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Scents of the Season

AROMATHERAPY CAN BOOST ENERGY, HELP YOU RELAX AND EASE PAIN.

Some smells that come with the holidays lift spirits by stirring happy memories. Used in aromatherapy, those scents can improve your well-being.

Certain scents trigger a reaction in the nervous system that leads to the release of feel-good hormones like dopamine, says Julie Chen, MD, an integrative medicine physician in San Jose, Calif. Here are a few holiday scents science says may help.

Peppermint gives candy canes their flavor, and the scent may boost energy and ease hunger. A study in the *North American Journal of Psychology* found people experienced 20 percent less fatigue and anxiety when they smelled peppermint in various driving scenarios. The same researchers found that inhaling peppermint curbs appetite.

Try it. Place a few drops of peppermint essential oil on a cotton ball (certain undiluted essential oils can irritate skin) and stash it in a zip-top bag to smell throughout the day.

Ginger is not just for gingerbread; it may relieve pain. A 2008 study in *Complementary*

Therapies in Medicine showed that people with moderate to severe knee pain reported less pain and stiffness after they were massaged with a ginger-and-orange oil than an unscented one.

Try it. Mix 10 to 15 drops of ginger essential oil with 1 ounce of jojoba or almond oil; massage directly on the skin.

Pine and juniper – the scent of a Christmas tree – may relieve stress and promote relaxation, according to research published in the *International Journal of Biomedical Research*.

Try it. Blend two to 12 drops of pine or juniper essential oil in a tablespoon of vegetable oil, and add it to a bath. –SHARON LIAO

