

# Valerian

Valerian is a natural, plant-derived medicine which has been used for over 1,000 years. Its name means “Good Health.” Today, valerian is primarily used for sleep.

## How To Take It

- 450-600mg, taken 2 hours before bedtime. Higher doses do not bring greater benefits.
- May take several weeks for benefits to built up.

## Side Effects

Valerian is generally well-tolerated. Possible side effects include headache and stomach distress. Valerian is not associated with addiction or morning fatigue. Some preparations from Mexico have been associated with contaminants, and rare reports of liver impairment and visual disturbance have been reported.

## Recommended Products

Some products have had issues with lead contamination or have not had the correct amount of Valerian. The following brands were tested and recommended by Consumer Labs:




- *GNC Herbal Plus Valerian Root Extract*
- *Herbal Secrets Valerian Root*
- *Nature's Sunshine Valerian*
- *Nature's Way Standardized Valerian*

Among those, the GNC Herbal Plus Valerian Root Extract and Nature's Way Standardized Valerian were their top choices because they had the best standardization of the dose. Nature's Way was the less expensive. The full results of their testing are on the back pages.

**Bottom Line:** Try Nature's Way Standardized Valerian, \$13/bottle on Amazon, take 2 tablets 2 hours before bedtime






—Chris Aiken, M.D., updated 11/26/18




RESULTS OF CONSUMERLAB.COM TESTING OF VALERIAN SUPPLEMENTS						
Click on <a href="#">\$ Price Check</a> beneath a product name to find a vendor that sells it.						
Product Name, Listed Amount of Valerian per Unit, Serving Size, and Suggested Daily Serving on Label  Click on "Ingredients" for Full Listing	Claimed Amount and Form of Valerian Per Labeled Daily Serving  Expected Daily Amount of Valerenic Acids (C = Claimed; M = Minimum Expected <sup>1</sup> )	—TEST RESULTS—  (See How Products Were Evaluated)				Cost For Daily Suggested Serving On Label  [Cost per 2.4 mg Valerenic Acids]  Other Notable Features <sup>4</sup>  Price Paid
		OVERALL RESULTS:  APPROVED or NOT APPROVED	Contained Labeled Amount of Expected Amount of Valerenic Acids  Percentage of Valerenic Acids <sup>2</sup>	Did Not Exceed Contamination Limits for Lead, Cadmium and Arsenic <sup>3</sup>	Disintegrated Properly  NA = Not Applicable	
Nature's Answer® Valerian Root (500 mg root powder per vegetarian capsule; 3 vegetarian capsules with food or water 30 minutes before bedtime)  Dist. by Nature's Answer® <a href="#">Ingredients</a>	1,500 mg root powder  1.5 mg valerenic acids (M)  Large vegetarian capsule	<b>NOT APPROVED</b>  Note: Low dose (<2 mg) of valerenic acids	Total VAs: 0.75 mg (50.0% of expected minimum)  VA: 44% (0.33 mg) AVA: 56% HVA: 0%	Found 2.8 mcg lead per daily serving (1.8 mcg per g)	NA	\$0.16  [\$0.52 based on amount found]  <i>Kosher, suitable for vegans/vegetarians, gluten free</i>  \$9.71/180 vegetarian capsules
NOW® Valerian Root (500 mg root powder per veg capsule; 2 veg capsules prior to bedtime)  Dist. by NOW FOODS <a href="#">Ingredients</a> <a href="#">\$ Price Check</a>	1,000 mg root powder  1 mg valerenic acids (M)  Large veg capsule	APPROVED  Note: Low dose (<2 mg) of valerenic acids	✓  Total VAs: 1.5 mg  VA: 44.3% (0.67 mg) AVA: 50.1% HVA: 5.6%	✓	NA	\$0.12  [\$0.19 based on amount found]  <i>Non-GMO, not manufactured with wheat, gluten and yeast</i>  \$5.98/100 veg capsules
Swanson® Valerian Root (475 mg root powder per capsule; 1 to 2 capsules prior to bedtime)  Dist. by Swanson Health Products <a href="#">Ingredients</a>	475 mg to 950 mg root powder  0.475 mg to 0.95 mg valerenic acids (M)  Large capsule	<b>NOT APPROVED</b>  Note: Low dose (<2 mg) of valerenic acids	✓  Total VAs: 0.75 mg to 1.5 mg  VA: 44.4% (0.33 mg to 0.67 mg) AVA: 51.6% HVA: 4%	Found 1.6 mcg lead per daily serving of 2 capsules (1.5 mcg per g)	NA	\$0.03-\$0.06  [\$0.10]  \$2.99/100 capsules

