Stinging Nettle: An Anti-Inflammatory Solution to Crohn's Disease?

By Greg Arnold, DC, CSCS, October 4, 2004, abstracted from “Ameliorative effect of IDS 30, a stinging nettle leaf extract, on chronic colitis” published online August 25, 2004 in the International Journal of Colorectal Diseases


Crohn's Disease (CD) is an inflammatory disease of the bowel, usually of the lower small intestine (called the ileum) although it can effect any portion of the digestive tract. The inflammation can penetrate deep into the layers of the small intestine, usually resulting in frequent bouts of diarrhea.¹

Conventional medical treatment of CD aims at eliminating high levels of an inflammatory protein called tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF-alpha), but every time the treatment is repeated the effect lessens, eventually making it nearly useless. The stinging nettle leaf (SNL) extract, IDS 30, has shown effectiveness in helping deal with rheumatoid arthritis by effectively suppressing cytokines.² Now a new study³ has found SNL extract may also help decrease the inflammation present in colitis.

Researchers investigating SNL effects induced colitis in mice by injecting dextran sodium sulphate after which they were treated with either IDS 30 or water and monitored for clinical signs of colitis. Researcher then assessed the declining/improving symptoms of Crohn’s by measuring fecal levels of two cytokines, IL-1beta and TNF-alpha.

Mice treated with IDS 30 had “significantly fewer signs of colitis” than the placebo group that included “significantly lower levels” of IL-1beta and TNF-alpha mucosal cells. These results led the researchers to conclude that “the long-term use of IDS 30 is effective in the prevention of chronic murine colitis” and that stinging nettle “may be a new therapeutic option for prolonging remission in inflammatory bowel disease.”

Although the researchers did not make any recommendations on what amounts of SNL will elicit a decrease in CD symptoms, the lack of side effects of SNL make it a harmless yet possibly very effective addition to anyone’s nutrition regimen.

Reference:
¹ Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation of America. www.ccfa.org