

THE RISE OF BERBERINE

By Shari Barbanel

An alkaloid found in the roots, leaves, stems and barks of plants including Oregon grape, European barberry, goldenseal, goldthread, phellodendron and tree turmeric, berberine is bitter-tasting and yellow in color.

In both Native American and Chinese traditional medicines, berberine was used to treat a wide variety of illnesses, including eye conditions, diarrhea, jaundice, acne, digestive conditions and inflammatory disorders.

Today, berberine is useful in helping to regulate blood sugar, lowering cholesterol levels and reducing inflammation, as well as supporting heart health. According to MedlinePlus, berberine can also be beneficial when applied topically to canker sores.

Recently, berberine has become a hot topic on the social media site, TikTok, where users have been touting it as “Nature’s Ozempic” to help people lose weight. However, while the research on berberine’s ability to aid in weight loss is limited, studies do show that it is beneficial in helping to lower blood sugar levels.

In a 2016 collaboration between Chinese, Korean and Australian scientists at Sydney’s Garvan Institute, researchers found that berberine can be beneficial for those with type 2 diabetes. “Our studies in animal models of diabetes show that berberine acts in part by activating an enzyme in the muscle and liver that is involved in improving sensitivity of the tissue to insulin—this in turn helps lower blood sugar levels. In addition, it seems berberine can help reduce body weight,” said Garvan scientist Dr. Jiming Ye.

“Berberine has been used for decades, if not centuries, with few reported side effects,” added Professor David James, head

of Garvan’s Diabetes & Obesity Research Program and co-author of the paper. “Given the limitations of existing medicines we are excited to have evidence that berberine may be a helpful new treatment for type 2 diabetes.”

Another study published in *Science China Life Sciences* in 2015 found that berberine can help regulate blood sugar and lipid metabolism. The researchers found that berberine has an effect on blood sugar because it increases the receptivity of insulin cells, helping them work more effectively.

And in research published in 2008 in the journal *Metabolism*, a small sample of adults that were recently diagnosed with type 2 diabetes were given either berberine or metformin three times per day over the course of three months. The study found that both groups given berberine or metformin had a similar effect on lowering blood sugar.

Livestrong.com reports that the recommended daily dosage for berberine is as follows: for blood sugar management, 500 mg before or after each meal for a total of 1,500 mg per day; 1,000 mg per day to help lower cholesterol levels and 300 mg per day for inflammation.

According to WebMD, common side effects include diarrhea, constipation, gas and upset stomach. However, it is recommended to consult with a health care professional before taking berberine to find out what dosage is recommended, depending on the health issue, and to make sure that it won’t interact with medications or other dietary supplements that a person is already taking. **VR**

References:

Livestrong.com
Medlineplus.gov
WebMD.com

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF BERBERINE



1.) Berberine can be found in which plants?

- a.) European barberry b.) goldthread
c.) goldenseal d.) all of the above

2.) In traditional medicines, berberine was used to treat a wide variety of illnesses, including eye conditions, diarrhea, jaundice, acne, digestive conditions and inflammatory disorders.

- a.) true b.) false

3.) 2016 collaboration between Chinese, Korean, and Australian scientists at Sydney’s Garvan Institute, researchers found that berberine acts in part by activating an enzyme in the _____ that is involved in improving sensitivity of the tissue to insulin.

- a.) muscle b.) liver
c.) both a & b d.) none of the above

4.) Published in 2008 in the journal *Metabolism*, researchers found that both groups given berberine or _____ had a similar effect on lowering blood sugar.

- a.) Synthroid b.) Metformin
c.) Ozempic d.) none of the above

5.) According to Livestrong.com that the recommended daily dosage for berberine for blood sugar management is _____ before or after each meal for a total of _____ per day.

- a.) 500 g, 1,500 g b.) 50 g, 150 g
c.) 50 mg, 150 mg d.) 500 mg, 1,500 mg

ANSWERS: 1.) D 2.) A 3.) C 4.) B 5.) D

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