

Lavender Essential Oil: An "Adaptogen"?

The term adaptogen has many meanings: to have a “normalizing effect,” to adapt or adjust (from the Greek *adapto*). An adaptogen that has different results depending upon the need seems to be an unusual meaning of the term. Lavender essential oil is the perfect example for the two opposing adaptations we discuss below.

Lavender is known worldwide to calm and relax. Babies crying with colic were soothed by abdominal massage and lavender oil in a study conducted at the Department of Pediatric Nursing at Pemmukale University in Turkey¹.

Dental patients in London who nervously awaited appointments were found to be calmer and less apprehensive after lavender was diffused in the office waiting room in a randomized-controlled trial². Additionally, in a Thai study to assess the effects of lavender oil on emotional states and other bodily systems in healthy adults, the group that inhaled lavender oil categorized themselves as “more active, fresher, relaxed than subjects just inhaling base oil.”

But what happens to lavender’s famous calming and relaxing abilities when given to people who are experiencing a bone-weary fatigue? This is where the “Swiss Army Knife” of essential oils earns its nickname. Researchers at Sanyo Hospital in Japan gave fatigued subjects aromatherapy, a footsoak in warm water containing lavender for 10 minutes, and reflexology with jojoba oil containing lavender for 10 minutes. Fatigue scores improved significantly.

No matter how you define “adaptogen,” lavender seems to be able to adapt to the needs of the person who uses it.

References

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