

Aromatherapy During Childbirth: Mothers Speak Out

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Introduction

While childbirth can be an exciting time for expectant mothers and their families, a wide range of both positive and negative emotions may be present. One technique to foster a more positive experience and reduce negative emotions is the use of aromatherapy. Aromatherapy is a non-pharmacological approach that uses essential oils to promote physical, psychological, and emotional balance. There is evidence that aromatherapy can help relieve maternal anxiety and pain during labor and positively impact outcomes in the prenatal, intrapartum, and postpartum periods.^{1,2}

Patient Survey

A blind, random, anonymous survey³ was administered during November 2021 to explore the emotions women felt while in labor and giving birth and to gather opinions on the use of aromatherapy during the birthing process. Survey respondents were as follows:

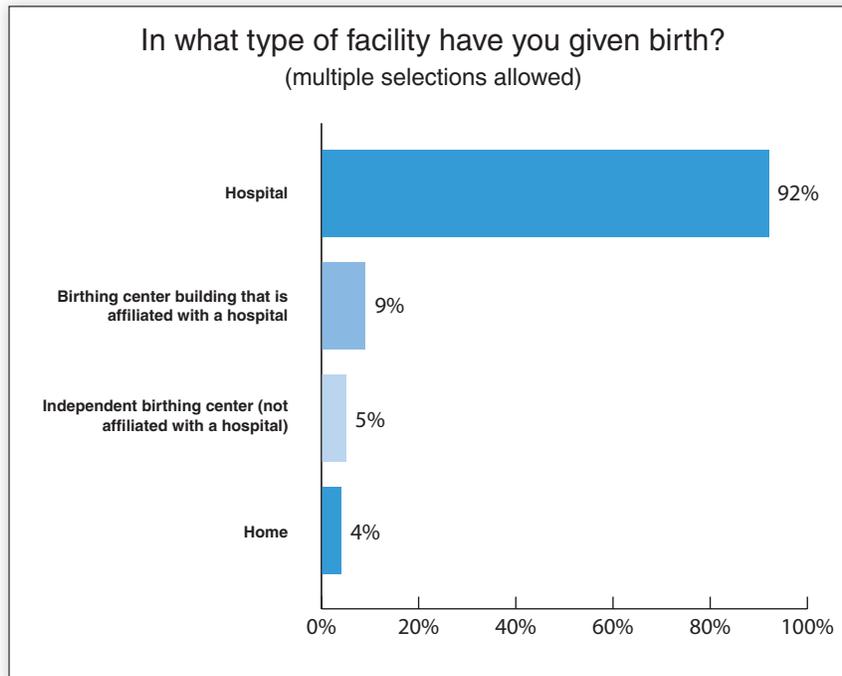
- Women between the ages of 25 and 45 across the United States
- Questions addressed aromatherapy in general as well as Elequil aromatabs®, an aromatherapy product designed for the clinical setting that adheres to the patient’s clothing or gown to provide personal aromatherapy
- Total of 275 responses included in the analysis

Key Discoveries

| Emotions Experienced During Childbirth | Responses About Elequil Aromatabs | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>76% of respondents said they felt nervous.</p> <p>62% of respondents said they felt anxious.</p> <p>44% of respondents said they felt overwhelmed.</p> <p>42% of respondents said they felt scared.</p> <p>39% of respondents said they felt fearful.</p> | <p>Of those who received Elequil aromatabs, 79% said they would be more likely to return to the facility in which they gave birth because they were offered Elequil aromatabs.</p> | <p>70% of respondents who did not receive Elequil aromatabs during their birthing experience said they would have liked it to be offered.</p> <p>52% of respondents who did not receive Elequil aromatabs during their birthing experience said they would have been more at ease or comforted.</p> |