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		OVERALL RESULTS:  APPROVED or <b>NOT APPROVED</b>	Contained Labeled Amount of Expected Amount of Valerenic Acids  Percentage of Valerenic Acids <sup>2</sup>	Did Not Exceed Contamination Limits for Lead, Cadmium and Arsenic <sup>3</sup>	Disintegrated Properly  NA = Not Applicable	
<b>Extracts:</b>						
Douglas Laboratories® Valsed™ (145 mg extract per tablet; 1 tablet, twice daily)  Mfd. by Douglas Laboratories <a href="#">Ingredients</a>	290 mg extract  1.16 mg valerenic acids (M)  Medium circular tablet	<b>NOT APPROVED</b>  <b>Note: Extremely low dose (&lt;2 mg) of valerenic acids</b>	<b>Total VAs: 0.035 mg (3.1% of expected minimum)</b>  VA: 41.2% (0.015 mg) AVA: 51.9% HVA: 6.8%	NA	✓	\$0.27  [\$18.10 based on amount found]  Magnesium (8 mg), passion flower powder extract (290 mg)  <i>No wheat, gluten and yeast</i>  \$12.00/90 tablets
GNC Herbal Plus Valerian Root Extract 500 mg (500 mg extract per capsule; 1 to 2 capsules before bedtime)  Dist. by General Nutrition Corporation <a href="#">Ingredients</a>	500 mg to 1,000 mg extract  4 mg to 8 mg valerenic acids (C)  Large capsule	APPROVED	✓  <b>Total VAs: 4.3 mg to 8.6 mg</b>  VA: 55.5% (2.4 mg to 4.8 mg) AVA: 37.2% HVA: 7.2%	NA	NA	\$0.30-\$0.60  [\$0.18]  <i>No wheat, gluten free, yeast free</i>  \$14.99/50 capsules
Herbal Secrets Valerian Root (500 mg extract per capsule; 1 to 5 capsules at bedtime)  Dist. by Herbal Secrets <a href="#">Ingredients</a>	500 mg to 2,500 mg extract  2 mg to 10 mg valerenic acids (M)  Large capsule	APPROVED  <b>Note: At 1 capsule, low dose (&lt;2 mg) of valerenic acids</b>	✓  <b>Total VAs: 1.8 mg to 9.1 mg</b>  VA: 52.8% (0.96 mg to 4.8 mg) AVA: 43.7% HVA: 3.6%	NA	NA	\$0.08-\$0.42  [\$0.11 based on amount found] <b>Lowest cost for valerenic acids from Approved product</b>  <i>No wheat, gluten and yeast</i>  \$10.00/120 capsules




