

Stop and smell the flowers -- the scent really can soothe stress

July 22 2009



Scientists are reporting the first scientific evidence that certain fragrances can alter gene activity and blood chemistry in ways that reduce stress levels. Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Feeling stressed? Then try savoring the scent of lemon, mango, lavender, or other fragrant plants. Scientists in Japan are reporting the first scientific evidence that inhaling certain fragrances alter gene activity and blood chemistry in ways that can reduce stress levels. Their study appears in ACS' *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

In the new study, Akio Nakamura and colleagues note that people have inhaled the scent of certain plants since ancient times to help reduce stress, fight inflammation and depression, and induce sleep. Aromatherapy, the use of fragrant plant oils to improve mood and health, has become a popular form of alternative medicine today. And

linalool is one of the most widely used substances to soothe away emotional stress. Until now, however, linalool's exact effects on the body have been a deep mystery.

The scientists exposed lab rats to stressful conditions while inhaling and not inhaling linalool. Linalool returned stress-elevated levels of neutrophils and lymphocytes — key parts of the [immune system](#) — to near-normal levels. Inhaling linalool also reduced the activity of more than 100 genes that go into overdrive in stressful situations. The findings could form the basis of new [blood](#) tests for identifying fragrances that can soothe stress, the researchers say.

More information: "Stress Repression in Restrained Rats by (R)-(-)-Linalool Inhalation and Gene Expression Profiling of Their Whole Blood Cells" [Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry](#)

Source: American Chemical Society ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Stop and smell the flowers -- the scent really can soothe stress (2009, July 22) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-07-scent-stress.html>

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