

## AROMATHERAPY AND YOUR MENSTRUAL CYCLE

### BEING IN CONTROL !!

#### Introduction

To run through this worksheet you'll need about ten to fifteen minutes of peace and quiet, and ideally, a red and a blue crayon or pen. If not, then a pencil. Start by writing down what you see as "your problem" in the box below:

My problem is:

#### How Can Aromatherapy Help?

Aromatherapy has an image problem!! Most people think of Aromatherapy as being a "nice gentle relaxing massage like they give at a beauty salon". *How could that help me?* In truth, it won't help you at all! Most beauty salons don't have the time for detailed individual consultations, and most only use pre-blended massage oils. Because these mixes have to be able to be safely used on most people, the essential oils are at a very low concentration in the massage oil. The treatment might feel nice, but will have no longer-term effect.

In order to get the desired *clinical* result, we take a holistic (*whole body*) approach to both you and your problem. We'll ask you about your medical history, and about how you **and** your body feel at various times during your menstrual cycle. Then we'll blend an oil mix that's just for you!!

We use some of this mix to "kick-start" your treatment with a massage, and give you a bottle to take with you to continue the treatment at home. It helps us if you can keep a detailed record of how you feel, and this worksheet includes menstrual charts and worked examples to help you to do this. If you can bring the charts with you on your next visit, then we can use this information to work with you and adjust your oil mix, so as to maximise the benefit. Don't worry if you can't keep the charts up to date – we can still help you by asking you questions!!



#### When Should I See You?

Aromatherapy treatment is most effective in the seven days before your period starts, so try to come and see us during this time. Your first session will last about an hour and a half as we'll need to review your medical history with you, assess you and agree a treatment plan, and then give you your first treatment. Subsequent sessions last for about an hour. We'll need to see you at least once a month for the first three months.

Used properly, aromatherapy oils are very powerful, and you should expect to see immediate results after your first treatment. By the end of the third month, you should have achieved your goal and be **IN CONTROL!!**

### **What's Next?**

Work your way through the rest of this worksheet. Try and plan your first appointment for a day when you're NOT going to be hurried and harassed.

If family commitments permit, try for an appointment time that is as late in the day as possible (our last appointment time is 7:00pm), so that you go home as relaxed as possible, and can get a calm night's sleep.

Call us to book your first appointment, and don't worry about giving us lots of notice as we'll do our best to fit in with you. When you come, don't forget to bring the worksheet with you.

Good Luck !!

### **What About PMS?**

Often wrongly referred to as PMT, doctors see the pre-menstrual syndrome as a *“group of physical and mental changes, which begin anything from two to fourteen days before menstruation, and which are relieved almost immediately your period starts.”*

Knowledge is king, and if you know how you are feeling, and why, then you will be better equipped to confront and control PMS. The physical and psychological symptoms listed below are all extremely common. Take a look at these symptoms, and make a tick against those that affect you.

#### **Physical Symptoms of PMS**

- Weight gain
- Swelling (abdomen, fingers, legs, ankles)
- Feeling of bloatedness
- Breast discomfort (enlargement, tenderness, heaviness, generalised 'lumpiness')
- Painful abdominal cramps
- Headaches
- Migraine attacks
- General muscular aches and pains or stiffness
- Changes to the vaginal mucus, or increased flow
- Low urine output
- Skin changes (blotches, acne, whiteheads, unexplained bruising, dry or greasy skin)
- Changes in appetite (either loss of appetite, or a desire to eat lots of fattening foods)
- Sleep changes (either sleeping poorly, or much more than usual)
- Clumsiness and increased proneness to accidents
- Diminished exercise tolerance (you get tired quickly when exercising)
- Painful eyes
- Nasal stuffiness
- Allergic reactions
- If asthmatic or epileptic, an increased tendency to attacks
- Nausea

### Psychological Symptoms of PMS

- Tension
- Irritability
- Depression, including lack of confidence and notions of unworthiness
- Lethargy
- Reduced power of concentration
- Poor memory
- Tendency to aggressiveness and/or physical violence
- Poor emotional control
- Illogical emotional reactions
- Lowered efficiency, especially for solving mental problems
- Low or absent sex drive
- Very strong urges to overeat, unrelated to appetite
- Tendency to drink too much alcohol
- Increased tendency to take medicine, tablets, etc.

