

# Healing Allergy Inflammation With Stinging Nettle

Many of us look forward to Spring. The weather warms up. We start spending more time outdoors. Plants are growing, and flowers are blooming everywhere. When spring is in the air, so is pollen. For those of us with seasonal allergies, spring is not as lovely. Fortunately, nature has a way with timing and can really help us out if we pay attention.

In the spring, just as all those flowers, grasses and trees are blooming and releasing clouds of pollen, stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*) are popping up in full force, ready to come to the rescue. Not only are they an amazing superfood and an all around useful medicinal plant, nettles work wonders for reducing inflammation.

This is an important thing to know because inflammation doesn't stop with our sinuses and seasonal respiratory allergies. Food allergies and associated digestive inflammation are a huge problem for many people, and most of the over-the-counter treatments only make the situation worse.

Nettles are a safe, soothing treatment for inflammation, offering the added benefits of vitamins, minerals, and immune-boosting properties. It's time to make friends with the stinging nettle, folks. You won't regret it.

## Nettles and Seasonal Allergies

Stinging nettles have been used for centuries as a natural treatment for seasonal allergies, hay fever, asthma, and hives. Research has shown that consuming nettles in freeze dried capsules effectively reduces histamine levels in the body, thus reducing inflammation of affected tissues. Even a simple nettle tea consumed daily throughout the pollen and

allergy season will alleviate allergy symptoms.

Common symptoms such as itchy eyes, sneezing, runny noses, and stuffed up sinuses are treated as effectively, if not more so, by stinging nettle than over the counter allergy medications. It has been suggested that nettles actually desensitize the body to allergens and decrease our reaction to the allergens over time. Nettles will also spare you the side effects that come with allergy medications, like drowsiness or irritation and ulcers of the digestive tract, which leads to a whole other set of inflammation issues you don't want.

With high levels of iron, calcium, potassium, phosphorous, sulphur, chromium, cobalt, magnesium, silicon, zinc, vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin K, iron, and chlorophyll, they will leave you feeling energized while assisting your immune system in overcoming the allergy response.

## **Nettles and Digestive Inflammation**

Inflammation of the digestive tract has become a common reality that many of us deal with, and this isn't really surprising when you look at the variety of culprits and how common they are in our modern lives. Food allergies, Candida imbalance, NSAID medications (ibuprofen, aspirin, etc.), chronic stress, sugars, highly processed foods, and environmental toxins are all potential sources of digestive inflammation and daily struggles for a lot of folks out there.

The most common go-to treatment tends to be over-the-counter NSAID medications that target pain and swelling, but they, in fact, contribute to the irritation and inflammation of the digestive tract, creating a vicious cycle that is difficult to break. Here is where the anti-inflammatory benefits of nettles come into play.

When the leaves and stems of stinging nettle are digested, either in the form of a tea, tincture, capsule, or culinary

green, the chemical constituents interfere with the body's production of prostaglandins, resulting in an anti-inflammatory response. Nettles also interfere with pain signals in the body, clean out the intestinal tract, and boost the immune system, providing relief and healing for issues of the digestive system.

Given these healing properties, nettles are beneficial in healing leaky gut syndrome and are listed as a therapeutic ingredient in the GAPS (Gut and Psychology Syndrome) diet. Nettle tea has been noted as a successful treatment for individuals dealing with gluten intolerance and Celiac disease to reduce gastrointestinal inflammation and discomfort.

Ulcerative colitis and ulcers in other areas of the digestive tract can also benefit from nettles, as they stop internal bleeding and re-build the blood with their high iron content and aided absorption.

## **Nettles for Pet Allergy Care**

Allergies are not only an issue for people; their canine companions suffer from them as well. Dog owners may associate the springtime with treating "itchy dog syndrome" along with their pet's eye discharge, ear infections, and overall discomfort. Stinging nettle is a natural anti-inflammatory for dogs to reduce levels of histamines, detox their system, and help desensitize their body to allergens. By giving dogs regular nettle supplements during allergy season, their allergies have been shown to actually go away over time. Nettles can be administered to dogs by adding it in freeze dried form to their food or through supplementation.

## **Where to Find Nettles**

If you are interested in wildcrafting your own nettles, you can find them growing in moist soils at the edge of forests,

streams, marshy areas, and pastures. You may even find them growing in your own backyard. They are one of the first plants to come up in the spring. They are very distinct with square shaped stems and opposite, serrated leaves tapered to a point, so they are fairly easy to find. With a good plant ID guide and advice from local foragers, you can venture out and gather your own nettles all through the spring months.

You can also establish a nettle patch at home in your garden either with nettle seeds from an heirloom seed company or by transplanting rhizomes from wild nettle patches. If you are working with fresh nettles, be sure to wear gloves while picking and handling them in the kitchen. The prickly hairs on the skin contain formic acid and can cause an irritation to the skin, which is a nuisance but not harmful. Cooking, drying, and grinding will break down the hairs so they are no longer an issue.

Nettles are very easy to dry and use throughout the rest of the year when they aren't found growing outside. For those of us who may not have access to foraging areas or garden space, you can always purchase dried nettle leaf and a variety of nettle supplements. Sometimes grocery stores will even carry fresh wildcrafted nettles in the spring.

## **Anti-Inflammatory Nettle Tea Recipe**

- 3 fresh nettle tops (three leaf nodes down the plant) or 3 Tbsp dried nettle leaf
- 1 Tbsp dried marshmallow root
- 2 slices fresh ginger root

Boil 4 cups water, and pour over herbs. Steep for 7 minutes, covered. I prefer using a quart mason jar with a lid.

# Hay Fever Relief Nettle Tea Recipe

- 3 fresh nettle tops (three leaf nodes down the plant) or 3 Tbsp dried nettle leaf
- 1 Tbsp dried elder flower
- 1 Tbsp dried chamomile

Boil 4 cups water, and pour over herbs. Steep for 7 minutes covered. I prefer using a quart mason jar with a lid.

## Recommended Reading:

- *Five Common Weeds to Cultivate for Health and Nutrition*
- *Candida, Gut Flora, Allergies, and Disease*
- *The Amazing Benefits of Stinging Nettles, with Recipes*
- *Allergy Free in Five Days (foods, dander, dust, seasonal, etc.)*
- *What Causes Chronic Inflammation, and How To Stop It For Good*
- *The Amazing Benefits of Stinging Nettles, with Recipes*

## Related Products:

- Gaia Herbs Nettle Leaf Capsules
- Gaia Herbs Nettle Leaf Liquid Extract
- Douglas Labs Nettle Capsules

## Sources:

- *Nettles: The Sting—"Minor"; Healing Properties—"Major"* – Idaho Observer
- *Stinging Nettle* – Dr. Christopher's Herbal Legacy
- *Stinging Nettle* – University of Maryland Medical Center
- *Stinging Nettle Benefits* – Herb Wisdom
- *What Causes Chronic Inflammation and How to Stop it For Good* – OLM
- *Nettle Tea: A Remedy for the Gluten-Free?* – G-Free Foodie
- *Gut and Psychology Syndrome* – GAPS Diet

- *Natural Anti-Inflammatory Agents for Pain Relief* – NCBI
- *Nettles for Allergy Relief (In Dogs)* – Green JuJu Kitchen
- *Understanding Canine Allergies* – The Whole Dog Journal
- *Take a Walk on the Wild Side: Wildcrafting Nettles* – A Mountain Hearth
- *10 Benefits of Stinging Nettle*