

Herbal and Dietary Supplements for Treatment of Anxiety Disorders

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Use of complementary and alternative medicine has increased over the past decade. A variety of studies have suggested that this use is greater in persons with symptoms or diagnoses of anxiety and depression. Data support the effectiveness of some popular herbal remedies and dietary supplements; in some of these products, particularly kava, the potential for benefit seems greater than that for harm with short-term use in patients with mild to moderate anxiety. Inositol has been found to have modest effects in patients with panic disorder or obsessive-compulsive disorder. Physicians should not encourage the use of St. John's wort, valerian, Sympathy, or passionflower for the treatment of anxiety based on small or inconsistent effects in small studies. Although the evidence varies depending on the supplement and the anxiety disorder, physicians can collaborate with patients in developing dietary supplement strategies that minimize risks and maximize benefits. (*Am Fam Physician* 2007;76:549-56. Copyright © 2007 American Academy of Family Physicians.)