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Anti-viral category: Controlling HERPES Simplex-1

WHILE THERE IS NO CURE, THERE ARE WAYS TO CONTROL THIS SURPRISINGLY COMMON AFFLICTION.

BY CARLEY SPARKS & DR. NICOLA MCFAZDEAN N.D.

The herpes simplex-1 virus (HSV-1) is one of the most prevalent infectious diseases worldwide. In an U.S. study, 32.9 per cent of adult blood donors at 25 sites reported recurrent cold sores, and 8.6 per cent categorized their outbreaks as severe. An Australian study found that 79.2 per cent of antenatal women tested positive for HSV-1, while a large study in the U.K. found that 60 per cent of both women and men tested positive for HSV-1. In Canada, it is estimated that herpes affects about 80 per cent of the population, with prevalence greatest in lower socio-economic groups and sexually promiscuous individuals. Not only is the virus widespread, experts estimate that the majority of the human population is harboring at least five herpes virus infections. Translated into sales, herpes is a relatively profitable category for retailers. OTC and prescription drug therapies typically retail for \$10 to \$40 for topical treatments and approximately \$110 and above for prescriptions, with 25 per cent margins. Natural remedies, in comparison, are typically in the range of \$40 to \$60 for capsules and \$30 to \$40 for topical treatments, with 40 per cent margins.

Herpes diseases such as cold sores, genital herpes, chicken pox, shingles, mononucleosis and roseola, were once thought of as "nuisance diseases." While undesirable, they were not considered life threatening. However, recent research suggests otherwise, indicating that the herpes viruses may be linked to other more serious conditions such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, neurological conditions, multiple sclerosis, lupus, lymphoma and other cancers.¹ HSV-1 has been specifically linked to Alzheimer's disease, trigeminal neuralgia and Bell's Palsy.²

HSV-1 can cause a myriad of different symptoms, the most common being an oropharyngeal infection or cold sores and fever blisters around the mouth and lips. Many people experience a "prodromal phase," where they feel tingling, discomfort or itching in the location where the sore is going to erupt. Other possible symptoms of an HSV-1 infection are flu-like symptoms, fever, irritability and loss of appetite. Usually transmitted through oral contact,³ HSV-1 is a life-long latent infection that remains dormant in the nerve tissue until something triggers it to enter healthy skin cells, causing sores. Outbreaks can occur quite regularly or very infrequently, depending on the individual and typically last seven to ten days. Following recovery the virus may be secreted in saliva for up to seven weeks and may be shed intermittently from mucosal sites for years.

Treatments for HSV-1 focus on inhibiting the growth of the virus and boosting the immune system. Natural treatments that have been attempted to reduce the effects of HSV-1 infections include the amino acid lysine, vitamin C, and zinc. Arginine, another amino acid, may actually trigger the herpes virus, so avoiding arginine-rich foods, especially during periods of stress, may be beneficial.

The most exciting development in the area of natural treatments for HSV-1 has come from research on the herb *Larrea tridentata*. *Larrea* products containing concentrated leaf resin have been shown to have significant anti-viral and antioxidant activity that inhibits viral replication by at least three documented mechanisms.

Larrea is available as an oral dietary supplement, and as a topical lotion or spray. Many people who take *Larrea* on a daily basis report that the frequency of their herpes outbreaks is dramatically reduced, if not

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eliminated. Larrea lotion, on the other hand, is said to provide effective pain relief during an outbreak and should be applied to cold sores and genital herpes lesions during the prodromal, or tingling, phase. The recommended dosage of Larrea is 50 or 100 mg per day, depending on the severity of the condition. Though there is some concerns over toxicity, a recent independent study concluded that a 150 lb man would need to consume over 270 capsules in one sitting before Larrea caused any adverse effects on the liver (reference pending). To be safe, Larrea should be used with caution in persons with a history of liver disease. No drug interactions have been reported.

