

Allergens

Excerpts from "The Chemistry of Essential Oils Made Simple" by David Stewart

Allergies (Page 451, 9)

Occasionally, a person receiving essential oils claims to have had allergic reaction to them. Such claims are based on a faulty understanding of what constitutes an allergy. While some people occasionally react in an unpleasant manner to the application of an essential oil, such a reaction is never allergenic. Allergies tend to be permanent, often lasting a life-time, while essential oil reactions are temporary. In fact, they are actually therapeutic and indicate the initiation of a cleansing, healing process.

The Nature of Allergens (Page 461)

The original question we are addressing and have been leading up to here is whether or not one can have an allergic reaction to an essential oil. The question boils down to whether or not an essential oil can be an allergen.

As previously stated, almost all allergens are proteins and/or polypeptides. Both of these are built from molecules of amino acids. Amino acid molecules all contain nitrogen as an essential element. Protein and polypeptide molecules are quite large compared to essential oil molecules. In fact, they are typically 100 to 1,0000 times larger in both weight and size.

In a few cases, allergens can involve nitrogen-free molecules, including some heavier natural oils, but this is rare. Allergens without nitrogen are always composed of molecules that are heavier than those found in essential oils. The molecular weights of 99% of the compounds in aromatic oils range from 100 to 300 amu. They are also structured in compact shapes and sizes, usually involving one or more rings. Allergens that do not contain nitrogen include large chains of hydrocarbons, much longer than any found in essential oils.

The nature of allergens can be summarized as follows: (1) Allergens are almost always proteins or polypeptides which are large nitrogenous molecules. (2) In rare cases allergens contain no nitrogen, but they are always comprised by molecules that are heavier and larger than those found in essential oils. An example of the second type of allergen will be discussed a little later (viz. Poison ivy), but first let's answer the question we originally set out to do.

Are Essential Oils Allergens? (Page 462)

Aroma therapists of the British school often warn about "sensitizations" from using essential oils undiluted on the skin or taken orally. This is why they dilute their essential oils with 95%-98% neutral, fatty vegetable oils and why they oppose taking undiluted essential oils orally. They are alarmed by such practices as raindrop technique where many oils are applied neat (undiluted) to the bare feet and back. Some opponents of raindrop technique actually claim that allergic reactions to raindrop can lead to serious consequences, including anaphylactic shock and respiratory failure.

None of these allegations are true and no verifiable facts or studies are ever cited to support them. The research publication entitled, A Statistical Validation of Raindrop Technique, soundly refutes such allegations with data from thousands of raindrop sessions.

Back to the question: **Are essential oils potential allergens?** Consider the following facts:

1. Allergens are almost always composed of proteins or polypeptides, which are relatively large molecules. There are no proteins or polypeptides in essential oils. In fact, nitrogen-containing compounds are virtually non-existent in essential oils except in occasional trace amounts. (See Chapter Four).
2. Allergens are composed of large molecules. There are no large molecules in volatile or aromatic oils, otherwise they would be neither volatile nor aromatic. The relatively small size of essential oil molecules and their natural plant origins makes them easily metabolized and eliminated, within minutes or hours. This is not enough time for a sensitivity response to develop. It takes a large molecule that stays in the body well beyond it is welcome before sensitization can occur.
3. There has never been a documented instance of an antigen-antibody response (i.e. sensitization) to an essential oil. Essential oil antibodies have never been found or detected in anyone. Never. Unless sensitization occurs and antibodies are produced and stored in the body, there can be no allergic reaction.

The first two points provide an explanation (based on fact) of why essential oils do not and cannot cause allergies. The third point (based on fact) is proof that essential oils do not cause allergies. The fact behind point three being that a true allergy has never been observed, verified or diagnosed with respect to essential oils. There simply are no known records of such a phenomenon.

Therefore, we can state unequivocally that essential oils are not and cannot be allergens. There is no such thing as an essential oil allergy.

Sometimes people do have allergy-like reactions to essential oils, but these are not allergenic in nature. They are detox reactions. We will discuss that next.

