

PLANET HEALTH NEWSLETTER

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SAFFRON: POWERFUL HELP FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Saffron has been used as a medicinal herb since ancient times. But it is not until only very recently that it has caught the attention of modern science. And it caught its attention it has!



Saffron may be one of the most versatile and valuable of all herbs for mental health. An Assyrian botanical dictionary from the 7th century BCE includes in its lengthy list of uses for saffron "diseases of the brain." So, this beautiful purple flower may have been used for mental health for almost 3,000 years.

Saffron not only does it well, but it also seems to do it all. Saffron has been shown in controlled studies to be effective for depression, anxiety, stress, insomnia, Alzheimer's ADHD (attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder) and OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder).

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Saffron for Depression

The first double-blind study on saffron and depression, published in 2004, found that saffron was as effective as imipramine with the important advantage of being safer.

But that was just the beginning. Several studies have now shown saffron to be as effective as fluoxetine (Prozac) and sertraline. A systematic review and meta-analysis of 14 controlled studies published in 2019 found saffron to be better than placebo and as effective as antidepressant drugs. A year later, a new systematic review and meta-analysis of 12 double-blind studies again showed saffron to be better than placebo and as good as drugs.

The latest word on saffron comes from a just published and massive systematic review of all the systematic reviews and meta-analyses of saffron and mental health. It included 13 systematic reviews of saffron for depression and found that saffron proved to be superior to placebo and as effective as drugs in every one of them.

Saffron for Anxiety & Stress

A systematic review and meta-analysis of six studies showed saffron to be better than placebo for anxiety. But that is not all. Saffron has also been shown to be as effective as the drug citalopram for anxiety.

As we saw in the depression research, saffron also helps separation anxiety and social phobia. Other studies have shown saffron to significantly improves stress.

Saffron for Insomnia

The massive systematic review of systematic reviews found that saffron increases sleep quality. At least six studies have shown saffron to help people with sleepless nights from insomnia. Saffron helps with the severity of insomnia as well as restorative sleep. And ability to function during the day. Saffron helps you to fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer, leading to improved quality of life.

Saffron for Alzheimer's

Saffron is superior to placebo for Alzheimer's. When people with Alzheimer's take a placebo, they continue to get worse, when they take saffron, they significantly improve.

And, again, saffron is not simply better than placebo. It is as effective as drugs. Saffron is as effective as the acetylcholinesterase inhibitor donepezil. A review of the research published between 1970 and 2017 concluded that saffron is one of the herbs that improve cognition.

The mild cognitive impairment study shows that saffron can also help seniors who are not suffering with Alzheimer's but are struggling with memory and cognition. The one year, single-blind study found that, while the control group continued to deteriorate, those given saffron significantly improved on the Mini-Mental State Examination.

Saffron for ADHD

At least four studies show saffron to be as good as Ritalin while being safer. An unblinded study found that the two were comparable for ADHD symptoms and executive function. Saffron was better for hyperactivity, Ritalin was better for inattention. Kids with ADHD often have sleep disturbances and daytime drowsiness.

Both treatments improved the length of time sleeping, but only saffron improved the time it took to fall asleep. Giving the herb the advantage over the drug.

An important double-blind study found that when kids take Ritalin or saffron, the effect is significant and equal. On parent's rating scale, 100 percent of the saffron group were responders versus 96 percent in the Ritalin group. Ninety-six percent of the saffron group were marked responders versus 84 percent of the Ritalin group) not a significant difference). There were no significant differences on the teachers' rating scale. Given the side effects of Ritalin, this performance by saffron is impressive and important.

Saffron for OCD

Two studies show saffron to be at least as good as drugs for OCD. The first one compared saffron to the SSRI fluvoxamine that is commonly used for OCD. OCD scores on the Yale-Brown Obsessive Compulsive Scale went down comparably with the improvement being slightly, but non-significantly, better in the saffron group. In a study that compared crocin, one of the active ingredients in saffron, with Prozac, Scores on the Yale-Brown Obsessive-compulsive scale went down significantly in both groups, but the crocin was safer.

This huge and growing body of research points to saffron as one of the most exciting emerging herbs for mental health. It is safe, effective, and versatile, helping everything from depression, anxiety, stress and insomnia to OCD, ADHD and Alzheimer's.





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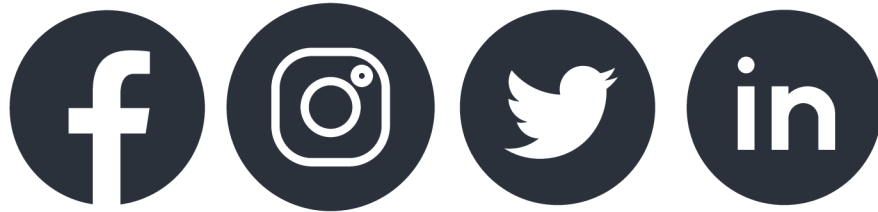


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