



WESTERN NEUROPATHY ASSOCIATION

Celebrating our 23rd Year!

Neuropathy Hope

Hope through caring, support, research, education, and empowerment

A newsletter for members of Western Neuropathy Association (WNA)

September 2021
Issue 08
Volume 19

Turning Tarantula
Venom Into Pain Relief

September Support
Group Schedule

Editor's Note With
Massage Oil Recipe

Letters To The Editor

Sleeping 7 Hours a
Night – Why and How

Questions to Ask Your
Doctor

What To Do If You Fall

Can Essential Oils Treat
Neuropathy?

2021 Research Grant
for Pain Relief



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WESTERN
NEUROPATHY ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 276567
Sacramento, CA 95827-6567
888-556-3356
admin@WNAinfo.org
www.WNAinfo.org

TURNING TARANTULA VENOM INTO PAIN RELIEF

University of California, July 22, 2021, Lisa Howard, UC Davis.

https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/turning-tarantula-venom-pain-relief?utm_source=fiat-lux

Summarized by Darrell O’Sullivan, WNA Treasurer

Researchers at the University of California, Davis are developing a new type of pain medication from an unusual source — tarantula venom. The project is part of the National Institute of Health (NIH) Initiative aimed at ending opioid addiction and creating non-addictive therapies to treat pain. A 20-person team is using computational biology to turn a poisonous peptide into one that can relieve pain. Peptides are smaller versions of proteins. Spiders and scorpions have millions of years of evolution optimizing peptides, which are poisons in their venom.

Approximate 11 million in the U.S. are affected by pain that lasts three months or longer and restricts significant activity, like being unable to work outside the home, go to school or do household chores. For strong pain, drugs like ibuprofen or aspirin are just not strong enough. Opioids are strong enough, but they have the problem of tolerance development and addiction. To create a nonaddictive but strong pain medication, the researchers are focused on pain signals traveling on sensory neurons. To stop these signals, they have targeted a particular type of protein “channel” found on the cell membranes of neurons and muscles. These channels, called voltage-gated sodium channels, play a crucial role in generating signals to nerves and muscles. That’s where the tarantula venom comes in. A peptide found in the venom of the Peruvian green velvet tarantula blocks a sodium channel preventing it from transmitting signals, including those for pain. This peptide inhibitor might be as effective as an opioid, but not addictive. The challenge with the protein in the tarantula venom is that it doesn’t just block one channel in the sensory nerves. In its natural form, the peptide blocks multiple channels, including those in the muscles and the brain, meaning that it could cause terrible side effects.

To solve this problem, the researchers are trying to engineer — modify — the toxin in the venom to block pain signals but not create unwanted side effects. To do this, they are using a computer program developed by the University of Washington called Rosetta. The complex modeling software lets the team create many different iterations of the tarantula peptide, which they can then synthesize and test in the lab. This has allowed the researchers to develop peptides as effective as morphine, but without the side effects. The potential therapeutic candidates will need to be tested in animals, and if found safe, carefully tested in humans. The researchers estimate any new medication is at least five years away.

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Please contact
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to find out about the
topic/speaker for the
upcoming meeting.

Bev Anderson
Editor

Katherine Stenzel
Acting Editor

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WNA SEPTEMBER SUPPORT GROUP SCHEDULE

This month we have an in-person meeting in Houston on September 18 with the other meetings held via Zoom. Everyone is welcome to join any virtual support group meeting via telephone, smartphone, tablet or computer. We urge you to take this opportunity to talk with other people that know about and experience neuropathy.

Meetings listed as held via Zoom also have access for telephones. Email the Group Leader requesting the meeting information and providing your name, mailing address, telephone number and email address. Instructions will be sent for connecting to the meeting via computer/tablet, smartphone or telephone.

Note that Zoom meeting participation is not limited to the physical location in the name. Anyone from any city is welcome to attend, listen and/or share.