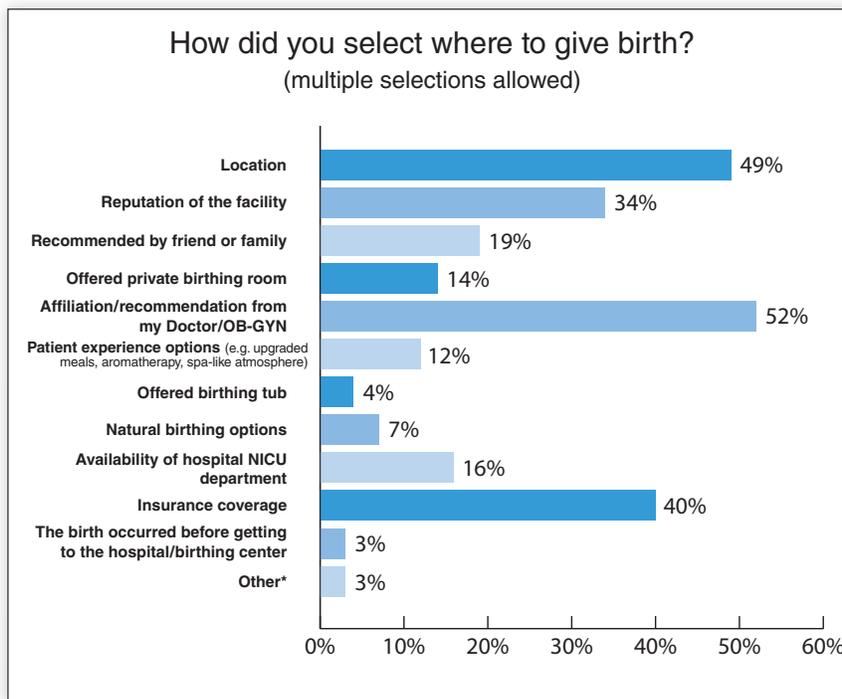
Where Women Give Birth

The majority of women responding to the survey said they have given birth in a hospital, but other types of facilities, or even home births, were also reported.



Reasons for Selecting Birthing Facility

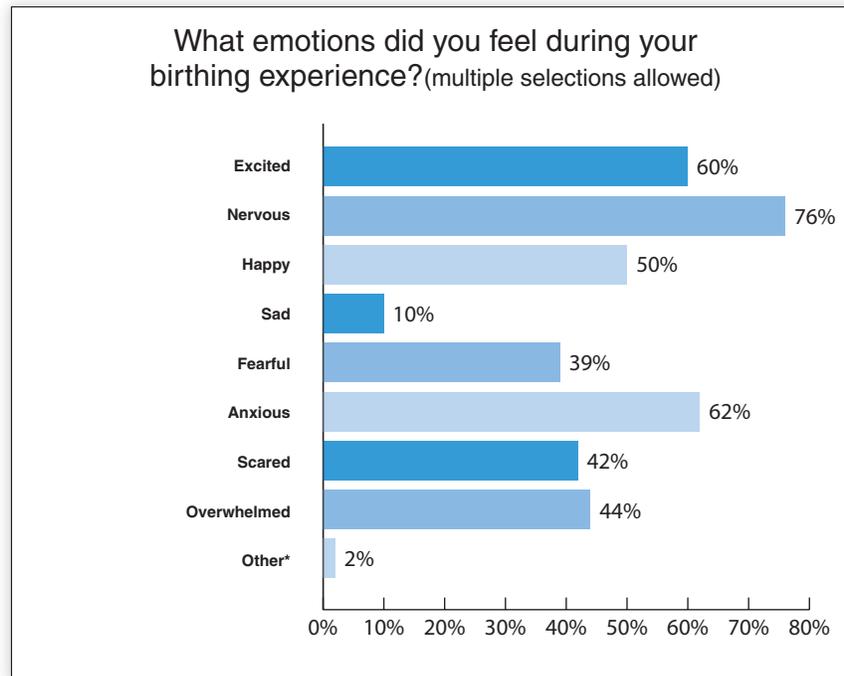
Many factors go into selecting where to give birth. The top five reasons cited were affiliation or recommendation from a doctor, location, insurance coverage, reputation, and recommendation from a friend or family member.



*Other reasons include previous experience at the facility, availability of other medical services, and employment at the facility.

Emotions During Childbirth

Survey respondents cited many different emotions during their birthing experience, ranging from happiness and excitement to fear and sadness. The emotions most frequently cited were nervousness, anxiousness, excitement, happiness and feeling overwhelmed.



*Other emotions include fatigue, confusion and despair.

What Women Say About Their Emotions During Childbirth

"You just never know what can happen, so the anxiety and nervousness took over. I had twins, so the birth was in a cold surgery room just in case a Cesarean had to be performed, and that was scary."

"Giving birth is exciting but it's also emotional and overwhelming."