Non-allergenic Reactions to Essential Oils

While allergenic reactions from pure therapeutic grade essential oils never happen, this might not be true for perfume, massage, or good grade oils, depending on what synthetic substances and fatty oils are used to alter and dilute them. However, even in cases of reactions to non-therapeutic grade oils, resultant reactions are not likely to be allergies.

To be an allergic reaction, there must be antibodies in the system of the person having the reaction, antibodies designed for that particular substance. There must also be a period of prior sensitization before an allergic reaction can occur. If a person has a reaction to an oil the first time they receive it, it cannot be an allergy because there was no prior exposure whereby sensitization and development of antibodies could have taken place. Such a reaction is non-allergenic.

Therapeutic grade essential oils are detoxifying to the body, which is a good thing. When the detoxification takes place at a rate greater than can be eliminated through our kidneys, colon, and respiration, then allergy-like symptoms can occur. Here is where aroma therapists of the British school make their mistake in interpreting allergy-like symptoms as allergies when, in fact, they are detox reactions. Allergic and detoxification reactions are quite different, even opposite in some ways.

According to data reported in A Statistical Validation of Raindrop Technique, the most frequently reported negative results of applying undiluted oils were a burning sensation on the skin, skin rashes, nausea, headaches, and tiredness (in that order). Among the outcomes of thousands of raindrop sessions included in the report, no negative experiences more severe than these five items was reported. Not one case of an allergic reaction was discovered by this study even though an honest effort was made to find and report such reactions if they existed.

In fact, none of the dire prognostications or potential sensitizations alleged by aroma therapists of the British school were seen in this study. This is true in spite of the fact that in gathering the data the research questionnaire was submitted to the antagonists of raindrop, soliciting their inputs and encouraging them to submit negative outcomes if they could document them.

In all the reports of negative outcomes with undiluted oils in that study, the experiences were temporary and interpreted as detox reactions, not allergies. Given enough time, accompanied by a cleansing regimen, detox reactions to oils will cease and the oils that had caused a reaction initially will no longer do so. This is an indication that the cleansing is complete and proof that the reaction was no allergy.

When a detox reaction happens, stop using the oils for a while or reduce their quantity in order to slow down the release of toxins. Don't do another raindrop procedure for a while. Focus on cleansing procedures with lots of water, fiber, and fresh foods, and, perhaps, some fasting, to flush out the toxins. Gradually use the oils again and eventually the toxins will be gone and you won't have unpleasant reactions to the oils any more. Many have had this experience. This proves that such reactions are not allergies, otherwise continued use of the oils would never result in cessation of the symptoms, but it would only increase the symptoms. So don't confuse a detox reaction with an allergic one. Detox reactions may be unpleasant, but are temporary and beneficial. They are the beginning of healing in a body full of toxins that would have eventually resulted in a serious chronic disease.

As a practical tip, persons with acidic conditions (low pH) in their bodies are more prone to detox reactions, such as skin rashes, than those with a more alkaline (and healthy) body chemistry. Taking a teaspoon of any alkalizing product, such as Alkalime (by Young Living), before and/or after a raindrop session can prevent such experiences even with toxic clients.

The toxins most often found in our bodies today are usually the result of "modern living" where we breathe polluted air, drink polluted water, and eat foods contaminated with pesticides, preservatives, herbicides, and synthetic hormones. We also bathe our bodies in synthetic compounds and petrochemicals through all the personal care products we use such as hand creams, mouthwashes, shampoos, perfumes, hair-care products, antiperspirants, after-shave lotions, toothpastes, and deodorants. Many common household cleaners are also sources of hazardous substances. Vaccines and prescription drugs are another source of toxins that can accumulate in our bodies.

We may not be able to eliminate all toxic substances from our living environments, but we can apply essential oils to help cleanse us from foreign materials as much as possible and to flush out what has been stored in our bodies from previous exposures. In this way we may be able to improve our health and extend our longevity.

In summary, we can state the following: There are no allergies to essential oils. Allergy-like reactions to pure therapeutic grade essential oils are actually detox reaction, which, if handled with care and common sense, are usually a good thing and may represent a healing process that leads to recovery from many ills and a ticket to longer, healthier living.