

Herbal healing by using natural plants and herbs

Introduction

Lavender is a species of mint native to the Mediterranean region. It is grown there on a large scale, especially in Provence, France. Lavender is a low-growing shrub with multiple stems topped with spikes of purple flowers. The flowers are used in herbal medicine and perfumery.

Lavender was one of the most popular herbs in England during the Victorian era. Women of refinement carried hand sized aromatic “swooning pillows” filled with lavenders and camphor, so that they could be readily revived from a faint. Bed pillows stuffed with lavender (without camphor) were used to induce sleep. A compound tincture of lavender, known as Palsy Drops was officially recognized by the British Pharmacopoeia for over 200years. It was used to relieve muscle spasms, nervousness and headaches.

Beneficial evidences

For centuries, Lavender has been used as a general tonic, sedative, antispasmodic, diuretic, digestive aid, and gas remedy. Lavender tea and essential oil are prescribed to treat common minor ailments such as insomnia, nervousness, fatigue, headache, nausea and gas. Its aroma helps to stimulate mental processes to help patients with dementia and alleviate mild to moderate depression. The essential oil has antiseptic qualities that may kill several types of disease-causing bacteria. It is used to treat skin ailments such as fungus, burns, wounds, eczema and acne. It also has been used for hair loss called alopecia. Benefits of lavender for specific health conditions include the followings:

Acne, headache

Lavender stops pain caused by headaches and various skin conditions, such as acne, through the action of two compounds found in the essential oil, linalool and linalyl aldehyde. Linalool increases the threshold of pain, meaning that a stronger stimulus is required before pain is felt. In addition to stopping the perception of pain, lavender also inhibits the hormonal reactions that create inflammation and pain. It also contains an essential oil called 1, 8 cineole or eucalyptol, which is also found in eucalyptus. This compound has analgesic and anti-inflammatory effects as well. This compound has analgesic and anti-inflammatory effects as well.

Anxiety, depression and insomnia

The use of lavender oil in aromatherapy for sleep problems was verified by investigators in a six week study involving nursing home residents. Researchers found that when they perfumed the sleeping ward with lavender and lavender oil for two weeks, the residents slept as long as and more soundly than they did during a different two-week interval in which they took sleep inducing drugs. Lavender baths are considered valuable for soothing and strengthening the nervous system. In one study, patients with severe dementia and agitation benefited from an aroma stream of lavender oil. In another study, for patients with mild to moderate depression, a tincture of lavender oil (60drops a day) and a medication (imipramine) helped treatment better than either alone. In a study using lavender oil in aromatherapy, patients with dementia and agitation experienced major improvements

Volume 2 Issue 2 - 2016

Arunima Chowdary

West Bengal University of Animal and Fishery Sciences, India

Correspondence: Arunima Chowdary, West Bengal University of Animal and Fishery Sciences, India, Email arc56sw@gmail.com

Received: September 11, 2015 | **Published:** April 29, 2016

in agitation, aggressive behavior and irritability. However in one study of patients with advanced cancer, there was no benefit from weekly massages of lavender oil in terms of reduced pain or anxiety.

Burns

Lavender’s effectiveness against burns was first discovered by chemist Rene-Maurice-Gattefosse, who is considered the father of aromatherapy. Gattefosse plunged a hand he had burned in a laboratory accident into the nearest liquid, a container of lavender oil and noticed that the pain subsided quickly and that his hand healed rapidly, without scarring. Lavender acts to heal burns by stopping the action of hormone like substances called prostaglandins, which cause swelling and provoke painful constriction in the area of burn. Lavender oil also protects burned skin from bacterial and fungal infections.

Digestive discomfort and gas

Lavender soothes stomach upset, reduces excess gas, and encourages the flow of blood. Health officials in Germany have endorsed the use of lavender tea for disturbances of the upper abdomen, such as nervous irritable stomach.

Considerations for use

Lavender oil can be used as is, or used in aromatherapy, baths, compresses, or teas. You should never take lavender oil internally. Using it on skin can lead to allergic dermatitis. People with gallstones or obstacles of the biliary tract should avoid lavender, because it can stimulate the secretion of bile that that cannot be released through the bile duct. Lavender should not be used by those who take sleeping pills, as Lavender potentiates the effect of the drug. Not all species of lavender are tranquilizing; Spanish lavender for example, has a stimulant effect. Before using any type of Lavender oil in a regular basis, try it out to make sure that it has a calming effect. Lavender oil should not be used by pregnant women or nursing mothers.

Acknowledgements

None.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.