

FEATURED ARTICLE



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QUERCETIN- AN AMAZING FLAVONOID TO THE RESCUE

Itchy eyes? Runny Nose? Yes, its hay fever time! For most of us it's a joyous return to spending time outdoors, for others it's the start of congestion, discomfort and daily annoyance. Most people who have allergies are aware of what they are allergic to, but other than taking antihistamines and keeping away from the offending elements, there is little more people know how to manage this condition. In my practice, quercetin is often the first line of defense to assist in managing the symptoms of hay fever.

Quercetin is a plant nutrient called a 'flavonoid' in the polyphenol group (like that in red wine) that gives plants their vibrant colours of reds, purples, orange, and yellows. Foods such as apples, grapes, capers, red onions and kale contain significant amounts of quercetin. Being a flavonoid, it exhibits similar protective antioxidant effects on the body like vitamin C and resveratrol. It also has supportive benefits on the immune system that helps to stabilize the release of histamine by our mast cells, making it an excellent alternative to pharmaceutical antihistamines. Below are three main areas quercetin has been used therapeutically and make it an exciting nutrient we should be getting enough of in our diet.

1) Environmental allergies- Mast cells are the immune cells responsible for allergic responses due to the foods we eat or elements in our environment. The cells when triggered produce a molecule called histamine that is responsible for the swelling, itching, mucous, and tears we experience with allergies. In a peer-reviewed study, quercetin was shown to be more effective than the pharmaceutical cromolyn sodium for mast cell

stabilization. This makes quercetin an effective natural alternative for IgE mediated immune responses such as hay fever and other allergic conditions such as contact dermatitis.

2) Gastrointestinal health- Most of our gut issues stem from inflammatory reactions from foods or toxins acquired from our environment. Our GI tract can also be victim to allergic responses that cause histamine to be released and cause our gut to become 'leaky'. Because these cells are overturned at a higher rate than other cells in our body it is important to protect our gastrointestinal cells to keep them functioning optimally. Most flavonoids, including quercetin, exhibit protective antioxidant and antihistamine effects preventing damage to our tissue including our gastrointestinal wall. Quercetin specifically has also been shown to protect liver cells from damage due to ethanol (alcohol) consumption.

3) Cancer treatment: Quercetin could potentially rise on the forefront for cancer prevention and treatment. There have been clinical trials performed using quercetin at different doses intravenously with very encouraging results. It has shown to inhibit cancer progression by blocking growth signals and triggering tumour cell death. It also has been shown to act by MCT1 inhibition associated with mechanisms of some anticancer drugs used today. Currently in my practice, I have begun to utilize intravenous quercetin as an adjunctive anticancer therapy.

With limited options to aid and assist our body from allergic reactions, quercetin is a nutrient that should not be overlooked. Because it can have more difficulty absorbing gastrointestinally, therapeutic doses are usually high. Consider using 500mg two to three times daily a few weeks prior to the start of allergy season for the best responses and to enjoy spring to its fullest.