

Berberine – One herb works in many ways

“If I could only choose one herbal product to help people, it would have to be Berberine,” [Healthy Living](#) Wellness Consultant Erik Johnson says.

Berberine, long used as a remedy in China and India for intestinal and lung infections or topically for various skin conditions, has been “discovered” in recent years in the western world and is now being used to treat ailments ranging from canker sores to urinary tract infections.

An Iowa State University website indicates Berberine has been suggested to boost the immune system, as an anti-oxidant, and even to help ward off cancer. Other reported uses include assistance with digestive tract problems, staph infections, in AIDS therapy, lowering cholesterol and blood sugar levels, and in battling Alzheimers disease.

Fight Staph, Strep, Candida and Salmonella

Materia Medica, a compilation of Chinese herbal information, indicates Berberine sulfate demonstrates significant antimicrobial activity against a wide range of micro-organisms, including Staphylococcus (Staph), Streptococcus (Strep), Candida, and Salmonella, as well as Klebsiella, Clostridium, Pseudomonas Proteus, Shigella, Vibrio, Cryptococcus, and Entamoeba species.¹

The National Institutes of Health also report extracts of Berberine have demonstrated significant antimicrobial activity against bacteria, fungi, viruses and Chlamydia.²

Combat E-Coli and diarrhea

One of Berberine’s most important attributes is its ability to counteract diarrhea and combat Escherichia Coli (e Coli). A contract study for the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command showed Berberine exhibits usefulness in inhibiting E Coli toxins³ and a study reported in 1987 by the National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health showed a significant improvement in diarrhea symptoms for patients treated with just a single dose of Berberine.⁴

Lower Cholesterol

A controlled Chinese study showed that Berberine taken for 3 months, effectively reduced cholesterol by nearly 30% in patients being treated for diarrhea associated with diabetes and a study at Mount Sinai School of Medicine also concluded that berberine lowered total cholesterol levels significantly among patients with a history of high cholesterol. Berberine appears to lower cholesterol through a different mechanism than that used by statin drugs recently pulled from

the market, leading to the possibility that Berberine may be a useful replacement for those statins for individuals concerned about lowering their cholesterol level.⁵

Fight Diabetes

Berberine also shows great promise in reducing blood sugar associated with diabetes. Diabetic patients taking Berberine reported they felt less thirsty, consumed less water, urinated less, had improved strength, and had lower blood pressure during the study. Researchers reported no adverse side effects from the Berberine.⁶⁷

Support heart health

A study reported in the 2001 edition of Cardiovascular Drug Review indicates the cardiovascular effects of Berberine may make it useful in the treatment of arrhythmias and/or heart failure.⁸

Ward off Alzheimers

Researchers at the Saitama Medical University in Japan released findings in January 2007 indicating Berberine may be a promising treatment for Alzheimer's Disease.⁹

What is Berberine?

Berberine is an isoquinoline alkaloid found in a number of Chinese herbs including Goldenthrum (*Coptis chinensis*) and the bark of *Phellodendron amurense*. Among western herbs, berberine appears in varying concentrations in western barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*), Oregon grape (*Berberis aquifolium*), tree turmeric (*Berberis aristata*) and goldenseal (*Hydrastis Canadensis*). The Berberine alkaloid appears in the roots, rhizomes and bark.

Berberine hydrochloride or sulfate is considered most effective as an herbal treatment. Berberine appears to be most effective as an antiseptic in chloride form.

Berberine chloride from plant roots and stems also is the primary ingredient in Natural Yellow 18, a dye from natural sources.

Berberine should not be used during pregnancy as it may cause uterine contractions and miscarriage. It has also been linked to neonatal jaundice. Berberine in very large doses for more than 4-6 weeks may cause liver overload. However doses of 200-1200mg have been found to be safe for most patients.

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