<p>Nature's Sunshine® Valerian (520 mg extract per timed release tablet; 1 to 2 tablets one hour before bedtime)</p>  <p>Dist. by Nature's Sunshine Products, Inc. Ingredients</p>	<p>520 mg to 1,040 mg extract</p> <p>2.08 mg to 4.16 mg valerenic acids (M)</p> <p>Medium/large tablet</p>	<p>APPROVED</p>	<p>✓</p> <p><b>Total VAs: 4.2 mg to 8.3 mg</b></p> <p><b>VA: 55.3% (4.6 mg)</b> AVA: 39.6% HVA: 5%</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>\$0.34-\$0.68</p> <p>[<i>\$0.20 based on amount found</i>]</p> <p>Non GMO Project Verified</p> <p>Time Released</p> <p>\$5.98/60 tablets</p>
<p><b>Liquid Extracts/Tinctures:</b></p>						
<p>Gaia Organics® Valerian Root (333 mg of herb per ml, 1.33 ml per 40 drops; 30-40 drops in a small amount of water, twice within 1 hour before bedtime)</p>  <p>Dist. by Gaia Herbs, Inc. Ingredients</p> <p><a href="#">\$ Price Check</a></p>	<p>2.0 ml to 2.66 ml valerian root extract (from 666 mg to 886 mg herb)</p> <p>0.67 mg to 0.89 mg valerenic acids (M)<sup>5</sup></p> <p>Liquid from bottle</p>	<p>APPROVED</p> <p><b>Note: Low dose (&lt;2 mg) of valerenic acids</b></p>	<p>✓</p> <p><b>Total VAs: 1.2 mg to 1.6 mg</b></p> <p><b>VA: 47.2% (0.56 mg to 0.75 mg)</b> AVA: 45.9% HVA: 6.9%</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>\$1.26-\$1.69</p> <p>[<i>\$2.54 based on amount found</i>]</p> <p>USDA Organic</p> <p><i>Organic</i></p> <p>\$19.38/1 fl oz [30 ml] bottle (approx. 23 servings<sup>6</sup>)</p>
<p>Herb Pharm® Rhizome With Root Valerian (560 mg of herb per 0.7 ml dropperful; 1 dropperful; up to four times daily for general relaxation — may be taken 1 hour before bedtime and again at bedtime. Best taken between meals.<sup>8</sup>)</p>  <p>Dist. by Herb Pharm Ingredients</p> <p><a href="#">\$ Price Check</a></p>	<p>0.7 ml to 2.4 ml valerian root extract (from 560 mg to 2,240 mg fresh herb)</p> <p>0.095 mg to 0.38 mg valerenic acids (M)<sup>7</sup></p> <p>Liquid from bottle</p>	<p>APPROVED</p> <p><b>Note: Very low dose (&lt;2 mg) of valerenic acids</b></p>	<p>✓</p> <p><b>Total VAs: 0.15 mg to 0.59 mg</b></p> <p><b>VA: 38% (0.056 mg to 0.23 mg)</b> AVA: 20.8% HVA: 41.2%</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>\$0.27-\$1.07</p> <p>[<i>\$4.31 based on amount found</i>]</p> <p>USDA Organic</p> <p><i>Non-GMO, organic, gluten free</i></p> <p>\$11.20/1 fl oz [30 ml] bottle (approx. 42 servings)</p>

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**Combination (Extract + Root Powder):**

Nature's Way® Standardized Valerian (400 mg root powder and 110 mg extract per veg capsule; 2 capsules one hour before bedtime; for daytime use, 1 capsule with water at mealtime.) 	400 mg to 1,200 mg root powder	<b>APPROVED</b>  Note: At 1 capsule, low dose (<2 mg) of valerenic acids	✓	✓	NA	\$0.08-\$0.23  [\$0.11 based on amount found] <b>Lowest cost for valerenic acids from Approved product</b>  <i>Suitable for vegetarians, non-GMO, no wheat and yeast, gluten free</i>  \$6.92/90 veg capsules
	110 mg to 330 mg extract		Total VAs: 1.6 mg to 4.9 mg VA: 52.5% (0.86 mg to 2.6 mg) AVA: 42.8% HVA: 4.7%	1.3 mg to 3.8 mg valerenic acids (C + M)  Large veg capsule		
Dist. by Nature's Way Brands, LLC Ingredients <a href="#">\$ Price Check</a>						

 Tested through CL's Quality Certification Program prior to, or after initial posting of this Product Review.

\* Product identical in formulation and manufacture to a product that has passed testing but sold under a different brand. For more information see CL's Multi-Label Testing Program.

1 Expected minimum amounts: 0.1% valerenic acids/valerian root powder; 0.4% valerenic acids/valerian root extract and 0.015% valerenic acids/ valerian tinctures (%wt/wt).

2 Percentage of each valerenic acid of the total valerenic acids found. VA = valerenic acid; AVA = acetoxyvalerenic acid; HVA = hydroxyvalerenic acid. Actual amount of valerenic acid (VA) found per daily serving is also shown.

3 Products were only tested for lead, cadmium and arsenic if they contain any whole herbs and/or 250 mg or more minerals daily.

4 Not tested but claimed on label.

5 Minimum based on valerenic acids expected from amount of herb (assuming herb powder) equivalency claimed, i.e., 0.1% of claimed herb equivalency.

6 Based on 40 drop serving.

7 Minimum based on valerenic acids expected from a valerian tincture since product claims to be made from "fresh" herb, i.e., 0.015% of tincture.

Unless otherwise noted, information about the products listed above is based on the samples purchased by ConsumerLab.com (CL) for this Product Review. Manufacturers may change ingredients and label information at any time, so be sure to check labels carefully when evaluating the products you use or buy. If a product's ingredients differ from what is listed above, it may not necessarily be of the same quality as what was tested.

The information contained in this report is based on the compilation and review of information from product labeling and analytic testing. CL applies what it believes to be the most appropriate testing methods and standards. The information in this report does not reflect the opinion or recommendation of CL, its officers or employees. CL cannot assure the accuracy of information.

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