaches, and the sun. If you are like me, you have to be really careful because any extended exposure in the sun ends up as a sunburn. While regular sunburns themselves are no fun, unfortunately, there are a few essential oils that can turn a bad sunburn into a possible trip to the emergency room. It is called photosensitization or phototoxicity.



What is Phototoxicity?

Phototoxicity is a reaction of UV light to substances applied to the skin. Certain essential oils contain molecules known as furanocoumarins. When exposed to UV light, these molecules bond together, and then bond to the skin (kind of like a magnifying glass effect), which results in a either sunburn or can lead to severe blistering. Depending on the amount used and exposure, the burns can last anywhere from a few days, to weeks, and/or can lead to permanent scarring. The same reaction can occur when these oils are applied topically and used with a tanning bed.

Signs of Phototoxicity

The problem with phototoxicity is that it might not show up immediately. The reaction can take anywhere from 12-36 hours to appear after being initially exposed to the UV rays. In addition, the symptoms could remain for weeks. Typical phototoxic symptoms include:

- Sunburn
- Darker pigmentation of the skin
- Swelling
- Blistering (in severe cases)

Staying Safe

So how can you use your favorite oils and still stay safe? There are a few simple things you can do to stay safe without giving up the oils that you love.

1. Avoid exposure to UV light for 12-18 hours after topically applying a phototoxic oil, according to Tisserand and Young (page 88).

2. Cover up! Phototoxicity only happens when the oil is applied to the skin and that skin is exposed to UV light. Simply apply the oil somewhere where it won't get exposed to sunlight. Keep in mind that all fabrics are not created equal. Very thin or see-through materials could still put you at risk for phototoxicity.
3. Use FCF (furanocoumarin free) oils instead (verify with the supplier there is no phototoxic risk before using).
4. Apply the oils to a diffuser pendant, or onto something that does not have direct contact with the skin. No skin contact, no risk of phototoxicity.
5. Dilute, dilute, dilute. Below is a chart of the oils that are known to have the phototoxic molecules, and the level they need to be diluted at in order to be considered safe.
6. Choose an alternative oil that is not phototoxic (see next page) when you know you will be going out into the sun.

Phototoxic Oils

Below is a list of oils that are known to be phototoxic (Tisserand and Young, page 86). The dilution guideline is also listed should you choose to use the oil and apply the oil on exposed skin. Please be advised that this is only a guideline, and each individual using oils may react differently. If in doubt, add extra dilution.

Essential Oil	Latin Name	Dilution Ratio	Drops per oz.
Angelica Root	Angelica archangelica	0.8%	4.8
Bergamot	Citrus bergamia or Citrus aurantium	.04%	2.4
Cumin	Cuminum cyminum	.04%	2.4
Fig Leaf Absolute	Ficus carica	Unsafe	0
Grapefruit	Citrus x paradise	4%	24
Laurel Leaf Absolute	Laurus Nobilis	2%	12
Lemon	Citrus x limon or Citrus Limonum	2%	12
Lime	Citrus x aurantifolia or Citrus x latifolia	0.7%	4.2
Mandarin Leaf	Citrus reticulata or Citrus nobilis	0.17%	1.02
Orange (Bitter)	Citrus x aurantium	1.25%	7.5
Rue	Ruta graveolens or Ruta montana	0.15%	.9
Taget	Asteraceae family	.01%	.6
Verbena	Verbenaceae family	Unsafe	0

According to Tisserand and Young (page 87), there is a secondary list of oils that may be phototoxic, so before applying and going out in the sun, use with care or just avoid these oils topically to be on the safe side.

Angelica Root Absolute	Angelica Root CO2 Extract	Celery Leaf Oil
Celery Seed Absolute	Clementine Oil	Combava Fruit Oil
Cumin Seed Absolute	Cumin Seed CO2 Extract	Khella Oil
Lovage Leaf Oil	Parsnip Oil	Skimmia Oil

Alternative Oils

Remember I mentioned that there are some alternative oils that you can use instead? Well, here is the list of oils that are considered non-phototoxic according to Tisserand and Young (page 87). As a reminder, if you choose the FCF oil option (remember, the furanocoumarins have been removed), **VERIFY** with the supplier that the oil does not contain any phototoxic risk.

Bergamot oil (FCF)	Lemon oil (steam distilled)	Lemon Leaf oil
Lime oil (steam distilled)	Mandarin oil	Orange (Sweet) oil
Orange Leaf oil	Satsuma oil (expressed)	Tangelo oil
Tangerine oil	Yuzu oil (expressed or steam distilled)	

I love oils, and I use them daily. Although they are considered safe, as with everything, there could be a risk involved. Education is the key on using oils safely. I hope you found this article and list of oils helpful. Stay safe and enjoy your summer!

References:

Tisserand, Robert and Young, Rodney. (2014) *Essential Oil Safety, A Guide for Health Care Professionals, Second Edition*. Edinburgh, Churchill Livingstone.

Taget family



Bergamot



Cumin



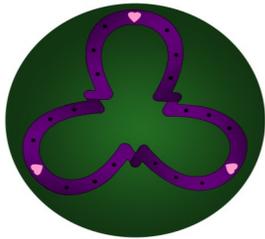
Fig Leaf



Upcoming Events

Healing Arts Festival

Scottish Rite Masonic Center
6151 H Street
Sacramento, CA
September 22nd and 23rd
10:00–6:00
10:00–5:00



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Referrals

Needing a service I don't provide? I recommend the following:

Anne Angelheart

Transformational Coach, Channeler, Author & Speaker

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