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ASK THE DOCTOR

Answers to Your Health Questions

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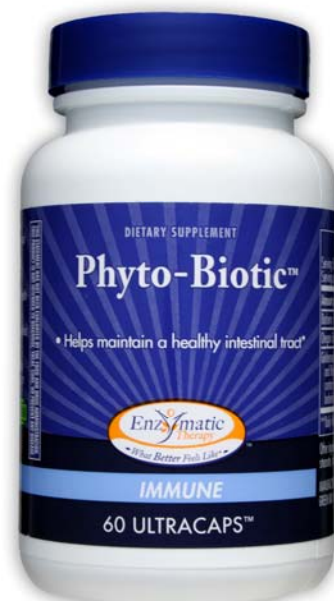
An Herbal Remedy for Gastrointestinal Distress

Barberry is a member of the family of plants containing berberine which includes other valuable medicinal herbs such as goldenseal and the Oregon grape. These plants have a long history throughout the world in the treatment of a wide variety of disorders. Much of their therapeutic effect is believed to be due to their high content of the so-called berberis alkaloids. The chief berberis alkaloid, berberine, has been extensively researched in both clinical and experimental studies.¹⁻¹²

HISTORICAL USE OF BARBERRY AND BERBERINE CONTAINING HERBS

Berberine containing herbs were used as tonics by several cultures, especially for improving the function of the digestive system. This reflects their ability to increase gastric and bile secretion.

Perhaps the most widespread use of berberine containing herbs was in the treatment of infection. Barberry is particularly effective in treating intestinal tract infection. Barberry has been used in India and China for nearly 3,000 years as an anti-diarrheal medication.^{1,3,4,9} Its success in treating gastrointestinal infections has recently been upheld in scientific literature. Researchers concluded, "these results thus provide a firm rationale for the reported clinical effectiveness of an ancient anti-diarrheal medication from the extracts of the common barberry bush."^{1,3,9}



BARBERRY

(Berberis vulgaris)

Barberry is native to the greater parts of Europe, Northern Africa, and Asia. There, in addition to its use as an anti-infective agent, it is used in the treatment of arthritis and high blood pressure. Its effects are thought to be very similar to goldenseal. Barberry is regarded as a more valuable liver remedy than either goldenseal or Oregon grape.^{13,14} Barberry's medicinal effect is thought to be due to its high berberine content.

BERBERINE

Antibiotic activity:

The antibiotic activity of berberine is well documented in the litera-

ture.^{1,4,5,6} It is an effective antibiotic against a wide range of organisms, including Staph. sp., Strep. sp., Chlamydia sp., Corynebacterium diphtheria, E. coli, Salmonella typhi, vibrio cholerae, Diplococcus pneumonia, giardia, and Candida albicans. Its action on Candida albicans as well as pathogenic bacteria prevents the over-growth of yeast that commonly follows antibiotic use.

anti-diarrheal activity:

Berberine has shown remarkable anti-diarrheal activity, even in the most severe cases. It has shown positive clinical results in relieving diarrhea in cases of cholera, amebiasis, giardiasis, and other causes of acute gastro-intestinal infection (e.g., E. coli, shigella, salmonella, and klebsiella).

Immuno-stimulatory activity:

Berberine has also shown remarkable Immuno-stimulatory activity. Foremost is its ability to increase the blood supply to the spleen. This promotes optimal activity of the spleen and the release of compounds that potentiate our immune system.⁷ Berberine has been shown to be a potent activator of macrophages.⁶ These cells are responsible for destroying bacteria, viruses, fungi and tumor cells.

Other activities:

Berberine improves liver function, reduces high blood pressure, and has anti-anemic effects.^{1,4,9}

Summary:

Barberry has a long history of use in the treatment of infectious processes and liver disorders, Its therapeutic action in these conditions is thought to be due to its high content of berberine. Berberine has been shown to possess broad spectrum antibiotic, immune stimulating, anti-diarrheal, and liver improving activity. Regarded as a bitter tonic, barberry is thought to improve digestion and absorption of nutrients.

I would recommend the following formulation:

Extr. Berberidis, radiceis. cortex (6:1) (Barberry, bark of root ex-

tract) 250 mg.

Provides the standardized extract of 100% pure Barberry, bark of root equivalent to 1500 mg. of crude powdered root. One concentrated capsule contains the biological activity of three 500 mg. capsules. Barberry, bark of root, is standardized for its strength and biological activity to produce the finest botanical extracts available.

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