

Lavender: A Portrait of an Overlooked Panacea

For most people, lavender conjures memories of powdery-scented sachets in lingerie drawers, spray colognes, or dainty English soaps. Because of this nostalgic cosmetic association, this age-old garden plant has been mostly forgotten as a medicinal, even by seasoned herbalists. *Lavandula angustifolia* or true lavender is a gentle but highly effective multitasking plant ally for children and adults alike. This fragrant shrub in the mint family has tiny, purple flowers, but don't let the lovely fragrance or size only connote cosmetic pleasantries. Lavender is highly therapeutic. It is capable of combating influenza and strep throat yet mild enough to calm the stormiest of tummy troubles in youngsters.

When infused gently in hot water, this lovely herb displays aqua hues that mellow to mauve as it fills the room with its fragrance. With such fairy glamor charms, this tea makes an easy internal medicine for nervous exhaustion, digestive spasms, tension headache and migraine, anxiety, panic attacks, chest infections, tonsillitis, bowel infections, excessive Candida, cold and flu, insomnia, and fevers including typhoid. Lavender can easily be combined with synergistic herbs such as lemon balm, chamomile, and rose petals to tailor its valuable properties for specific maladies.

On the other hand, lavender essential oils—true lavender and spike lavender—are some of the most important oils in clinical aromatherapy that are capable of fighting drug-resistant infections including MRSA (methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus) when used topically.

When looking at the body of modern clinical studies, old herbal manuals, and scribbled notes of aromatherapists, it is easy to see why this humble plant should be one of the most

important items to keep on hand at all times—in the medicine chest, the kitchen cabinet, and the travel case.

Uses for Lavender Tea

Allergies and Adrenal Support

Lavender is a natural immune booster, but it can also calm an overactive immune system that is responsible for multiple allergies or sensitivities. The adrenals, the body's stress glands, can play a significant role in promoting equilibrium between both extremes, and lavender can help. When the adrenals are nourished and the more the parasympathetic nervous system kicks into temper chronic fight or flight response, there will be fewer allergies and less severe allergies.

Tip: To prevent the body from neutralizing the effects of long-term use, alternate weeks that you drink lavender tea. For example, after a week of consistent use, skip a week and then resume.

Recommended amount: 1-2 cups a day.

Anxiety, Depression, and Neurotransmitter Balance

Lavender—both its scent and chemical properties within the flowers themselves when ingested—affect the production of serotonin, a vital neurotransmitter found within the gut and the brain. When this neurotransmitter is imbalanced or deficient, a multitude of “mental health” conditions can manifest. An *inhibitory* neurotransmitter, serotonin plays a major role in taming excessive production of excitatory chemicals that are responsible for low immunity, disrupted sleep cycles, sugar cravings, and heightened pain. Regular consumption of coffee and other stimulants, prolonged stress,

hormonal changes, and poor diet compromise and deplete our serotonin levels. In the simplest terms, serotonin imbalance directly affects many functions in the body including digestion as well as emotional wellbeing. When it is disrupted, it can be evident in many ways ranging from hormonal moodiness to eating disorders such as bulimia and certain types of depression to chronic anxiety. Lavender tea can offer wonderful and near-immediate calming effects by lowering the stress hormone cortisol and regulating adrenaline.

Recommended amount: 1-3 cups a day.

Blood Sugar Balance

Lavender tea has balancing effects on the pancreas and insulin production, therefore it can be beneficial for blood sugar stability, especially for non-diabetic/reactive hypoglycemia.

Recommended amount: 1-3 cups of *unsweetened* tea a day.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Because of its effects on neurochemicals and the adrenals, lavender tea is helpful for some individuals with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

Recommended amount: 1-2 cups of unsweetened tea a day.

Digestive Balance

Chamomile has long been hailed as the quintessential herb for stomach upset, but lavender is also a heavy hitter when it comes to calming nervous bellies, nausea, gas, bloating, and griping pains. A warm infusion of lavender can also increase good intestinal flora while combatting yeast overgrowth. Lavender tea is also an excellent children's remedy for tummy troubles, school jitters, nightmares, and

stomach aches from nervous origins.

Recommended amount for adults: 1-3 cups a day. **Recommended amount for little ones:** $\frac{1}{2}$ cup twice a day taken by the tablespoon if need be. A little local honey makes it a pleasant drink.

Energetic Properties and Emotional Influence

On the energetic level, lavender can soothe stormy emotions, stimulate peace where there is resentment or jealousy, and lift the mood.

Immunity

An infusion of lavender flowers drunk a few times a week is a pleasant immune booster that can prevent illness during the flu season, guard against infections, and balance neurochemicals such as serotonin that play an important role in strong immunity. Lavender tea is also wonderful for sore throats, and an added touch of local honey enhances its healing and soothing properties. The tea can be drunk cold, at room temperature, or hot. The latter is useful in bringing down high fevers.

Recommended amount: 3-5 cups a week, skip a week and then resume.

Insomnia

The scent of lavender and its effects on calming the body and inducing sleep are well known, but the herb prepared as tea gets little attention. A warm lavender infusion taken half an hour before bed can help the body wind down and calm racing thoughts.

Recommended amount: 1 cup of strong unsweetened tea before bedtime.

Muscle Tension and Headaches

Warm or hot lavender tea can relieve tension headaches and muscle tightness (anywhere in the body, including the neck), and it may help migraines.

Recommended amount: 1-2 cups of unsweetened tea.

Caution: Because of lavender's effects on neurotransmitters and insulin, those on antidepressants, diabetic pharmaceuticals, or sleep medications might need less of these drugs and should be monitored. Always ask your physician about contraindications regarding *any* medication. Also, despite lavender's gentle effects, some individuals can be allergic to it. If any signs of allergic reaction occur, discontinue use.