- **September 11 (Saturday)** 11:00am – 1:00pm PDT/ 1:00pm – 3:00pm CDT
Houston, TX Neuropathy Support Group via Zoom
Email Katherine Stenzel at klstenzel@hotmail.com
- **September 15 (Wednesday)** 10:30am – 11:30am PDT/12:30pm – 1:30pm CDT
Sign-in opens at 10:00am PDT/12:00pm CDT
Monterey, CA Neuropathy Support Group via Zoom
Email Bill Donovan, MD at wbdpad@cal.berkeley.edu
- **September 18 (Saturday)** 1:00pm CDT – 3:00pm CDT
Houston, TX Neuropathy Support Group Quarterly In-Person Meeting
Memorial Drive United Methodist Church
12955 Memorial Drive, Houston, TX 77079
Room DS100, enter at back (south) of building Email Katherine Stenzel at klstenzel@hotmail.com
- **September 25 (Saturday)** 11:00am – 1:00pm PDT/ 1:00pm – 3:00pm CDT
Houston, TX Monthly Open Discussion on Neuropathy via Zoom
Email Katherine Stenzel at klstenzel@hotmail.com

Support groups are not meeting in person unless a leader notifies the group that they are. If in doubt, call your leader.

CALIFORNIA

Auburn

Sharlene McCord (530) 878-8392
Kathy Clemens (916) 580-9449

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Joy Rotz (510) 842-8440

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Elk Grove

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admin@WNAinfo.org

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888-556-3356
admin@WNAinfo.org

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Grass Valley

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admin@WNAinfo.org

Merced

Larry Frice (209) 358-2045

Modesto

Harkaman Ghag (209) 541-5404

Monterey

Dr. William Donovan (831) 625-3407
wbdpad@gmail.com

Napa

Ron Patrick (707) 257-2343
bonjournapa@hotmail.com

Placerville

888-556-3356
admin@WNAinfo.org

Roseville

Stan Pashote (916) 409-5747

Sacramento

Sonya Wells (916) 627-0228

San Diego

Chhattar Kucheria (858) 774-1408

San Francisco

Merle (415) 346-9781

San Jose

888-556-3356
admin@WNAinfo.org

Santa Barbara

Nancy Kriech (805) 967-8886

Santa Cruz

Mary Ann Leer (831) 477-1239

Santa Rosa

Judy Leandro (707) 480-3740

South San Diego

Jacklyn (858) 228-7480

Walnut Creek

888-556-3356
admin@WNAinfo.org

Westlake Village - Thousand Oaks

Angie Becerra (805) 390-2999

NEVADA

Las Vegas

Barbara Montgomery
lvneuropathygroup@gmail.com

OREGON

Grants Pass

David Tally 541-218-4418

TEXAS

Austin

Marty Meraviglia RN, ACNS-BC
(512) 970-5454 • mgmeraviglia@gmail.com

Houston

Katherine Stenzel
klstenzel@hotmail.com

EDITOR'S NOTE

Katherine Stenzel, Acting Editor, WNA Board Director

The September issue is full of information to help with our neuropathy in specific and health in general. Continuing with suggestions on how to prevent falls from last month, this month's issue details what to do after you fall and it all depends on if you are in pain. A list of questions to ask during a medical office visit will help as you partner with your doctor in treating your neuropathy as detailed in the August issue. If you have trouble sleeping for seven hours at night like I do, try the routine suggested by Dr. Emily Splichal, PMD, for combatting nighttime nerve pain. An extensive report on essential oils gives hope on using these for relief from nerve pain even though more research is needed. If you are interested in trying these oils after reading the article on pages 6 and 7, try the recipe below and report your results to me. I'll share with the readers in the next issue.

...Katherine (klstenzel@hotmail.com)

Nerve Pain Relief Massage Oil

Ingredients

- 1 ounce carrier oil*
- 3 drops geranium oil (*Pelargonium graveolens*)
- 3 drops lavender oil (*Lavandula angustifolia*)
- 2 drops bergamot oil (*Citrus aurantium*)
- 2 drops eucalyptus oil (*Eucalyptus globulus*)
- 2 drops tea tree oil (*Melaleuca alternifolia*)
- Glass bottle

*Grapeseed oil, sweet almond oil, jojoba oil, olive oil, etc.

Instructions

1. Drop essential oils into a medium glass bowl.
2. Add in carrier oil and mix.
3. Store in glass jar or in a lotion dispenser.

Massage over feet, legs or other problem areas.

