

Women's Health

Scents of Calm

How aromatherapy is helping women during childbirth

By Donna Gregory Burch
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Essential oils are all the rage now as people look for more natural ways to clean and fragrance their homes.

But they're also popping up in some unexpected places. At St. Francis Medical Center's New Life Center, expecting moms are using aromatherapy during their labor and delivery.

The center began using Elequil aromatabs in March after nurses learned about how aromatherapy can benefit patients in clinical settings during a conference. Since then, the center has tripled its monthly order of Elequil's lavender and orange/peppermint aromatabs.

"When we looked at the evidence, what we found was aromatherapy with essential oils was shown to reduce anxiety, ease depression, increase energy levels, increase healing and promote relaxation," said Beth Lavelly, St. Francis' administrative director of women's services. "You can even find links in the literature about it lowering blood pressure and decreasing pain."

A 2012 Iranian study found that massages using lavender essential oil



Ash Daniel/Chesterfield Observer

Pam Powell, a labor and delivery nurse, works with fellow nurse Colleen Ross in the New Life Center at St. Francis Medical Center, which is using aromatherapy to help expecting moms relax.

decreased the pain and duration of the first and second stages of labor. And a 2012 Clayton State University study concluded that peppermint essential oil was

effective at reducing nausea in women who had undergone C-sections.

"Labor and delivery is an ideal department to have an aromatherapy initiative

in place," said Melissa J. Vibberts, senior product manager of marketing with Beekley Medical, Elequil's distributor. "Mothers-to-be may be anxious, espe-



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cially first-time mothers, ones that require bed rest or those having complications.”

According to registered nurse Lisa Townsend, some moms-to-be bring their essential oil diffusers from home to use while giving birth.

But Elequil's aromatabs are a simple, convenient way to use aromatherapy during labor and delivery because they don't require monitoring or refilling like diffusers. The aromatabs are essentially a rectangular sticker containing 100 percent essential oils that can be placed on the patient's gown. Patients can control the strength of the scent by opening the tab partially or fully. There are no bottles to manage, eliminating over-pouring of oils, spillage and staining of clothing. The scent lasts for more than eight hours, but the aromatab can be removed at any time.

Lavender has been the most popular scent at the New Life Center.

“It brings down the level of stress for everyone,” Townsend said. “It's noninvasive, it doesn't hurt, it's not a stick, it's hands-off. It just sort of takes the edge off and brings your stress levels down a couple of notches.”

A less stressed mom usually translates into a less stressed newborn upon delivery.

After giving birth, the center uses the lavender aromatabs to help improve moms' sleep and to help them relax while

nursing.

The orange/peppermint aromatabs help quell nausea, especially in women who have delivered via C-section. They can also be used during the final minutes of labor when moms-to-be need an extra push of energy to deliver their babies.

“I suspect that the use of this is on the rise,” Lavelly said. “It wouldn't surprise me at all if we just keep increasing the amount that we order. If the patients are having a positive experience, then it's worth it.”



Pink Planner

A listing of upcoming breast cancer awareness events in Chesterfield – and beyond.

Breast cancer support group 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month 6-7:30 p.m.

Bon Secours Watkins Centre –
VA Breast Center
601 Watkins Centre Parkway, Suite 200.
Kathy Childers, 893-8623, bonsecours.com

Breast cancer survivors support group Weekly on Wednesday 6:30-8 p.m.

The Hawthorne Resource Center at
Thomas Johns Cancer Hospital at
Johnston-Willis,
1401 Johnston-Willis Drive.
Robin Yoder, 330-2136,
hawthornecancerfoundation.org

Pink for a Purpose Thursday, Oct. 13 5-9 p.m.

Short Pump Town Center,
11800 W. Broad St., Richmond.
Hear from health experts about women's
health and breast cancer education,
enjoy wine tastings and appetizers along
with a special tribute to breast cancer
fighters and survivors. Registration
required. \$25. 287-7508, bsvaf.org/
pinkforapurpose

Total Breast Health: Expert Dialogue Across the Continuum of Care

Thursday, Oct. 13
5 p.m. registration, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
presentation
Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden,
1800 Lakeside Ave., Richmond.
Join VCU Massey Cancer Center's
panel of experts as they review real-world
examples and answer your questions
about the continuum of breast cancer
care, including advances in screening,
treatment, survivorship and more. Free.
828-2357, vbfc.org/calendar

15th Annual Making Strides of Richmond Sunday, Oct. 16

Noon registration, 1:30 p.m. walk
Virginia War Memorial,
621 S. Belvidere St., Richmond.
This 5K (3.1 miles) will raise funds
for breast cancer research, education
and patient services. No fees,
donations welcome. 527-3705,
RichmondVAstrides@ cancer.org

5th Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Open House Tuesday, Oct. 18 6-8 p.m.

Courtyard by Marriott,
2001 W. Hundred Road.
A family-friendly night of games, prizes
and community support.
285-1200, vbfc.org/calendar

Pink Tie Gala

Saturday, Oct. 22
7:30 p.m.-12:30 a.m.

Greater Richmond Convention Center
Ballroom, 403 N. 3rd St., Richmond.
Enjoy a Roaring '20s-themed night of food
and beverages, live music, dancing, silent
auctions and The Celebration of Life Dance
Team, and raise funds for breast cancer
awareness, grant programs, survivor
support, education and research in the
community. \$100.
pinktiegala.org

9th Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Event

Thursday, Oct. 27
6-8 p.m.

His or Hers Salon & Spa,
6521 Lake Harbour Drive.
Enjoy complimentary services, makeup
and skin care consultations, hors
d'oeuvres, bake sale and raffle drawings.
\$5 donation benefits breast cancer
awareness. 639-2880, hisorherssalon.com



9th Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Event

Thursday, October 27th
6pm to 8pm

- \$5 donation at the door
- The first 25 people to enter receive a FREE gift!
- Complimentary Services
- Makeup and Skin Care Consultations
- Raffle Drawings
- Bake Sale
- Hors d'oeuvres

All proceeds donated to
Breast Cancer Awareness



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