


COOTIE CRUSHER

Essential Oils

Perfume the Lice Away



With fears surrounding the toxic chemical insecticides in most lice shampoos, along with the emergence of super lice that are resistant to active ingredients like Permethrin, Pyrethrins, and Pyrethroids, many people are seeking alternative treatments that are natural and non-toxic when lice attack their families and invade their homes. Oils are an excellent option to explore.

You may already know that natural oils like olive oil and coconut oil can be used, but what you might not realize is that adding essential oils to your regimen can help to make treatments more effective. They also smell great, especially when compared to the acrid, chemical smell of lice shampoos containing insecticides.

Before you decide which essential oils you want to use, you first need to understand why they work, as well as how to use them appropriately. Here are a few things everyone should know about using essential oils to kill lice.

Why Use Essential Oils?

Several essential oils have proven effective when treating lice, including lavender, rosemary, peppermint, eucalyptus, and especially tea tree oil, among others. Why do they work?

Essential oils are extracted and distilled from plants. These oils boast properties that act as natural insecticides. In some cases, such as when super lice are present, they may work even better than their chemical counterparts.

For example, a 2012 study published by the NCBI (National Center for Biotechnology Information) on the effects of tea tree oil and nerolidol (found in several essential oils, including lavender) on several different lice and louse eggs found that the application of a 1% concentration of tea tree oil resulted in 100% mortality of lice just 30 minutes after treatment. While nerolidol was not as effective at killing lice, it proved more effective at killing nits, with 50% of eggs failing to hatch within 4 days of treatment.

As you may have guessed, the use of tea tree and lavender oils in combination to treat head lice is ideal, not only because of efficacy, but also because the combination smells a lot nicer than chemical treatments.

The disclaimer here is that some essential oils should be used with caution when treating small children, say under the age six. If you want to use such treatment options, consult with a qualified naturopathic physician to receive advice, instruction, and products designed to ensure the best results for any patient.

Mixed with Water

There are several ways to dilute essential oils in order to apply them to the hair and scalp. One option is to mix the oils with water in a spray bottle for easy application. The ratio should be 15-20 drops of oil for every 2 cups of water.

This mixture should be applied every 30-60 minutes for several days, followed by rubbing the mixture into the scalp. Don't forget that nitpicking is a crucial element of success when using any lice treatment, and it should be done at least daily. Look for information on wet combing if you've never done it before.



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Mixed with Oil

Essential oils may be more effective when paired with an oil base, as opposed to water, simply because the use of oils alone could better serve to suffocate lice, even as the essential oils act in an insecticidal capacity.

A few drops of oil can be added to 2-3 tablespoons of olive, coconut, or other natural oils and applied to the scalp and hair. It should be left on for 30-60 minutes and then rinsed with warm water. Repeat this treatment at least twice daily.

Mixed with Water

Regular shampoo and/or conditioner can become a lice treatment with the addition of essential oils, and here you can add a mixture of 3 tablespoons olive or coconut oil, 1 teaspoon tea tree oil and 1/2 teaspoon lavender, rosemary, or eucalyptus oil to your shampoo bottle. Shampoo should be massaged into the hair and scalp and left on for 30-60 minutes before rinsing.

For an even simpler solution, look for tea tree oil shampoos. Pay careful attention when using essential oils as some can cause dryness or skin irritation. If this occurs, you may need to try different oils or swap them out intermittently. Again, speak with a qualified naturopathic physician for help finding the combination that works best for you.