Reference: <https://naturallivingfamily.com/essential-oils-for-neuropathy>

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

August 2020 Issue

(Last year in our August issue, support group leader Jacklyn Lewicki wrote about her experience during the Holocaust. The following Letter to the Editor, belatedly printed, acknowledges another's experience with the same.)

Editor,

I would like to acknowledge Neuropathy Hope's publication of fellow support group leader Jacklyn (Frenkel) Lewicki's article depicting the suffering of the Jewish people, her family and herself in the Holocaust. I have been moved professionally doing medical reparations evaluations and treatment of Holocaust survivors, often with KZ serial numbers tattooed to their wrists.

Lest we forget, we can contribute to the prevention of the mistreatment of other peoples. I have been a member of the Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) for a number of years, and believe this organization is positioned to prevent future antisemitism.

JVP can be contacted at www.jvp.org or 510-465-1777.

William B. Donovan, MD

Monterrey, CA Support Group Leader

August 2021 Issue

Katherine,

I wanted you to know that I think that you did an outstanding job as the Acting Editor for the August 2021 issue. Your note was very clear and informative. All the contributors wrote some very helpful and interesting articles, especially Dr. Donovan and Sonya Wells. Also, I was glad to read that all three recipes turned out well.

Sincerely,
Bill Porter

Help With Health Care Challenges

If the number is not in your area, call the one listed and ask for the right number.

Medicare

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...

The Affordable Health Care Act

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Access Project Free publications about the health care, insurance rights and concerns of people with disabilities and serious health conditions. For more information, go to <http://dralegal.org/> and click on "Projects".

DISCOUNTS FOR WNA MEMBERS

The following companies or individuals have agreed to give WNA a discount to WNA members. Give them a call or visit. If you choose to purchase the service or wares of any on this list, pull out your WNA Membership Card and claim the discount.

Anodyne Therapy

Infrared Light Therapy equipment - **12% off all home units.** Contact: 800-521-6664 or www.anodynetherapy.com

Auburn

The Footpath

825 Lincoln Way
(530) 885-2091
www.footpathshoes.com
WNA Discount: 10% off the regular price shoes.

Elk Grove

Shoes That Fit

8649 Elk Grove Blvd.
(916) 686-1050
WNA Discount: 20% off the regular price shoes.

Fortuna

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is a Certified Pedorthic
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West Sacramento

Beverly's Never Just Haircuts and Lilly's Nails

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Hair - (916) 372-5606
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WNA discount: 10% off the regular price.

- Continued on page 5

SLEEPING 7 HOURS A NIGHT – WHY AND HOW

By Katherine Stenzel

I read articles in magazines and on the internet all the time about how many hours of sleep we should get each night. Seven hours is the magic number in common with each. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine and Sleep Research Society reconfirmed this number in June, 2021 by recommending that an average adult should regularly sleep at least 7 hours per night to promote optimal health.¹ Having thought I rarely hit this number, I checked my Fitbit for the last four weeks and was pleasantly surprised to see I averaged 6.9 hours a night! Only near the minimum, but close.

What happens to our bodies when we don't get enough sleep?²

- Weight Gain – sleeping less than 6 hours each night increases your calorie intake the next day to increase your obesity risk by 30%.
- Poor Immunity – with less than 7 hours of sleep it's harder for your body to fight off colds resulting in an increase of 300% that you will catch one.
- Diabetes – a reduction in deep sleep reduces your body's sensitivity to insulin, increasing your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.
- Brain Fog – reducing your sleep by only 1.5 hours can reduce your alertness by a maximum of 32%.
- Poor Heart Health – your heart is very sensitive to less sleep as sleeping only 6 or less hours long term increases your risk of developing and dying from heart disease by 48%!
- Blood Pressure Problems – sleeping only 6 hours increases your chance of developing high blood pressure by 20%.

But how do we get more sleep? With neuropathy, nighttime pain often inhibits falling asleep and staying asleep through the night. Dr. Emily Splichal, PMD, details her nightly routine for combatting nighttime nerve pain.³ For greatest results, do this consistently every night.

Step 1. Dry brushing and lymphatic massage.

Give a boost to your circulation and lymphatic system with this simple technique. Using a natural bristle brush, brush the skin in the direction of the heart for approximately 1 minute. Search for YouTube videos to further demonstrate this procedure.