How To Make Lavender Tea

Quick Method

Use 1-1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons of dried organic lavender flowers per cup of water. Place the dried herb in a heat proof Pyrex measuring cup or a tea pot, pour boiling water over the lavender and allow it to steep for 10 minutes. Strain before drinking. If preferred, add honey to taste.

Overnight Method for a Larger Quantity

Fill a 1-quart Mason jar with $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of dried organic lavender flowers. Pour boiling water over the herbs, filling the jar halfway. Stir the herb mixture and then fill the rest of the jar with water until full. Put a lid on and cover with a towel overnight. Strain and drink. If preferred, add honey to taste. Refrigerate for up to 4 days. Individual portions can be reheated.

Topical Use of Lavender Essential Oil

How to Use Lavender Oil Topically

Due to individual skin sensitivity, neat, or undiluted, application of lavender essential oil is recommended via the soles of the feet. Pores of the foot sole are the largest in the body and are therefore ideal for fast delivery of essential oils into the bloodstream. Inhalation of lavender essential oil can also have profound benefits.

Adults: For undiluted application to the soles of the feet, use 3-4 drops of essential oil maximum *per foot*. Apply to the soft part of the sole between the heel and the ball of the foot.

Children: Use 1 drop essential oil *per sole* of the foot or 1 drop of essential oil mixed into 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil and massage on chest, belly, or any other part of the body. Avoid mucus membranes.

Tip: The easiest way to apply essential oils neat to the soles of the feet is to simply place an index finger over an essential oil bottle, invert the bottle, and then turn right-side up. The amount of essential oil dispensed on your finger should equal 1 drop. Be sure to allow oils to be absorbed before putting on shoes and socks.

Uses for Lavender Oil

Anxiety, Panic Attacks, Depression, and Chronic Worry

Lavender essential oil is the premiere essential oil for afflictions of the nervous system that manifest as emotional

or psychological conditions ranging from certain types of depression to PTSD. Dermal (skin) application and inhalation are both recommended for any of the above. Lavender essential oil is best used consistently, even when symptoms are not apparent. For example, a person who suffers from panic attacks will benefit from lavender by using it between attacks as a preventative measure as well as when symptoms are present. When inhaled, lavender essential oil immediately affects the limbic portion of the brain and works with the adrenals to regulate stress hormones such as adrenalin and cortisol.

Application: 3 drops per sole of the foot daily, preferably before bed. For inhalation, put a drop on a tissue and inhale as needed.

Cardiovascular Health

Dermal application of lavender essential oil has been shown to increase oxygen and decrease inflammation, thus making it beneficial for heart disease or the prevention of this condition.

Application: 3 drops per sole of the foot daily, preferably before bed. Steam inhalation is also beneficial and can be used by dropping 3 drops of lavender essential oil into hot water and inhaling for ten minutes with a towel over the head.

Chronic Pain Syndromes and Inflammation

Rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, and other pain syndromes respond positively to a topical application of lavender. Lavender is a gentle analgesic that reduces pain, swelling, and inflammation. Steam inhalation of lavender can also benefit the body by reducing physiological stress responses and reducing inflammation.

Application: 3 drops per sole of the foot daily, preferably before bed.

Steam inhalation: add 3 drops of lavender essential oil to hot water and inhale for ten minutes with a towel over the head.

First-Aid and Skin Health

A drop or two of lavender essential oil applied to cuts, burns, wounds, and other injuries can instantly promote healing and stop bleeding. Immediate application followed up with daily re-application is recommended for best results. A few drops of lavender essential oil added to water in a spray bottle makes a wonderful sunburn soother that can also be used for inflamed skin condition such as acne, rosacea, and allergies. Lavender applied to the skin after radiation treatment can speed healing and ease pain. Lavender has been shown to decrease certain types of skin cancers, especially when combined with high quality frankincense essential oil.

Headaches

A few drops applied to the back of the neck, the temples, and the forehead can relieve headaches stemming from tension, stress, and allergies. Use as needed.

Immunity

Lavender essential oil is a powerful oil to use during the cold and flu season and is best used as a preventative.

Application: 3 drops per sole of the foot daily, preferably before bed. Lavender essential oil can be combined with other immune-boosting essential oils such as clove or organic lemon. If combining, use 2 drops of lavender to 1 drop of lemon or clove.

Conclusion

In the world of alternative health, lavender is an all-around remedy with many more uses than those discussed here. It is

also a gift for the frazzled spirit in challenging times. Here's wishing you lavender's beautiful benefits!

Recommended Reading:

- The Many Benefits Of Turmeric, the Perfect Paleo Herb
- The Power of Pau d'Arco – Herbal Remedies and More
- Garlic – The Most Amazing Herb On The Planet
- Cayenne and Capsaicin, Natures Miracle Medicine

Where to Find Dried Organic Lavender Flowers:

- Frontier Co-op
- Jean's Greens
- Starwest Botanicals

Author's Recommended Brands of Essential Oil of Lavender, Spike Lavender, and Other Lavender Species:

- Birch Hill Happenings
- doTERRA
- NOW
- Young Living

Sources:

Books

- Back to Eden by Jethro Kloss
- Encyclopedia of Herbal Medicine by Andrew Chevallier
- Flower Power by Anne McIntyre
- Goddess Consciousness by Marlaina Donato
- Healing Oils, Healing Hands by Linda Smith
- Multidimensional Aromatherapy by Marlaina Donato, CA

Online

- Green Med Info