

Essential Oil Inhalation Methods



Key Points

- Inhalation is the fastest method of introducing essential oil molecules into the bloodstream.
- Essential oils can be administered through direct or indirect inhalation methods.

Direct inhalation methods

Direct inhalation methods of administering essential oils are amongst the cheapest, easiest, and most efficient delivery techniques. Delivery mechanisms for direct inhalation include cotton balls, adhesive bandages, patches, and aromasticks.

Cotton ball techniques

Place 1 drop of essential oil on a cotton ball and try any of the following methods:

- **Plastic cup or sandwich bag:** Place cotton ball in a lidded plastic cup or sandwich bag. Inhale, taking several deep slow breaths as desired, sealing container or bag between uses.
- **Tape:** Secure the cotton ball to clothing with tape. Make sure to tape the cotton ball to the back of clothing in patients with cognitive or physical impairments to prevent them from picking at it and potentially swallowing it.
- **Pillowcase:** Place cotton ball in pillowcase and inhale while head is on pillow. This is a good method when using essential oils for insomnia.

Note: cotton balls open to the air will lose the therapeutic effectiveness over time, so in the clinical setting it is recommended to change the cotton ball every 8–12 hours.

Adhesive bandage technique

Roll an adhesive bandage onto itself to expose the inner pad. Place 1–2 drops of essential oil on the pad, and then apply the sticky part to clothing.

Patches and aromasticks

Patches and aromasticks can be purchased from a variety of retailers. Be sure to use a reputable company that sells high-quality products. You can also make your own aromasticks by following the tutorial in the “Direct Inhalation Methods” video in this course.

Indirect inhalation methods

- Indirect inhalation with a diffuser is less intense than direct inhalation.
- Irritation or other undesired effects of diffused essential oils depends on room size, amount of essential oil, ventilation, and distance from diffuser.
- There are a number of variables that make it unadvisable to diffuse essential oils in public or shared spaces.
- Diffusion is safer and more effective with intermittent use. Visit the Tisserand Institute website to learn more: <https://tisserandinstitute.org/learn-more/diffusion-guidelines-2/>



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