



Lavender Fine AOC*

(*Lavandula angustifolia*)

*(Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée - Controlled Designation of Origin)
Stock #3907-8 (5 ml.)

Lavandula angustifolia, commonly known as English lavender, French lavender or true lavender, is sometimes referred to as *Lavandula officinalis*; however, the correct botanical name is *Lavandula angustifolia*. True lavender essential oil has many different qualities, including relaxant, sedative, hypotensive (blood pressure-lowering), antispasmodic, analgesic, antiseptic, antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties. Of course, lavender oil's psychological effects are very well-known—an excellent anti-stress remedy, lavender oil improves states of irritability, impatience, extreme panic and hysteria.¹⁻³

Lavender's analgesic action makes it effective for treating headaches, especially migraines, and rheumatic pain. In fact, a blind, randomized 10-day clinical trial to evaluate the analgesic effects of lavender oil for perineal discomfort was conducted upon 635 mothers. Women using pure lavender oil as a bath additive recorded lower mean discomfort scores between the 3rd and 5th days than women using either a synthetic lavender oil or an inert substance. Incidentally, reduced discomfort during these days is significant, as this is when women are usually discharged home and perineal discomfort is high.^{1,2,4,5}

Lavender's anti-inflammatory properties make it useful for treating all types of skin problems and irritations, from pore congestion and acne, to itching insect bites and small cuts, to puffiness and skin inflammation, including burns, abrasions and sunburn. Lavender's cooling effect is likewise beneficial for sunstroke and heat exhaustion. Gentle application of oils such as *Lavandula angustifolia* (lavender), *Chamaemelum nobile* (Roman chamomile), and *Rosa damascena* (rose) are also believed to protect the skin against radiotherapy and to bring quick relief and facilitate the healing of post-radiation burns. However, it is recommended to not apply oils to the skin during the actual radiotherapy.^{1,2}

In addition, extensive clinical data suggests that the essential oils of lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*), lemon (*Citrus limon*), tea tree (*Melaleuca alternifolia*) or sweet thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), diluted in distilled water and applied as a compress, can facilitate the mending of broken skin and be used to irrigate sores and wounds.¹

Lavender essential oil contains linalol, a substance with strong sedative effects that makes this oil such an effective relaxant. For example, the sedative properties of lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) oil were studied using mice injected with caffeine. The resulting induced hyperactivity observed by researchers was decreased to nearly a normal motility only by means of inhalation of the lavender oil. Such results lend credibility to the aromatherapeutic use of herbal pillows in folk medicine for reducing stress and enhancing sleep in humans.^{3,6}

Today, clinical uses of lavender oil include the treatment of neurasthenia and insomnia, due to the confirmed action of lavender oil on the cerebrospinal nervous system. Preliminary findings by Japanese researchers have also confirmed that inhalation of lavender oil increases alpha-wave activity (a sign of relaxation) in humans.^{2,7}

Numerous studies in clinical settings have been conducted using lavender essential oil. An experimental study to determine the effects of aromatherapy on patients in intensive care was conducted at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in England. Individuals were randomly selected to receive either massage, a period of rest, or aromatherapy using essential oil of lavender. Study results showed that those receiving aromatherapy reported significantly greater improvement in their mood and perceived levels of anxiety. The participants also reported feeling less anxious and more positive immediately following aromatherapy. Such instantaneous results are plausible, since researchers have confirmed that lavender oil is quickly absorbed through human skin—the highest concentration of linalool (a main constituent of lavender) in the blood can be detected within 20 minutes following topical application of lavender oil. Furthermore, computer measurements have verified the sedating action of inhaled lavender oil on the central nervous system.^{7,8}

Another study, published in the *International Journal of Aromatherapy*, showed that 91% of intensive-care patients receiving a massage with lavender experienced a decrease in heart rate of 11-15 beats per minute. Such results confirmed a relaxation response and demonstrated that massage with an essential oil, such as lavender, was more effective for reducing stress than massage alone.¹

Lavender oil has demonstrated additional cardiovascular benefits. Due to its high ester content, including the ester linalyl acetate, lavender oil provides strong antispasmodic activity. Lavender oil is medically applied as an antispasmodic to alleviate heart palpitations and tachycardia. Researchers have also studied the effects of inhaling lavender oil on experimental atherosclerosis in rabbits. Although no effect was observed on the cholesterol content in

the blood, there was a reduction of cholesterol in the aorta and a reduction of the effect of atherosclerotic plaque on the aorta. Thus, the inhalation of lavender oil appears to exert an angioprotective effect.^{1-3,9}

Japanese scientists have further documented an anticonvulsive effect upon mice, following 15 minutes of inhalation with the pure essential oil of lavender. This treatment also appeared to reduce nicotine toxicity; however, protection was strongly dose-dependent—optimal protection was achieved through inhalation of 1 ml. of lavender oil over a 15-minute timespan. Although researchers are unclear on the exact mechanism by which lavender oil inhalation promotes anti-convulsant effects, such action may be based on an enhancement of the brain's natural calming function involving the neurotransmitter GABA.^{10,11}

Aromatherapy may eventually become a regular component in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. According to an article published in the *International Journal of Aromatherapy*, essential oils have been used to enhance the quality of life of Alzheimer's patients. For example, the essential oils of geranium and lavender are used to trigger fond memories of cooking and plants, while eucalyptus, peppermint and pine oils are used to stimulate conversation and overall memory.¹

Lavender oil has also proven beneficial in the treatment of infectious diseases, including vaginal disorders such as leukorrhea. Its antiseptic and fungicidal properties make it an excellent aerosol disinfectant, useful for all respiratory and sinus problems. Linalyl acetate contributes to lavender oil's antiviral and antifungal activity.¹⁻³

A study was conducted in France to determine which essential oils would purify and deodorize the air, destroying bacteria such as *Proteus*, *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Streptococcus pyogenes*. Several vaporized essential oils were found to effectively destroy 90% of microbes within 3 hours, including clove, lavender, lemon, mint, pine, rosemary and thyme.¹

Many people are unaware that essential oils have been utilized in cough medicines for years. Some researchers believe that the expectorant ability of such medicines is due to the local action of essential oils on the respiratory tract lining during exhalation (after the cough medicine has been swallowed). In one randomized trial of 182 institutionalized patients, a mixture of the essential oils of clove, cinnamon, lavender, thyme and mint appeared to decrease the frequency of bouts of chronic bronchitis. One advantage of inhaling vaporized essential oils is that in many cases, infections linger in the sinuses between bouts. Essential oils regarded as beneficial for the treatment of chest infections and other respiratory problems include eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*), frankincense (*Boswellia carteri*), lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*), pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), rosemary, (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) and thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*). Furthermore, lavender and thyme oils are believed to be particularly effective against infection by *Streptococcus aureus*, a common cause of colds and coughs.¹

One last note of interest—European researchers conducted a randomized, double-blind, controlled clinical trial on the effects of aromatherapy for the treatment of alopecia areata. A preparation containing the essential oils of lavender, thyme, rosemary, and cedarwood, in a mixture of grapeseed and jojoba carrier oils, were massaged into the scalp daily for 7 months. Photographic assessment at 3 and 7 months showed a significant degree of improvement in 44% of the patients using the essential oil preparation, compared with only 15% using the control preparation (which contained only grapeseed and jojoba oils). Thus, aromatherapy was confirmed to be a safe and effective treatment for alopecia areata.¹²

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