Step 2. Epsom salt baths and Magnesium spray.

Magnesium is a crucial mineral to every organ in the body and has been shown to benefit muscles and nerves. Whether you get magnesium from an Epsom salt bath or you spray it topically, any form of magnesium will help relax muscles and nerves. If you opt for the topical magnesium spray, spray only on the feet as it can sometimes cause itching.

Step 3. Peppermint Oil. This essential oil provides an analgesic and cooling effect when applied topically or added to a foot soak or bath. The menthol contained in peppermint oil naturally warms the skin and muscles to improve circulation in the area of numbness or discomfort. If adding to the bath, Dr Splichal recommends starting with 15 drops and increasing based on comfort level. If adding topically, Dr Splichal likes to mix with Step 4.

Step 4. Topical CBD Cream. CBD oil is all the craze in the medical community with some promising research around the efficacy of topical CBD and neuropathic pain. A soothing CBD cream can promote a healthy anti-inflammatory response in the soft tissue and muscle, and can improve circulation in the affected area. Remember that not all CBD products are created the same, and users may need to experiment to find a product and dose that works for them. Or ask a fellow neuropathy sufferer if they use a CBD product for a personal recommendation.

Dr. Splichal has one last reminder for your nighttime routine – try to stay calm and relaxed. Integrate relaxing music when taking a hot bath or meditate as you start to fall asleep. The nervous system is a complex system that is highly influenced by our emotional and physiological well-being.

References:

¹ Ramar K, Malhotra RK, Carden KA, et al. Sleep is essential to health: An American Academy of Sleep Medicine position statement. *J Clin Sleep Med.* Published Online June 21, 2021.

² Your Body on a Lack of Sleep, *Prevention Magazine*, June 2015.

³ How to Hack Nighttime Nerve Pain, Barefoot Strong Blog, September 16, 2020, retrieved July 21, 2021 from <https://barefootstrongblog.com/2020/09/16/how-to-hack-nighttime-nerve-pain/>

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR By Barbara Montgomery

To continue the discussion started in the August issue about partnering with your doctor, this article includes questions to ask your doctor during an office or televisit.

To Prepare for your Visit

- Take a list of your medications and supplements.
- Collect copies of important papers/X-rays/test results to take to the doctor's visit and remember to collect the same from this doctor.

Questions to ask

Pain

- Why do my symptoms of pain come and go?
- What can I take for the pain that is not addictive or is less addictive?
- What can I do to help ease the pain?
- What alternative treatments or therapies are available for the pain?

Tests

- What tests will you be doing?
- What will the above tests show you?
- What tests will determine the type/cause of my neuropathy?
- How often should I take these tests?

Neuropathy - symptoms

- What are the common symptoms of neuropathy?
- What symptoms indicate my neuropathy is more serious?
- Will my neuropathy symptoms change with time?

Neuropathy – causes

- What are the potential causes of my neuropathy?
- What type of peripheral neuropathy do I have?
- What makes my neuropathy worse?
- Can I have more than one type of neuropathy?
- Is my type of neuropathy progressive?

Neuropathy – treatments

- How can I manage the burning sensations in my feet and legs?
- Will physical therapy help?
- Can I stop the neuropathy from progressing?
- What treatments are available for the more severe types of neuropathy?
- Will anything repair my damaged nerves?

At the end of the visit

- When should I come back for another visit?
- What suggestions does the Doctor have for you?
- Do I need any referrals?
- Where can I find support groups or organizations?

After The Visit

- Follow your doctor's recommendations and prescriptions.
- Stop bad health habits including smoking, overeating, and oversitting/inactivity (toxins build up in our body if we don't move).

DISCOUNTS FOR WNA MEMBERS

Continued from page 4

Neuropathy Support Formula/Nerve Renew

(1-888-840-7142) is a supplement that a number of people are taking and reporting it has helped them. The company gives members of WNA a discount and free shipping. The 30-day supply is \$40 (normally \$49.97). It can be auto-shipped monthly for the same. A 3-month supply via auto-ship is \$95.00. They also have a Nerve Repair Optimizer that is available for \$20 with free shipping. Marsha, the manager, said that if anyone wants more information about the product, they can call and ask for her. If she is not readily available, leave your number and she will call you back. They now have Nerve Renew Fast Acting Cream at \$20 for WNA members. It reportedly takes the edge off numbness.