### What About During My Period?

You may have little or no sign of PMS, but still have a painful or difficult period, with an irregular often-heavy flow, and severe abdominal cramps.

Aromatherapy oils can still be very effective, and in this instance we'll give you two bottles for home use – one to use in the three days before your period starts, and the second to use during your period. Over a few months we'll work with you to adjust the blends to maximise the benefits to you.

### Irregular Periods?

If your periods vary then make an appointment to come and see us when you think you're just after the middle of your cycle.

We'll start work with an oil mix that will encourage a regular cycle to develop. It can take at least three months to get positive results, and you should be prepared to continue treatment for about a year. In severe cases we'll need to work with your GP to achieve a result.

### What About The Menopause?

The average age for the onset of the menopause is 51. If you think that your menstrual cycle is changing because of the menopause, then ask for a copy of our worksheet on the menopause. You should find this helpful.

### What If I Just Feel Depressed?

If you feel that you might be suffering from depression, it's important that you seek professional help and advice from your GP. Aromatherapy treatment is a very effective part of a treatment plan for depression, particularly when using St Johns Wort (*Hypericum*) as a constituent of the treatment blend. Ask for our worksheet on depression as this will help you!!



**Using The Menstrual Charts**

A menstrual chart is an easy way of showing your menstrual cycle. At its simplest, you can just use it to record which days were period days. You can also build it up to make a complete picture of what’s happening to you, and to your body.

Think back to “*your problem*”, and also to the PMS symptoms. Did you find your problem there, or elsewhere in these notes? How many PMS symptoms did you tick? Could you have a go at transferring your experience onto a menstrual chart?

We use a shorthand notation to display symptoms on a menstrual chart. The more common abbreviations are displayed below. If you have other symptoms then there’s space for you to make up a code letter and add it to the list.

<b>P</b>	<b>Period Days</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>Ovulation</b>
<b>W↑</b>	Weight Gain	<b>I</b>	Irritability / Tension
<b>B</b>	Tender Breasts	<b>D</b>	Depression
<b>S</b>	Swelling / Bloating	<b>V</b>	Violent Tendencies
<b>U↓</b>	Urine Less Than Usual	<b>L</b>	Lethargy
<b>U↑</b>	Urine More Than Usual	<b>C</b>	Cravings for Food/Drink
<b>H</b>	Headaches / Migraines		
<b>A</b>	Abdominal Cramps		

**Examples**

These are examples of completed menstrual charts. This should help you to understand how to fill in your own chart. Don’t worry if you don’t understand how to do this – we’ll help you with it!!

Date	January	February
1		U↓
2		U↓
3		U↓WL
4	U↓	U↓WLC
5	U↓WL	U↓WLB
6	U↓WL	U↓WLBA
7	U↓WLB	PU↑A
8	U↓WLB	PU↑A
9	U↓WLBHA	P
10	PU↑A	P
11	PU↑A	P
12	P	
13	P	
14	P	
15		

This is someone on a regular 28-day cycle who suffers mainly from the physical effects of PMS

The low urine output, weight gain, lethargy and tender breasts all occur during the pre-menstrual phase.

There is a marked increase in urine output once the period has started.

Here's another chart example that should help you to understand how to build *your* chart:

Date	January	February	March
1			D
2	D		D
3	D		U↓WAIV
4	DI		U↓WAIV
5	U↓WAIV	D	PU↑AIV
6	U↓WAIV	D	PU↑AIV
7	PU↑AIV	D	PIV
8	PU↑AIV	DL	PIV
9	PIV	U↓WAIV	P
10	PIV	U↓WAIV	
11	P	U↓WAIV	
12	P	PU↑AIV	
13		PU↑AIV	
14		PIV	
15		PIV	
16		P	
17		P	
18			

This is someone on an Irregular cycle and who mainly experiences psychological symptoms.

Initial depression gives way to mood swings and a tendency to violence.

With some people this can lead to a cycle of mood swings and depression which can be very hard to break

**How To Build Your Menstrual Chart**

If you've kept a diary with your period dates, then start off by transferring those dates onto the chart. If you can remember how you felt before, during and after your last period, then add this to the chart as well.