Another herb garnering critical attention as a potent anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-fungal is Oreganol oil. According to Dr. Cass Ingram, oregano oil, specifically P73 Oreganol derived from wild spices grown in the Mediterranean mountains, has "a devastating action" against viruses, achieving kill rates above and beyond conventional drugs. "A study done by Sidiqqi determined that the oil completely destroyed herpes viruses, 'disintegrating' them," says Ingram. Other studies conducted by Ingram have found extremely promising results against the corona, influenza A and hepatitis viruses. Incidentally, the corona virus is not only the cause of the common cold, but is also linked to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Not only are essential oils extremely effective, there is no acquired resistance to them by pathogenic microbes as there is with antibiotics. This unique property is thought to be due to their mechanisms of action though that of essential oils has yet to be determined. Recent research suggests that essential oils destroy microbes by dissolving membranes, resulting in lysis and preventing viral replication. Moreover, oregano oil, particularly wild oregano oil blends, are extremely powerful antioxidants. According to Shioh Y. Wang, a biochemist at the USDA's Beltsville Agricultural Center in Beltsville, Maryland, oregano has 3 to 20 times higher antioxidant activity than the other herbs studied. "ORAC testing found that oregano oil combined with cumin oil was 30 times more powerful an antioxidant than blueberries," says Ingram, noting that oregano oil alone is four times more powerful than blueberries. Both cumin and oregano oils boost the cellular synthesis of glutathione, a potent defense against herpes outbreaks. Glutathione is the key cellular antioxidant system needed to protect cell membranes against biological, as well as microbial, damage.

When choosing an oregano product pay particular attention to the type of oregano used. "Oreganum vulgare" is not the same as the P73 formula and has no similarities. Even the taste is different, the *Origanum vulgare* being bitter, while the P73 spice oil blend has a robust, spicy taste. What's more, commercial oreganos are not true oregano species. "Moroccan oregano" is made from Spanish thyme, while "Mexican oregano" is actually Mexican sage. True oregano containing the active compounds that give it its healthful effect grows only in specific soil and climate conditions and cannot be produced in your backyard, even if the same seeds are planted. Also, look at the thymol and carvacrol content. Excess thymol is actually a harmful substance, so beware of products containing five per cent or more of thymol. Carvacrol, on the other hand, is an indicator of quality and should be no lower than 40 per cent.

The recommended dosage of wild spice oil concentrate for viral infections is 600 mg three times a day (or three 450 mg caps three times a day) and five or more drops of oregano¹ twice a day for 30 days, says Dr. Ingram. For preventative purposes, Dr. Ingram recommends that the oil be rubbed vigorously over the spinal column daily, since that is where the virus lives when it is dormant. According to one patient's testimonial, her genital herpes completely disappeared after one month of treatment with oregano oil, despite having it for several years. Though there are no known drug interactions or side effects, people taking the blood thinner Coumadin should use oregano oil with caution as it has a natural blood thinning effect. Also, those requiring large quantities of oregano oil should consider taking a probiotic as large doses may kill off some of the acidophilus in the gut.

As broad spectrum anti-virals Larrea and oregano could theoretically be used to treat any type of viral infection, including warts, colds and influenza. These herbs are best merchandised with other immune boosters and anti-viral products in your immune health category. Since stress can play a major role in triggering a herpes outbreak (and many other conditions), it is a good idea to merchandize the two categories (stress relief and immune health) in close proximity and to recommend stress relief products to customers purchasing Larrea and oregano products. For most retailers a two to four foot section blocked by specific ailment will suffice. Other natural products that will support herpes treatment include lysine, tea tree and hemp.

Being purveyors of acute medical treatments, pharmacists have the widest access to herpes sufferers and subsequently, potential Larrea or oregano consumers, making it a significant opportunity to boost incremental sales. Smaller pharmacies, which have the advantage of being perceived as a source for health consultation, can recommend Larrea as a preventative measure to herpes sufferers during an outbreak when they are most receptive to solutions and oregano as an acute treatment to their symptoms. Large pharmacies, on the other hand, benefit from a higher amount of traffic and should pay particular attention to displaying these products so that their use is easily identifiable to self-serve customers. Generally speaking capsules are the best sellers, while sprays and lotions tend to appeal to people looking for relief of inflammatory conditions and sell best when a sampler is provided. ■

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