

# Lavender

## Lavandula officinalis



### Lavender Benefits

*Lavender (Lavandula officinalis) was originally found only in the Mediterranean, but now blooms in many sunny locations around the world and is also very popular as a decorative garden shrub as it produces beautifully scented purple flower heads. The flowers come in a light blue to a deep purple color. These flowers are full of medicinally active compounds.*

### Main active ingredients

The flowers are the main supplier of lavender oil, which is how the properties are extracted from the plant. The main active ingredients in lavender are 51% linalool and 35% linalyl acetate. Linalool is a terpene alcohol that is responsible for the strong floral scent of lavender.

## Health Benefits of Lavender

### ***Depression***

Holistic practitioners have often advised that **lavender oil** is a healthy alternative to prescription medications to treat depression and anxiety disorders. In 2009, The International Journal of Phytotherapy and Phytopharmacology published a **report** in which a double-blind study was performed to investigate lavender as an alternative to benzodiazepine. The six-week study, compared lorazepam; a common medication prescribed for depression to silexan; a lavender oil capsule. During the study, results were compared using the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale. It showed that those taking the lavender capsule showed as much improvement as those taking the lorazepam.

### ***Sleep Aid***

Lavender flowers can be crushed and steeped in hot water to create a **tea** that can be ingested. The flower should steep in the hot water until it cools and then drink the tea. The aroma helps to relax the sleepless person, and help to induce sleep. It is thought to be the combination of warmth, aroma and natural sedative properties from ingesting the tea that all help you to fall asleep.

### ***Relaxant***

Lavender oil is used successfully in **massage therapy** to relax muscles, reduce stress and bring about a sense of well being.

### ***Headaches***

Lavender oil can be **inhaled deeply** into the air passages and this is thought to help relieve headache pain and reduce stress levels.

## Topical Uses of Lavender

### ***Rashes and Skin Problems***

Lavender oil has healing and soothing properties. It has been reported that those who apply lavender oil to burns will see only slight marking of the skin after two days of treatment. They report smaller scabs and almost no scarring.

### ***Bug Repellant***

Lavender oil can be used to repel mosquitoes. Mosquitoes and other bugs do not like the scent and will steer clear of those with the fragrance. This lowers the chance of mosquitoes biting a human and

transferring West Nile virus or Equine Encephalitis and other viruses and diseases.

### ***Sprains and Joint Pain***

Many people who suffer from sprains and joint pain rub lavender into the skin over the site of the pain and feel improvement. The lavender oil helps the pain become less noticeable and relieves the swelling.

### **How to Benefit from Lavender**

#### ***Inhalation***

In bath water, aromatherapy machines or cool mist inhalers, lavender can provide insomnia relief, pain relief and treat circulation problems.

#### **Safety Concerns**

Lavender can be ingested in very small amounts but people should exercise caution. Lavender can have negative side effects. It can bring on headaches, increased appetite and cause constipation. Pregnant women and young boys should avoid lavender since it can often affect hormones. It's thought to cause gynecomastia in young boys before they hit puberty. It suppresses the male hormones. Some dispute the claim that lavender oil is a direct link in the cause of gynecomastia.

**Drug Combinations** Lavender causes sleepiness, relaxation and drowsiness, so taking it with other sedatives can be dangerous. It will cause severe sleepiness. Depressants and sedatives should not be combined with lavender. Chloral Hydrate can also cause serious drowsiness when taken with lavender. It should not be ingested in combination with other medications.

The concentrated extract of Lavender essential oil should be considered for topical use or inhalation only and not ingested at all.

## **The Health Benefits of Lavender Essential Oil**

### **This soothing oil can calm anxiety and improve sleep**

Lavender essential oil is one of the most popular and versatile [essential oils](#) used in aromatherapy. Distilled from the

plant *Lavandula angustifolia*, the oil promotes [relaxation](#) and believed to treat anxiety, fungal infections, allergies, [depression](#), insomnia, eczema, nausea, and menstrual cramps.

In essential oil practices, lavender is a multipurpose oil. It is purported to have anti-inflammatory, antifungal, antidepressant, antiseptic, antibacterial and antimicrobial properties, as well as antispasmodic, analgesic, detoxifying, hypotensive, and sedative effects.

## Health Benefits

Lavender essential oil and its properties have been widely studied. Here's a look at the research.

### Anxiety

While there's currently a lack of large-scale clinical trials testing lavender's effects on people with [anxiety](#), a number of studies show that the oil may offer some anti-anxiety benefits.

