

# ESSENTIAL OILS AND HERBS – BEWARE OF THEIR POTENTIAL HARM

Essential oils and herbal remedies are widely used and sold for many different reasons, from health benefits, to treatments, to scenting your room.

We have recently had a 1 year old patient who died from swallowing a small amount of camphor oil.

## Particular oils to be aware of: What are the potential dangers?

Essential oil	Uses	Risks/ Dangers
<b>Camphor:</b> (present in Vicks, tigerbalm, mothballs)	Colds, skin healing	Highly toxic especially if swallowed. Immediate symptoms, seizures, death especially in children
<b>Peppermint</b> (Menthol element), Wintergreen, eucalyptus, rosemary	Multiple uses	Can cause breathing to stop in young children (esp if have breathing problem). Menthol: severe jaundice in babies
<b>Bergamot, lemon, lime, orange angelica, grapefruit, ginger, cumin</b>	Multiple uses	Photosensitivity (skin reaction to the sun)
<b>Tea tree oil, Pennyroyal</b>	To get rid of fleas on pets	Tremors, weakness, vomiting, depression, damage to liver and kidneys, death

## Bottom line on essential oils

- Never swallow essential oils.
- Always store essential oils out of reach of children and pets
- Always dilute an essential oil with a carrier oil– consider a test patch first
- Use essential oils cautiously or avoid in pregnancy and breastfeeding, in children, with certain conditions (eg epilepsy, migraines). Always check with a healthcare provider



## Advice on herbal medicines

- They may interact with prescription medicines so consult a physician or pharmacist first.
- Buy dietary supplements and herbal medicines from reputable sources (reduce risk of containing contaminants or adulterants)
- If new symptoms develop whilst using these remedies, stop them and consult a physician.
- Pregnant, breastfeeding mothers, young children, and other vulnerable people should avoid using herbal medicines or dietary supplements (except folate and iron supplements).



### Further information

<https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/explore-healing-practices/aromatherapy/are-essential-oils-safe>

<http://www.healthguidance.org/entry/15772/1/The-Dangers-of-Herbal-Supplements.html>