

Biological activities of lavender essential oil

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Background: Lavender essential oil (most commonly distilled from *Lavandula angustifolia*, *L. latifolia*, *L. stoechas* or *L. x intermedia*) has been used both cosmetically and therapeutically for centuries. Among the claims made for lavender oil are that it has antibacterial, antifungal, sedative and antidepressive properties, it relaxes smooth muscle and is effective against burns and insect bites. Although there is considerable anecdotal information about the biological activity of lavender essential oil much of this has yet to be substantiated by scientific or clinical evidence.

Objective: To review current research investigating the effect of lavender essential oil on psychological and physiological parameters and its use as an antimicrobial agent, and to highlight areas that require further investigation.

Conclusions: The authors conclude that there does seem to be both scientific and clinical data that support some of the traditional uses of lavender. However, data are still inconclusive and often controversial due to the lack of consistent methodology, inadequate reporting of oil types used and the lack of infection models. Standard methodologies must be adopted that allow for direct comparison of lavender, and other, essential oils. In addition, a greater appreciation of the differences between the oils produced by the different members of the *Lavandula* family is required: indeed, many of the contradictory findings in the literature regarding the activity of lavender essential oil may be explained by differences in chemical profiles between the various types of lavender. These issues will need to be resolved before we have a true picture of the bioactivity, therapeutic potential and clinical utility of lavender essential oil.

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For more information on essential oils, visit: www.aromatherapy-stress-relief.com

Dr Gillian Hale is co-founder of Aromatherapy-stress-relief.com, a home based UK business providing Aromatherapy Stress Relief Gifts.

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