Several studies have tested lavender's anxiety-reducing effects in specific populations. For example, a study published in *Physiology & Behavior* in 2005 focused on 200 people awaiting dental treatment and found that breathing in the scent of lavender both lessened anxiety and improved mood.

In addition, a pilot study published in *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice* in 2012 indicates that lavender-essential-oil-based aromatherapy may help soothe anxiety in high-risk postpartum women. In an experiment involving 28 women who had given birth in the previous 18 months, researchers found that four weeks of twice-weekly, 15-minute-long aromatherapy sessions helped alleviate depression in addition to lowering anxiety levels.

There's also some evidence that ingesting lavender oil may help relieve anxiety. In a report published in *Phytotherapy Research* in 2012, for instance, scientists analyzed 15 previously published clinical trials and concluded that dietary supplements containing lavender oil may have some therapeutic effects on patients struggling with anxiety and/or stress.

A more recent review of the literature found 5 studies (2010, 2010, 2014, 2015 and 2016) showed benefits in participants with moderate to severe anxiety.

## Insomnia

Several studies have shown lavender essential oil may help promote sleep and fight insomnia.

A 2015 study published in the *Journal of Complementary and Alternative Medicine* found a combination of sleep hygiene techniques and lavender essential oil therapy helped college students get a better night's sleep than sleep hygiene alone. The study of 79 students with self-reported sleep problems also found inhaling lavender at bedtime improved daytime energy and vibrancy.

A 2018 study published in *Holistic Nursing Practice* confirms lavender's effect on sleep. In this study of 30 residents of a nursing home, lavender aromatherapy was found to improve sleep onset, quality, and duration in an elderly population.

## Possible Side Effects

Lavender essential oil may cause skin irritation or an allergic reaction in some individuals. If you experience nausea, vomiting, or a headache after using lavender, discontinue use immediately.

Because consuming lavender essential oil can have toxic effects, this remedy should not be ingested unless under the supervision of a medical professional.

## Dosage and Preparation

There is no recommended daily allowance for lavender essential oil. According to the principles of aromatherapy, breathing in the scent of lavender essential oil or applying lavender essential oil to the skin transmits messages to the limbic system, a brain region known to influence the nervous system and help regulate emotion.

One popular approach involves combining lavender oil with a carrier oil (such as jojoba or sweet almond). Once blended with a carrier oil, lavender essential oil can be [massaged](#) into your skin or added to your bath.

You can also sprinkle a few drops of lavender essential oil onto a cloth or tissue and inhale its aroma, or add the oil to an aromatherapy diffuser or vaporizer.

# What to Look For

Essential oils are not regulated by the FDA and do not have to meet any purity standards. When purchasing essential oils, look for a supplier who either distills their own material or deals directly with reputable distillers, and uses gas chromatography and mass spectrometry (GC/MS) to analyze the quality of the product.

When buying pure lavender essential oil, check the label for its Latin name, *Lavandula angustifolia*. No other oils or ingredients should be listed. If you see another oil, such as fractionated coconut oil, jojoba oil, or sweet almond oil, the lavender is diluted and should not be used in a diffuser.

Essential oils should be packaged in a dark amber or cobalt bottle and stored out of sunlight.

## Other Questions

### Can lavender essential oil treat allergies?

Many essential oil proponents recommend using a combination of lavender, lemon, and peppermint oil to relieve allergy symptoms, and claim that lavender is a natural antihistamine. A 1999 study printed in the *J Pharm Pharmaceuticals* did find that lavender oil inhibits immediate type allergic reactions in mice and rats.

### Will adding lavender oil to my mascara make my lashes grow faster?

Adding lavender oil to mascara is purported to help lashes grow thicker and faster. The theory behind this is that tiny mites live on and feast on eyelashes inhibiting growth, and using lavender to kill the mites will allow lashes to grow faster. There is no scientific evidence to support this claim.

### Is lavender essential oil a cure for baldness?

A few studies over the years have suggested that lavender oil may reverse hair loss. A 2016 study on mice showed that a diluted topically applied lavender essential oil did lead to dramatic hair growth. An earlier study (1998) looked at people with alopecia



areata showed improvement in hair growth with a topically applied combination of lavender, thyme, rosemary and cedarwood.

## A Word From Verywell

While lavender may help soothe mild anxiety, it should not be used in place of professional mental health treatment for any type of anxiety disorder. If you're experiencing [symptoms of anxiety](#) such as constant worrying, fatigue, insomnia, and rapid heartbeat, make sure to consult your primary care provider rather than self-treating your anxiety with lavender.

