Aromatherapy or Essential Oil therapy, is a complementary and alternative medicine designed for the treatment or prevention of diseases with the use of essential oils and other aromatic plant compounds. Aromatherapy - the 'Treatment through Fragrance', can be defined as the art and science of utilizing naturally extracted aromatic essences from plants to balance, harmonize and promote the health of body, mind and spirit. The use of essential oil brings tremendous physical and mental benefits to the patients. The essential oils stimulate the sense of smell and can have a positive effect on the body. The inhaled aroma from these essential oils is widely believed to stimulate brain functioning and many other functions in human physiology. They can support the immune system, reduce pain and inflammation, heal the skin and kills microbes such as bacteria, viruses and fungi.

The essential oils used in aromatherapy are the naturally extracted aromatic essence from herbs, flowers, trees, stem, leaves, flowers, roots, spices or fruit. The most common essential oils of this kind are eucalyptus oil, rose, lemon balm, tee tree oil, jasmine, almond oil and chamomile etc. These natural oils have a different composition compared to other herbal products and consist of tiny aromatic molecules that are readily be absorbed through the skin or inhaled, enter the bloodstream and are carried around the body where they can deliver their beneficial healing powers.

Aromatherapists, professionals who specialize in the practice of Aromatherapy, provide treatment to different types of illnesses, and improve a patient's health and sense of well being with the use of aromatic oils. They mix and blend the therapeutic essential oils or plant extracts with other oils to make them suitable for massage. They provide holistic medicinal treatment to the patients through inhalation of natural oils or topical application, massage, water immersion etc.

Aromatherapy can be used in many different ways to treat a wide range of physical and emotional problems. It can be used for a growing variety of applications, including mood enhancement, cognitive function such as memory and concentration, energy enhancement, sleep improvement and numerous physiological applications. Treatment methods in Aromatherapy comprise making patients consume essential oil orally, aromatic baths techniques like relaxation, massage, vaporization, detoxification etc. Inhaling the appropriate fragrance can reduce stress, lift depression, hasten a good night's sleep, soothe your soul, or give you more energy. Essential oils can also be absorbed through the skin through massage with the help of carrier oils. Their fine molecular structure allows them to reach the bloodstream within minutes, and create the desired healing effect.

How to Become an Aromatherapist

Studying aromatherapy is a fun and challenging experience, combining core sciences with product formulation and scent blending. Only few Indian institutes are offering Aromatherapy courses and one can pursue certificate, diploma, degree and postgraduate diploma / degree courses through regular or distance mode. Minimum eligibility criteria for short term and degree courses is 10+2 and graduation for post graduate course. Depending on the type of the course, the duration may vary from 1 week to 3 years.

Indian Institute of Aromatheraphy and Cosmetology (Kolkata), Institute of Alternative Medicines Kolkata (IAMK), Science and Art Academy of Hair & Beauty Culture (Chennai), CV International Academy of Beauty Mumbai, International School of Aesthetics and Spa (Pune), The Global Institute of Aromatherapy (Kolkata) are some of the reputed institutes offering courses in Aromatheraphy. Indian Board of Alternative Medicines (Kolkata) offer 2 years Bachelor degree and 1year Diploma course in Aromatheraphy through its distance mode.

Several beauty care massage therapy centers such as Eves Beauty Parlour and Academy, Fragrance & Flavour Development Centre (FFDC), Farita Beauty Parlour and International School, Ananda Spa Institute also offer Aromatheraphy courses. Some centers conduct workshops in Aromatherapy.

Course Area : Aromatherapy course provides basic knowledge of Aromatherapy treatments for many problems, the art of extraction of essential oils, use of essential oils and carrier's oils on different skin types, their properties, blending, methods of application etc. The course also deals with the basics of physiology, pathology, anatomy, practice management, occupational safety and health. By studying Aromatherapy courses, one will get a clear idea about the selection, blending as well as the proper use of essential oils to heal the body, mind and spirit.

Skills required for Aromatherapists

Aromatherapists should possess the following personal attributes and abilities:

- A tolerant and calm manner
- A caring approach
- Empathy to listen to the needs of patients
- Interest to help others to achieve positive change in their lives
- Ability to inspire clients confidence and trust
- Knowledge in botany and the study of plants
- Excellent communication and listening skills
- Good organizational skills
- Excellent record keeping skills
- An understanding of the limit of one’s own medical abilities
- Ability to recognize when to refer clients to a qualified medical doctor
- Commercial awareness and business skills for self-employed persons

Nature of Work and Job Prospects of Aromatherapists

The main aim of an Aromatherapist, is to ease the patient's symptoms, rather than to cure them. The major duties and responsibilities of an Aromatherapist would involve:

- Explaining the treatment to the patient
- Taking details of the patient’s medical history, diet and lifestyle
- Selecting appropriate oils for treatment and blending the oils accordingly for massaging, bathing or inhaling, and applying them fully or partially on the patient.
- Keeping record of treatments and the blends of oils used
- Supplying blended oils and instructions for clients to use at home
- Referring patients to other health practitioners if and when necessary

Alternative medical clinics offering treatment like Reiki, Acupuncture and various other types of massages, are the largest employers of Aromatherapists. Most Aromatherapists work with spa, beauty centers, hospitals, nursing homes, chiropractors offices, massage clinics, hotels, resorts, cruise ships etc.

Apart from working with alternative clinics, Aromatherapists can set up their own private practice at home, initially by treating their friends and family members. They can build up their network of clients by promoting their business through advertising in media and social websites. Some specialists travel to visit their patients in their own homes, in hospitals or hospices. Those with profound knowledge in therapeutic uses of essential oils can set up essential oil production manufacturing business, web retail stores, therapeutic product lines and consultation services.

Besides these, other potential career opportunities in the field of Aromatherapy include:
- Aromatherapeutic counselor
- Essential oil retailer
- Essential oil store manager
- Custom aromatherapy blender for an Aromatherapy bar
- Community holistic health clinic participator
- Aromatherapy writer for journals, magazines or book author
- Massage therapists
- Aromatherapy teacher at massage school

Salary of Aromatherapists

The salary of Aromatherapists varies depending on location, type of workplace and the number of patients treated. An experienced Aromatherapist can earn between Rs.20,000 - Rs 35,000 per month. As most Aromatherapists are usually self-employed they can choose their own working hours. An appointment with these professionals, usually lasts between 40 minutes to 1 1/2 hours and one can charge an hourly rate between Rs. 300 to Rs. 500 per session. Experienced practitioners can earn nearly Rs.1 lakh per month.

Aromatherapy Institutes in India

For the details of colleges/ insitututes conducting Aromatherapy Courses, click on the following links.

- Aromatherapy Training
- Bachelor of Aromatherapy (Correspondence/ Distance Education)
- Bachelor of Aromatherapy
- Basic Aromatherapy Course
- Certificate Course in Aromatherapy
- Diploma in Aromatherapy (Correspondence/ Distance Education)
- Diploma in Aromatherapy
- Post Graduate Diploma in Aromatherapy