"I was excited to meet my child but anxious about the pain and how long the labor would be."

"I had to have a C-section so I was scared, overwhelmed and nervous but at the same time I was excited and happy that my baby was going to be born."

"I was happy to give birth but anxious about the process and recovery."

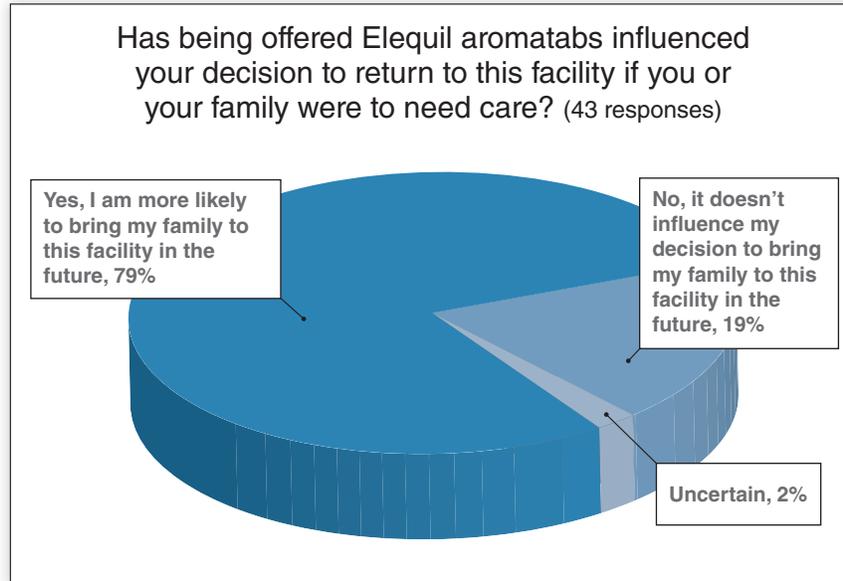
"I was excited, happy, nervous, anxious and scared. The many unexpected events of going into labor and trying to deliver naturally led me to feel many different emotions."

"I was excited to meet my baby but nervous about the pain."

"I was excited to bring a new child into the world but overwhelmed with possible complications."

Elequil Aromatabs® Influences Return to Birthing Facility

Approximately 8% of all survey respondents said they were offered Elequil aromatabs when they were in labor or leading up to labor. Of those, an overwhelming 79% said being offered Elequil aromatabs has or will influence their decision to return to the facility in which they gave birth if they or a family member were to need care.



Elequil Aromatabs Effective in Improving Post-Cesarean Comfort

Lavender aromatherapy was found to improve comfort in a recent clinical study of 48 women who had given birth via cesarean and were subsequently transferred to the hospital's maternity unit for postpartum care.⁴

Study participants were asked to complete the six item State and Trait Anxiety (STAI-6) score (six Likert scale questions) to assess their level of anxiety pre- and post- application of either lavender aromatherapy or placebo. Their comfort and pain levels pre- and post- administration were also assessed, and differences between groups were analyzed. For the lavender aromatherapy group, an Elequil® lavender aromatab, at maximum aroma exposure level, was placed on the participant's gown at chest level.

The study found individuals who received the **Elequil aromatabs had significantly higher self-reported levels of comfort** compared to those who received a placebo. **Of those who received the aromatherapy, 91.7% reported enjoying using it.**

The study authors propose that the ability of lavender to improve comfort and decrease pain and anxiety could be

