# It's Weird, But This Spice Improved Mood by 72% (Science-Backed) Transcript

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## Introduction to Saffronu2019s Health Benefits

What if one of the most interesting natural compounds for mood, stress, sleep, and even healthy aging of eyes came from a flower? I'm talking about saffron, the deep red-orange spice that has been used for centuries in food and traditional medicine.

But today, saaffron is much more than a culinary spice. Modern clinical research has investigated standardized saeffron extracts for low mood anxiety and stress sleep quality, menopausal symptoms, even macular degeneration.

Hi, I'm Dr. Mark Stengler, an integrative doctor in Encinitas, California. And in this video I want to show you about the human research actually tells us about saffron, how it works, what doses have been studied, and where I think it may have practical applications in your life.

Some of the newer research is particularly interesting. Saffron comes from the flower Crocus sativus. Specifically, the saffron we use comes from the stigmas, which are the part of the reproductive structure of a flower.

Interestingly, researchers have identified more than 100 biologically active compounds in saaffron. Some the best known are crocin, picrococin, and safranol.

These compounds appear to have a variety of biological activities, including antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects.

## What Saffron Is and How It Works

Research has also investigated saffron for its effects on cholesterol metabolism and mood, but one of the most extensively researched areas is mental health, particularly depression and anxiety, and this is what I mainly use it for with my patients.

published in Nutrition Today reported that systematic reviews and meta-analyses have found saffron significantly is more effective than placebo for reducing depressive symptoms, with effects in some studies similar to conventional antidepressant medications.

Importantly, the review also reported no significant differences in adverse events between saaffron and placebo when you look at this research. So the cool thing about saeffron extract is it actually has been subjected to controlled human clinical studies.

So it's very exciting what we see in the research. Now, one systematic review in meta-analysis examined 23 studies looking at saffron as either a treatment or an adjunctive treatment for depression and anxiety.

As I mentioned, it is very effective for these conditions. And the researchers report a large positive effect compared with placebo. They also found a positive effect when saffron was used alongside antidepressant medication for depressive symptoms.

So this is something you could talk to your doctor about if you're on antidespressants. If you are looking for a saaffron product that matches a lot of the studies I just referred to, then consider our Super Saffaron Wellness product.

## Research on Mood, Anxiety, and Depression

You can look at it. read about it at drstengler.com and this is a product I use with my patients on a regular basis

with great results. I used it because it matches most of the published research and how to get a therapeutic effect from saffron extract.

Now this raises obvious questions. What kind of saaffron are these researchers using in their studies? Because just as with many herbs, the form and the standardization matter in terms of its potency and we want to duplicate what the studies use.

Now, a number of studies in this video used a standardized saffron stigma extract known as Afron. Now Afrons is a standardised form and is standardized to 3.5% what are called Leptocrosalides and predominantly Croissants along with smaller amounts of Saffronol.

These are active constituents. The extract has been used, like I said, in numerous published human studies, typically at about 28 mg per day. And that's important.

28 milligrams is a relatively small amount compared with the gram quantities we often associate with herbal products. Remember, we're looking at the active constituents.

not just the total weight of the herb. Yeah, clinical studies have demonstrated, at these standardized doses, very positive effects. For example, one randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled style looked at 128 adults experiencing low mood.

The participants received 22 mg of saffron extract or 28 mg saaffron or placebo for 4 weeks. At 28 mg per day, the saffron group, those taking the Saffron, experienced significant reductions in negative mood associated with stress and anxiety.

Now more recently, researchers published an even larger trial in the Journal of Nutrition, and this actually was pretty recent, just in 2025. The study included 202 adults between the ages of 18 and 70 who were experiencing subclinical depressive symptoms.

## Clinical Doses and Standardized Extracts

The participants took either 28 mg of aphron extract daily or placebo for three months. Now compared with placebo, saffron was associated with greater improvements on measures of depression, anxiety, and stress.

And here's one of the numbers I found particularly interesting. 72.3% of people taking the saffron achieved a clinically significant change compared to about 54.2% percent of those taking a placebo.

