
LAVENDER ESSENTIAL OIL (CalmAid, Silexan) Fact Sheet [G]

Bottom Line:

Lavender essential oil is a reasonable option in patients who have not responded to FDA-approved treatments for generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) or in patients who request a natural alternative.

FDA Indications:

None.

Off-Label Uses:

GAD.

Dosage Forms:

Softgels (CalmAid): 80 mg, 500 mg.

Dosage Guidance:

Start 80 mg QHS, ↑ to 160 mg QHS after one week if needed.

Monitoring: No routine monitoring recommended unless clinical picture warrants.

Cost: \$

Side Effects:

- Most common: Lavender-flavored burping; well tolerated in most.
- Serious but rare: Weak estrogenic properties may contribute to rare cases of breast development in adolescents (avoid in those under 12; caution in those under 18), palpitations at higher doses.
- Pregnancy/breastfeeding: Not enough data to recommend.

Mechanism, Pharmacokinetics, and Drug Interactions:

- Several mechanisms proposed, but most relevant may be serotonin-1A agonism.
- Drug metabolism pathway unclear; $t_{1/2}$: 9 hours.
- Drug interactions: Limited information, though studies thus far show no inhibition or induction of CYP450 enzymes by Silexan.

Clinical Pearls:

- Silexan is a proprietary blend of linalool and linalyl acetate, along with over 100 compounds from the lavender plant.
- In a large randomized, double-blind controlled study, Silexan 80 mg and 160 mg both beat out paroxetine 20 mg/day and placebo on the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale with a large effect size of 0.87. Silexan also performed best on secondary outcome measures such as depression, sleep quality, and quality of life.
- One smaller study found Silexan 80 mg/day was comparable to lorazepam 0.5 mg/day in patients with GAD.
- Benefits are typically seen after two weeks and continue to build over three months.
- While Silexan is not sedating, patients report improved sleep quality, likely secondary to its anxiolytic effect.
- A formulation containing 500 mg of dried lavender is also available. This has been studied (taken BID) in postmenopausal women for anxiety.

Fun Fact:

Silexan is regulated as a prescription and licensed for anxiety in 14 countries. In the US, it is available over the counter as CalmAid, through Schwabe's "Nature's Way" line.