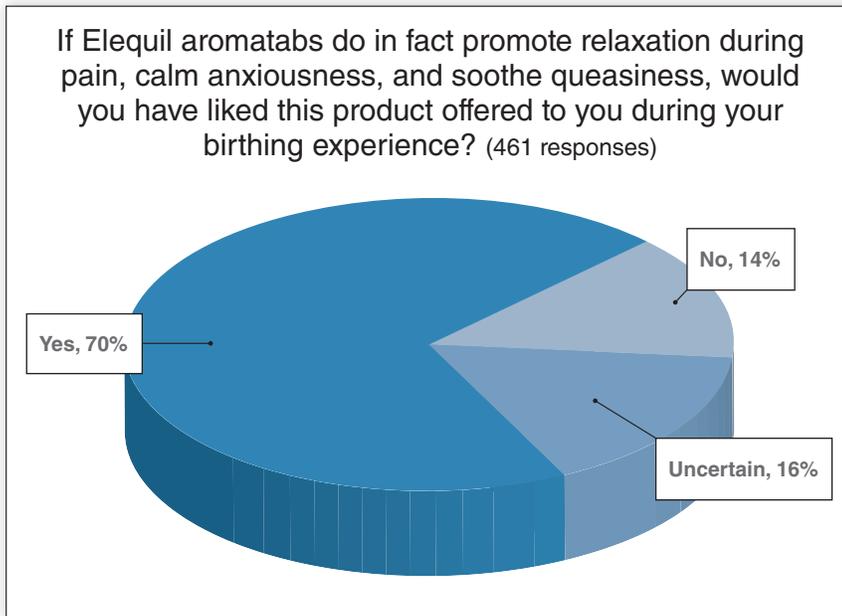
especially useful in maternity care: because perioperative opioid prescribing is associated with persistent opioid use after surgery, it is important for nurses and other healthcare providers to consider non-pharmacologic strategies that could improve pain relief and comfort and decrease anxiety, potentially decreasing postoperative opioid requirements consistent with CDC recommendations.

Additionally, nurses caring for participants who received the Elequil lavender aromatab reported very little aroma in the patient's room. Since other methods such as aromatherapy diffusers disperse essential oils more widely, the use of the Elequil lavender aromatab may be a method to provide aromatherapy in the clinical setting while still protecting nurses, employees, and visitors who dislike aromas or suffer from allergies or other respiratory ailments which could be exacerbated by smells.

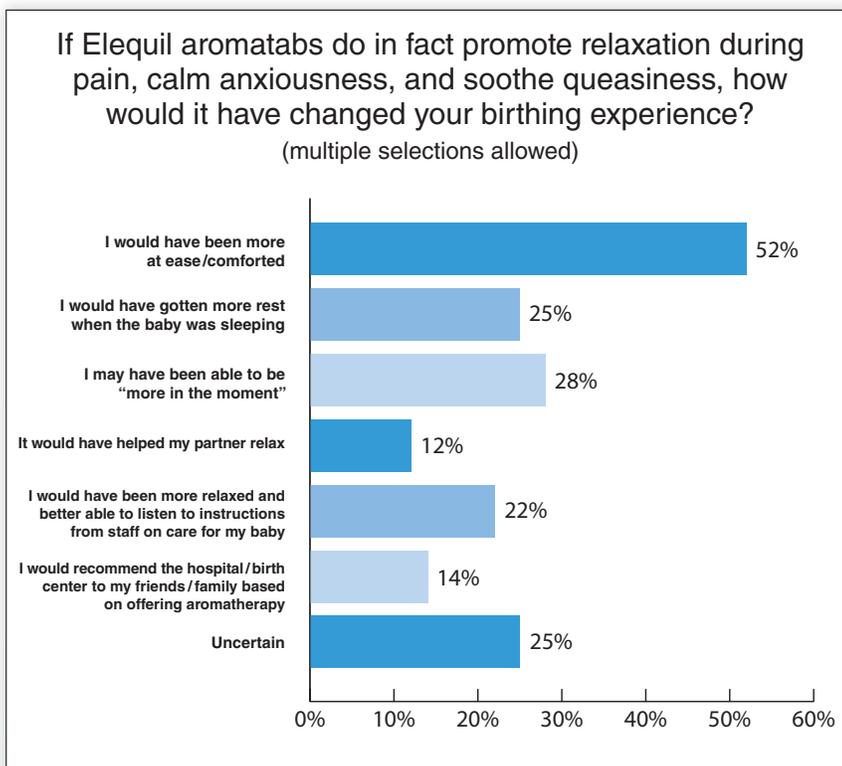
The study authors conclude that the use of lavender aromatherapy may be a simple, low-risk and cost-effective addition to non-pharmacologic bundles used on postpartum units to improve comfort among women who recently gave birth via cesarean. They suggest clinicians in healthcare settings consider how they can embed holistic interventions such as aromatherapy into care to improve comfort and possibly reduce anxiety and pain.

Perceptions of Patients Not Offered Elequil Aromatabs®

Based on the description that Elequil aromatabs promote relaxation during pain, calm anxiousness, and soothe queasiness, 70% of respondents said they would have liked Elequil aromatabs to have been offered.