Building Better Balance DVD, Developing Spine Health

– The DVDs are \$30 each. The price of a full set (4 DVDs) is \$100 (that's a 20% discount). You can order the DVDs by going to the website www.building-better-balance.com. Shipping is free. You can also order the DVDs over the phone using a credit card. Call (707) 318-4476 and leave a message. Vanessa Kettler, Balance and Fall Prevention www.building-better-balance.com (707) 318-4476

Additional Discounts

Do you know a business that might offer our members a discount? Tell them that they will be listed each month in our newsletter and on our website so our members will know of their generosity and patronize their business. Call 888-556-3356 or email admin@WNAinfo.org.

We'll mail an agreement form to the business, and once we have it, we'll add them to this list.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FALL Consumer Reports, On Health, June 2021, Vol 33, issue 6

Last month's issue included information about ways to prevent falls. This article focuses on after a fall and details on getting back up.

If you fall, the National Institute on Aging (NIA) recommends that you take several deep breaths and remain still for a few moments. Once you're over the initial shock of falling, take inventory. Do you feel pain? Did you hit your head?

If you've not in pain and don't think you've hit your head, roll over onto your side and rest a bit – this lets your body and blood pressure adjust, according to NIA. Then slowly get up on your

hands and knees, and crawl to a stable chair, table or counter. You may need to hold onto one of these objects to pull yourself up. Sit, and once you feel calm, call your doctor. He or she may want you to come in for an evaluation.

If you're in pain, have hit your head, or feel dizzy, nauseous, or otherwise sick, don't move – getting up too fast or in the wrong manner could worsen any injury. Call for help if you can. If you're alone and can't alert anyone or contact 911, you may have to crawl to a phone or door to summon assistance.

CAN ESSENTIAL OILS TREAT NEUROPATHY? Compiled by Sonya Wells, PharmD, MPH, WNA Board Director

Popular for thousands of years, essential oils are known for their healing properties. They're said to help soothe the mind and body, and they may treat a number of conditions, including pain. Because of this, they're often seen as a natural alternative to medication.

Neuropathy, or nerve damage, can cause pain and numbness in the affected areas. For people with peripheral neuropathy, this primarily affects the legs, feet and hands. Severe cases of neuropathy may cause issues with digestion and affect your heart rate. Although more research is needed, essential oils may help relieve some of these symptoms.

What are the benefits of essential oils?

- Essential oils may help relieve pain associated with neuropathy.
- Certain oils have antimicrobial properties, which can help treat infection.

Essential oils are often viewed as a natural "cure all." Not only are certain oils thought to relieve illness and reduce recovery time, they may help:

- treat cuts, scrapes, or infections
- purify the air in your environment
- balance your hormones
- alleviate stress, tension, or anxiety
- help you fall asleep easier

Limited research has suggested that peppermint, ginger, St. John's wort, holy basil, Roman chamomile, and lavender essential oils may assist with nerve pain. More research is needed to fully assess the potential benefits, risks, and efficacy.

Peppermint

Peppermint essential oil is known to have antimicrobial and antioxidant properties. The oil can relax muscles, control muscle spasms, and act as a pain reliever. Researchers in a 2002 study found that topical peppermint oil helped a 76-year-old woman treat neuralgia. This woman had been resistant to other standard therapies, but saw almost immediate pain relief after applying topical peppermint oil. This relief lasted four to six hours after application. There's also evidence to suggest that peppermint oil may help improve symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome and relieve indigestion.

Roman Chamomile

Roman chamomile may help soothe painful muscles. A 2014 study concluded that Roman chamomile may be beneficial in inflammation disorders. The chamomile also decreased oxidative stress.

Lavender

Inhaling lavender essential oil may help promote relaxation, and reduce pain and anxiety. A 2016 study looked at the effectiveness

of aromatherapy. 106 people were due to undergo a procedure, the researchers randomly assigned the participants to receive either aromatherapy with lavender essential oil or a placebo. Following the procedure, those in the lavender group reported significantly less pain and anxiety than those in the placebo group.

