



Herbal Steam Inhalation

Herbal steams are used to deliver the medicinal qualities of herbs and essential oils directly to the respiratory tract. They hydrate, warm and decongest the mucus membranes of the nose, sinuses and throat. They can be used to help fight infections in these areas as well as in the lungs. Sometimes these are also helpful with calming a cough or calming the mind.

Use up to 10 drops **total** of any one or combination of essential oils

- *Eucalyptus*-general congestion, sinus infections
- *Thyme*-coughs, infections- antiviral
- *Lavender*-calming and soothing
- *Hyssop*-coughs, infections
- *Bitter orange*-antibacterial, sedating
- *Chamomile*-coughs, colds, calming

Cautions

1. Do not use essential oils if you have known allergies to the essential oils or the plants from which they are derived.
2. Do not use essential oils internally without physician supervision.
3. Do not use essential oils internally if you have kidney disease.
4. Use essential oils with caution with people with epilepsy and with those who are sensitive to intense smells.
5. Do not use essential oils internally in pregnancy.
6. Prolonged inhalation of essential oils (several consecutive hours) of essential oils may cause headache, vertigo, nausea, lethargy, or double vision

Essential Oils for Steam Inhalations:

EUCALYPTUS

THYME

BITTER ORANGE

LAVENDER

@NORTHWESTINTEGRATIVEMEDICINE

STEAM INHALATION BASICS

1. Heat up water
(stove/microwave, bath) ☒
2. Add 5-10 drops of essential oil(s) ☐
3. Remove from heat
don't burn yourself! ☐
4. Inhale the steam for at least
3-5 minutes ☐
5. Repeat up to 3 times per day ☐



TL/DR- Too Long/ Didn't Read:

You are using steam and heat to help carry the medicine to the parts of you that are sick.

The biggest risk is that you could burn yourself or your child so you should use caution and supervise your child.

You should not drink/eat essential oils unless specifically directed by your provider to do so.

Resources

- Bove, Mary. Encyclopedia of Natural Healing for Children and Infants, 2nd Ed. 2001. McGraw-Hill
- Tisserand, Robert. Essential Oil Safety. 1995. Churchill Livingstone Press.



Instructions for Adults & Teenagers

Option 1-Tent method

Boil 2-3 cups of water and **remove from heat**. Add 5-10 drops of essential oil (see suggested oils below). Position yourself so that your head is above the container of water, no closer than 9 inches. Drape a towel over your head and the container, forming a tent. Inhale the vapor with slow deep breaths for 5-10 minutes.

Option 2-Mug method

Fill a mug ½ full of boiling water. Add 3-5 drops of essential oils. Use hands to form a cup over nose and mug to enclose vapors. Inhale vapors for 3-5 minutes.

Option 3-Bath method

Draw a hot bath, keep door closed to keep the steam in. Add 10-15 drops of essential oil to Epsom salts, mix briefly and then add to bath after you are in the tub. Relax in tub for 15-30 minutes taking slow, full deep breaths.

Option 4-Modified bath method

Boil water, **remove from heat** and add essential oils to the pot as in option 1. Draw a hot bath as in *Option 3*. Carefully bring the pot or bowl of water into the bathroom and set by the bath. Relax in the tub for 15-30 minutes. Take slow deep breaths.

Option 5-Steam Vaporizer method

A steam vaporizer (not humidifier) can also be used instead of the pot of water. *This can also be great option for children.* Start with 5-10 drops of your essential oil in the machine's well. Position your head or the child so their head is close (but no closer than 18 inches) to the steam. Another option is to run the vaporizer in the child's room as they sleep.

Instructions for Children

1. **Use extreme caution with hot water to avoid burning the child.**
2. Run a hot shower so the bathroom fills with steam.
3. While the bathroom is steaming, boil a pot of water (approx. 2 quarts).
4. Once the water has come to a boil, turn off the stove.
5. Bring the pot of boiling water, oils you are using, and a bath towel into the bathroom.
6. Close the door to keep the steam in the bathroom.
7. Keep the shower running to maintain the steam.
8. Add up to 10 drops of essential oil(s) (see suggestions below) to the pot of water.
9. Sit in the room with the child for 10-15 minutes, with the child on your lap or in a chair. Consider having toys or books on hand to help distract the child if he/she becomes restless.
10. Do this treatment 2-3 times per day or as prescribed by your doctor.

Children Older Than 4 Years Old

Make a steam tent with older children: position the child no closer than 18 inches from the pot of water or vaporizer and cover their head and pot (or vaporizer) with a towel. Do not use this technique with children under 4 years of age due to the increased risk of burns.

Additional Options to help break up mucus

While in the steamed room, lay the child on their stomach across your lap with their head slightly lower than trunk. With your hands cupped, carefully but firmly pat the upper part of the child's back using alternating hands. This will help to break up the mucus and promote drainage.