

# Peppermint Oil Soothes IBS Pain. (Clinical Rounds).(irritable bowel syndrome)

## Pediatric News

Peppermint oil was found to alleviate the pain associated with irritable bowel syndrome in a group of 42 patients ranging in age from 8 to 7 years, Dr. Nelson noted.

In the 2-week study by Robert M. Kline, Ph.D., of the University of Missouri-Columbia, and his associates, patients were given enteric-coated capsules that contained 187 mg peppermint oil or a placebo (arachis oil). Patients weighing more than 45 kg were given two capsules three times a day, while smaller children were given one capsule three times a day.

On day 1 of the study, 100% of the children reported abdominal pain, while 90% also reported changes in stool pattern, 86% reported gas, and 62% of the children reported nausea.

By the end of the 2-week study, 76% of patients in the peppermint oil group reported significant improvement in severity on the symptom scale, compared with 19% of those in the placebo group. The mean severity of pain symptoms was significantly lower in the peppermint oil group (J. Pediatrics. 138[1]:125-28, 2001).

Pain was the sole symptom that was affected by the treatment; there were no changes in stool pattern or frequency or other associated symptoms.

No adverse events were reported with the peppermint oil treatment, and the investigators concluded that "peppermint oil should be considered for the treatment of moderate levels of pain in children with irritable bowel syndrome."

The effects of peppermint oil are thought to derive from its ability to relax the lower esophageal sphincter, to block calcium channels, and to reduce colonic spasms.

Peppermint oil also is a mild topical analgesic.