Remember to take the chart with you to your Aromatherapy appointment.

When you're using the chart, try to record **all** of your symptoms throughout each month, rather than just your symptoms in the run up to and during your period. If you can feel when ovulation takes place, or experience any changes in the vaginal mucus, or get thrush or cystitis or any other illness or infection, then mark this on the chart as well.

Be honest with yourself, and try to keep the chart going for at least three consecutive months - longer if possible. You can use the chart to record the effects of Aromatherapy treatment, either by us, or self-administered at home.

**At last, you're starting to be *in control* yourself!**



### Using A Symptom Score Chart

The other kind of chart which will help you is the *Symptom Score Chart* which you can use to indicate the severity of your symptoms. To use this, count Day 1 as the day on which your period starts. In the first example above, Day 1 would have been January 10th, and the period finished on Day 5, or January 14th. The next symptoms were on Day 23, or February 1st, and they finished on Day 2 of the next cycle, which was on February 8th.

The completed symptom score chart for January that relates to the first menstrual chart above is as follows:

Symptom	Day Of Cycle		Severity Of Symptoms
	(Start)	(Finish)	
Weight Gain	25	28	✓✓
Breast Discomfort	27	28	✓✓✓
Headaches	28	28	✓
Low Urine Output	23	28	✓✓
Abdominal Cramps	27	1	✓✓✓
Lethargy / Tiredness	24	28	✓✓

The number of ticks indicate the severity of the symptoms - the more ticks, the worse it is! There is space on these chart to record your own individual symptoms if they are not already listed there. Use one chart each month. There's four blank symptom score charts in this pack.

The symptom score chart that relates to the second menstrual chart, in this case for the 36 day cycle in February, is as follows:

Symptom	Day Of Cycle		Severity Of Symptoms
	(Start)	(Finish)	
Weight Gain	34	36	✓
Low Urine Output	34	36	✓
Abdominal Cramps	34	36	✓✓
Depression	30	33	✓✓✓✓
Lethargy / Tiredness	33	33	✓
Irritability	34	2	✓✓✓✓
Violent Tendencies	34	2	✓✓

Its not essential to complete a symptom score chart, and if you find it hard work, then don't bother!! Another way of recording the severity of the problem is just to repeat the symbol (e.g: **BBB** for very tender breasts) on the menstrual chart. Take the charts with you if you see your GP discuss your menstrual cycle, as it will help them to help you! Remember that the more you know about your cycle and how it affects you, the more **you** are *in control* !

**Always go to your doctor if you suffer from any of the following:**

**Persistent breast lump(s), that is, an area or lump of tense breast tissue that remains with you constantly and does not come and go with your menstrual phases; migraine or any other troublesome headaches that continue to incapacitate you; a copious smelly vaginal discharge before, during or after your period; severe depression not relived by pre-menstrual remedies; or anything else that really bothers you which you would like to have sorted out.**

**Which Aromatherapy Oils Do We Use?**

Essential oils such as Clary Sage, Geranium, Roman Camomile, Lavender, Neroli and Rose Otto, blended into a carrier oil such as Sweet Almond or Grapeseed and applied by body massage, are the usual form of treatment. Where relevant, we may use other oils, such as Juniperberry, and we might also suggest the use of alternative carrier oils, such as Evening Primrose Oil, for the massage.

We'll also usually give you one or two small bottles of blended oils to take home, together with instructions for their use. The delight of a personal blend of aromatic oils, and the relaxing effects of body massage, are all part of the successful Aromatherapy treatment. The positive results of your Aromatherapy treatment can be recorded on your Menstrual Charts.

**Chiltern Aromatherapy**

Chiltern Aromatherapy is part of Wycombe Chilterns Complementary Therapy, a registered charity that aims to promote the use of complementary therapies. We're non profit-making and any excess of income over expenditure is used to provide free of charge or reduced rate treatments to patients who cannot afford private practice fees. To make an appointment for an Aromatherapy treatment, please call *Chiltern Aromatherapy* on 01494-816651. Our last evening appointment is 6:00pm, and Saturday morning appointments from 9:00am to 12 noon are also available upon request.