
American Botanical Council

HerbClip

FILE: · Peppermint Oil
(*Mentha piperita*)
· Colon Spasm
· Irritable Bowel
Syndrome

Date: January 29, 1996

HC 1-29-6-3

TO: General Distribution

Re: Peppermint Oil and Irritable Bowel
Syndrome

Kingham, J.G.C. Commentary: Peppermint oil and colon spasm.
The Lancet, Vol. 346, October 14, 1995, pg. 986.

In the United Kingdom, peppermint oil is currently being prescribed for the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Known for generations as a digestive aid and a carminative, it has not yet been determined whether this more recent use of the oil is effective or beneficial. Peppermint oil has been shown to act as a spasmolytic to intestinal muscle *in vitro*, but whether or not this is clinically relevant is uncertain.

It has been reported anecdotally that the instillation of peppermint oil into the colon during colonoscopy or barium enema may reduce spasm, thereby lessening the need for intravenous spasmolytics. The results of one randomized clinical trial involving 141 patients undergoing barium enemas are encouraging. The patients received either standard barium sulphate or a suspension with added peppermint oil; fewer of those to whom peppermint oil was administered needed an added intravenous spasmolytic (5 vs. 9) or exhibited spasm (23 vs. 39). Intravenous spasmolytics are inconvenient to administer and are more expensive than peppermint oil. Further research into the pharmacological activities and applications of peppermint is called for.

Peppermint oil has been reviewed and approved by the German Commission E for its safety and efficacy for use in IBS. An enteric-coated peppermint oil capsule is available on the U.S. market and is presumably useful for patients with IBS.

Bin #78