Additionally, lavender essential oil is valued as one of the best oils for treating the tingling sensation associated with neuropathy as it possesses potent anti-inflammatory and analgesics properties which helps to alleviate nerve pain and repair nerve damage. Regular massaging with lavender or cypress essential oils may help to repair nerve damage and restore the functioning of the nerves.

Ginger

Using ginger oil may help reduce neuropathic pain from inflammatory conditions. A 2014 study compared the effectiveness of Swedish massage using aromatic ginger oil with traditional Thai massage in 140 older adults who had chronic lower back pain. Although both treatments improved the symptoms, Swedish massage with aromatic ginger oil was more effective than Thai massage in reducing pain and disability. Ginger oil also contains a compound called zingibain, which possess potent anti-inflammatory properties. This may help reduce neuropathic pain that results from inflammatory conditions.

St. John's Wort

St. John's wort, or *Hypericum perforatum*, is a traditional remedy for depression and anxiety. People also use extracts to treat burns, inflammation, and nerve pain. According to a 2017 case report, a person with trigeminal neuralgia (TMJ) — a type of nerve pain that affects the face — found that a homeopathic preparation of St. John's wort helped relieve the symptoms. The authors of the report concluded that St. John's wort "may be a promising therapeutic option" for treating this pain, but further research is necessary.

Holy Basil

Holy basil, also known as tulsi or tulasi, is an aromatic plant that grows throughout the Indian continent and Southeast Asia. Practitioners of Ayurvedic medicine have long used it to treat a range of conditions, including nerve pain.

In 2015, a study on animals showed that holy basil extract was able to reduce neuropathic pain on the injured nerve. Similar to lavender oil, holy basil also has anti-inflammatory properties which can significantly reduce pain.

How to use essential oils

- Add a few drops of essential oil to a diffuser, bath water, or soft furnishings, such as pillows. Diffusing essential oils into the air may help with some of the symptoms associated with nerve pain, such as lack of sleep, stress, and anxiety.

– Continued on page 7

The Western Neuropathy Association provided a \$5,000 research grant for 2021 to Dr. Bruce Hammock's University of California Laboratory. The funds are used to support efforts to advance a new experimental pain relief drug through FDA approved trials and to support studies in multiple pain models, specifically pain caused by cancer and by chemotherapeutic agents to treat the cancer. These studies are being done in rats and in cell systems by Dr. Karen Wagner, who has spoken at WNA meetings. This work will expand fundamental knowledge of the physiology and biochemistry of pain and will generate data to move the new pain drug into human efficacy trials. These will help determine what cancer and chemotherapy approaches lead to pain and how this pain can be managed. Progress reports will continue to be provided on a regular basis. For additional information, check out their website at <https://www.eicosis.com/>.

EicOsis



Can Essential Oils Treat Neuropathy? – Continued from page 6

- For pain relief, use a topical approach. Add 1 ounce of carrier oil, such as coconut or olive oil, to every 12 or so drops of essential oil. This can prevent the essential oil from causing any skin irritation or inflammation.

Risks and considerations

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) classes most essential oils as cosmetic products, which means that it does not regulate their quality or safety. It is therefore advisable to only purchase essential oils from reputable manufacturers and to carefully read any labels or directions.

Essential oils can cause skin irritation or allergic reactions in some people, so it is advisable to perform a patch test before using a new oil. A patch test involves applying the diluted oil to a small area of skin, such as the back of the hand or part of the forearm. Do not use the oil if the skin becomes itchy, red, or dry.

Essential oils may interact with certain medications, such as antidepressants and stimulants. People taking prescription medications should seek advice from their doctor before using an essential oil.

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WESTERN NEUROPATHY ASSOCIATION

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**Western Neuropathy Association
has received as of May 2021
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Western Neuropathy Association (WNA)

A California public benefit, nonprofit,
tax-exempt corporation.

Bev Anderson, Editor

P.O. Box 276567
Sacramento, CA 95827-6567
(888) 556-3356
www.WNAinfo.org

WNA Headquarters: admin@WNAinfo.org

Our mission is to provide support, information and referral to people with neuropathy and to those who care about them, to inform and connect with the health care community, and to support research.

Dues - \$30 a year

All contributions and dues are tax-deductible.

We are supported by dues-paying members, contributions by members and friends, and occasionally, small grants and fundraisers.

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