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## SAFFRON Fact Sheet [G]

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**Bottom Line:**

A very limited number of studies have shown promise for saffron in ADHD, depression, and anxiety. It's likely safe to use, so you may consider it for patients with milder symptoms or who are reluctant to take medications.

**FDA Indications:**

None.

**Off-Label Uses:**

Depression; anxiety; ADHD.

**Dosage Forms:**

**Capsules:** 15 mg, 28 mg, 30 mg, 50 mg, 60 mg.

**Dosage Guidance:**

Usual dose is 20–30 mg/day, although doses up to 400 mg/day have been studied.

**Monitoring:** No routine monitoring recommended unless clinical picture warrants.

**Cost:** \$

**Side Effects:**

- Most common: Agitation possible; well tolerated in most.
- Serious but rare: Unknown.
- Pregnancy/breastfeeding: Not enough data to recommend.

**Mechanism, Pharmacokinetics, and Drug Interactions:**

- Several mechanisms proposed, but most relevant may be related to anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.
- Drug metabolism pathway unclear;  $t_{1/2}$ : 6–7.5 hours.
- Drug interactions: Limited information, unknown.

**Clinical Pearls:**

- Saffron contains more than 150 chemicals, but the two most biologically active are thought to be crocin and crocetin.
- In Chinese medicine, saffron is used for the treatment of depression, irregular menstruation, postpartum thrombosis, and bruises.
- Two small controlled studies (one in combination with curcumin) demonstrated greater efficacy with saffron than placebo in patients with depression. Saffron has also been shown to be equally effective as antidepressants (citalopram, fluoxetine, imipramine) in mild to moderate adult depression.
- One adult study showed saffron 25 mg/day to be more effective than diazepam 5 mg/day in reducing anxiety.
- A randomized controlled pilot study of 50 children (6–17 years) with ADHD showed no difference in efficacy (per Teacher and Parent Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Rating Scale-IV) between saffron 20–30 mg/day and methylphenidate 20–30 mg/day. There was no placebo arm, and the study duration was only six weeks, so larger studies with longer treatment duration will be helpful to determine saffron's role in ADHD.

**Fun Fact:**

Saffron, the dried red stigma of the perennial herb *Crocus sativus L.*, is the most expensive spice in the world.