Accordingly, respondents believed they would have benefited in many ways from the use of Elequil aromatabs.



Discussion

For most women, childbirth is a life-changing experience. The expectant mother and others present for the birth may experience many different emotions. As shown in this survey,⁵ it's not uncommon for women to feel nervous, anxious, overwhelmed, or scared at the same time they are feeling excited and happy.

Expectant mothers who were provided Elequil aromatabs during their birthing experience reported many benefits, including making them feel more relaxed or at ease and helping them cope with their pain.⁶ It is not unreasonable to infer that Elequil aromatabs may also help other family members, such as the father, who are present for the birth and also experiencing negative emotions due to the stress of the situation.

Notably, as a result of their experience using Elequil aromatabs, 79% of survey respondents said it would influence their decision to return to the facility in which they gave birth.⁷

The benefits of aromatherapy are also shown to be beneficial post-partum: women who received Elequil® lavender aromatabs following a cesarean birth reported significantly higher levels of comfort compared to those who received a placebo.⁸

Conclusions

Aromatherapy is suggested as an effective adjunct to other coping techniques to reduce anxiousness and other negative emotions during labor, delivery, and post-partum care, potentially improving overall patient experience and increasing patient satisfaction scores.

Elequil Aromatabs®

Elequil aromatabs is a simple non-pharmacological intervention that uses 100% pure essential oils. Elequil aromatabs has a unique controlled delivery system with easy hands-free application, adheres to the patient's gown or clothing, and allows minimum and maximum aroma exposure.



Lavender-Peppermint

Lavandula angustifolia-Mentha piperita
Lasts up to 8 hours

Lavender-Peppermint promotes relaxation during pain, helps comfort and calm anxiousness, and soothes queasiness



Lavender
Lavandula angustifolia
Lasts up to 8 hours

Lavender-Sandalwood
Lavandula angustifolia-Santalum album
Lasts up to 24 hours

Lavender and Lavender-Sandalwood promote relaxation during pain, help comfort and calm anxiousness



Orange-Peppermint

Citrus sinensis-Mentha piperita
Lasts up to 8 hours

Orange-Peppermint uplifts and can soothe queasiness

References:

- ¹ The Effectiveness of Aromatherapy in the Management of Labor Pain and Anxiety: A Systematic Review, Mahbubeh Tabatabaeichehr, Hamed Mortazavi, *Ethiop J Health Sci.* 2020;30(3):449. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ejhs.v30i3.16> retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7445940/pdf/EJHS3003-0449.pdf>.
- ² Aromatherapy in Obstetrics: A Critical Review of the Literature, Anna C. Bertone, MPH, and Rebecca L. Dekker, PhD, RN, *Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology*: September 2021, retrieved from <https://www.binasss.sa.cr/gine/52.pdf>.
- ³ Online survey conducted November 2021 via Survey Monkey®.
- ⁴ Burgess, Adriane PhD, RNC-OB, CCE, CNE, C-ONQS; Harris, Amy MSN, RNC-MNN; Wheeling, Julia MBA, RN, C-ONQS A Pilot Randomized Control Trial to Assess the Impact of Lavender on Anxiety and Comfort After Cesarean Birth and the Barriers Encountered, *MCN, The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing*: March/April 2022 - Volume 47 - Issue 2 - p 85-91 doi: 10.1097/NMC.0000000000000803, retrieved from https://journals.lww.com/mcnjournal/Abstract/2022/03000/A_Pilot_Randomized_Control_Trial_to_Assess_the.5.aspx.
- ⁵ Online survey conducted November 2021 via Survey Monkey®.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Burgess, Adriane PhD, RNC-OB, CCE, CNE, C-ONQS; Harris, Amy MSN, RNC-MNN; Wheeling, Julia MBA, RN, C-ONQS A Pilot Randomized Control Trial to Assess the Impact of Lavender on Anxiety and Comfort After Cesarean Birth and the Barriers Encountered, *MCN, The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing*: March/April 2022 - Volume 47 - Issue 2 - p 85-91 doi: 10.1097/NMC.0000000000000803, retrieved from https://journals.lww.com/mcnjournal/Abstract/2022/03000/A_Pilot_Randomized_Control_Trial_to_Assess_the.5.aspx.

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