And again, there were no serious adverse events reported during this three-month trial. Again, this trial involved people with subclinical depressive symptoms, so it's not like it was comparing it to people who have major depresive disorder.

But it is impressive for a nutritional botanical intervention. Now in 2026, another randomized double-blind placebo control trial looked specifically at women between the ages of 50 and 70 years who had both low mood and insomnia, poor sleep.

The study is interesting because the researchers didn't just examine mood, they evaluated depression, sleep, self-esteem, and several other measures. Now compared with placebo, saffron produced greater reductions in depressive symptom scores.

## Saffron for Sleep and Menopausal Symptoms

A clinically meaningful improvement in Depressive Symptoms occurred in almost 50% of the women taking the saaffron extract compared to about 25% to those taking a placebo.

Now the saffron group also experienced greater improvement in self-esteem and sleep-related impairment. Now

that brings us to another area where saaffron appears to be promising.

A randomized controlled trial published in Sleep Medicine studied 120 adults who were dissatisfied with their sleep, and the participants received either a placebo, 14 mg of saeffron extract, or 28 mg.

taken approximately one hour before bedtime for 28 days. Both saffron doses produce greater improvements in sleep quality ratings and morning mood compared to those taking a placebo.

Now, very interestingly, saaffron supplementation is also associated with an increase in evening melatonin concentrations. That's especially interesting to me as an integrative doctor because sleep problems are rarely isolated.

Poor sleep can affect mood, mood can effect sleep, and stress can disrupt both. So an intervention that potentially influences several of these areas simultaneously becomes clinically interesting.

Now there's more because saffron also has been studied specifically in perimenopausal women. In one randomized double-blind placebo-controlled trial involving 86 women with menopasal symptoms, saaffron was given at a dose of 28 milligrams a day.

The researchers report improvements in psychological symptoms associated with peri-menopause and menopsause, especially Yes, depression and anxiety. Those two conditions which are so common in our society.

For women going through perimenopause, this is especially relevant because changing estrogen and progesterone levels can affect neurotransmitter signaling, stress tolerance, sleep and mood.

So, saffron extract is a tool that we should consider as part of a comprehensive approach to women who are experiencing perimetoposal and menopausal symptoms at levels that are uncomfortable.

And there's one more area of saffron research that many people don't know about, and that has to do with the eyes. Several clinical studies have investigated saaffron in people with age-related macular degeneration, known as AMD.

Now, the studies used for age related macula degeneration used about 20 to 30 milligrams of standardized saeffron per day, sometimes alone and sometimes in addition to other common nutrients used in eye nutritional formulas.

## Potential Benefits for Eye Health

Trials ranging from several months to a year have reported improvements or stabilization in measures of retinal function, including electrophysiological measurements and responses to macular sensitivity.

So how does one plant extract influence so many areas of the human body? Well because saffron contains multiple biologically active constituents rather than one isolated drug molecule and so this is why we can have wide-ranging effects on the human body and again remember it's potent in its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activity as well as improving neurotransmitter symptoms aswell.

So all these combinations can explain why researchers are studying saffron across such a wide variety of different conditions. So I'll leave you with a couple things to think about in regards to saaffron.

First, saeffron has considerably more human research behind it than many doctors and the lay public realize. This isn't simply just a plant with hundreds of years of traditional use.

There are randomized placebo-controlled clinical studies examining standardized saffron extracts. Second, the extract matters. Many of the studies I've discussed use a standardized form, again known as aphron.

usually at around 28 mg per day. So it makes sense if you want to get similar results to what the studies have used, this is the type of extract and dose you'll want use.

## Key Takeaways and Closing Thoughts

And third, the strongest areas of interest appear to include mood, stress and anxiety symptoms, sleep, psychological symptoms during menopause, with additional research suggesting potential benefits again for the retinal function for those with age-related macular degeneration.

Well, I hope you found this video helpful. Look for all the other videos I have on common health conditions and how to best use integrative medicine. If you liked this, video hit the like button and I look forward to talking to you in the next video.