

L'epidemia silenziosa della malattia epatica

La maggior parte della gente pensa che le più frequenti malattie del fegato siano causate da alcol o da infezioni virali.

Oggi la principale causa di epatite è l'eccesso di peso.

Questa forma di degenerazione del fegato associata a obesità e a glicemia alta è chiamata steatosi epatica non alcolica (NAFLD).

È sorprendente sapere che il 48% dei ragazzi adolescenti obesi si stima abbia la NAFLD. È la più comune causa di malattia epatica cronica nei bambini e adolescenti negli Stati Uniti ed è causata da obesità, insulino-resistenza e sindrome metabolica.

L'unica speranza per arginare questa malattia la marea di NAFLD è l'associazione di trattamenti con principi attivi farmacologici efficaci, cambiamento nello stile di vita e adeguate terapie nutrizionali. Fortunatamente, composti come la silimarina che si trova nel cardo mariano hanno dimostrato la capacità di proteggere il fegato contro i danni inferti dalla steatosi epatica non alcolica (NAFLD).

La Steatosi epatica non alcolica (NAFLD) è causata da un accumulo di grasso in eccesso nel fegato. Può portare a fibrosi epatica, cirrosi e insufficienza epatica, e aumenta nettamente il rischio di cancro al fegato.

Questa malattia rimane spesso sotto diagnosticata e come, per molte altre malattie degenerative, l'infiammazione e lo stress ossidativo contribuiscono a generarla.

Studi di laboratorio hanno scoperto i numerosi modi in cui silimarina e il suo costituente attivo silibinina aiutano a proteggere il fegato; essi potenziano i processi protettivi naturali delle cellule del fegato e diminuiscono contemporaneamente una serie di mediatori dell'infiammazione (questi includono iNOS, fattore di necrosi tumorale alfa, interleuchine-6 e 1 beta, cicloossigenasi-2 [COX-2], e fattore nucleare kappa-beta [NF-kB]).

NAFLD è caratterizzata dalla presenza di eccessivi depositi di grasso nelle cellule epatiche, che normalmente ne contengono pochissimo. Nei paesi sviluppati la percentuale di adulti che soffre di NAFLD è tra 30 e il 50%.

Questo è preoccupante, poiché un terzo dei pazienti con NAFLD progredirà a una condizione più grave nota come steatoepatite non alcolica o NASH.

Questo tipo di danno epatico conduce direttamente il fegato alla fibrosi che distrugge la maggior parte delle funzioni naturali del fegato stesso. Sappiamo anche che l'infiammazione in generale favorisce il cancro e fa comprendere perché NASH è ora considerata un fattore di rischio per il carcinoma epatocellulare, la forma più comune di cancro primario del fegato.

Alla base dell'epidemia di NAFLD vi è l'obesità, strettamente legata allo sviluppo del diabete di tipo II. Sono comunemente indicati come un unico problema: obesità e contribuiscono alla sindrome metabolica che accelera l'invecchiamento, favorendo le patologie cardiovascolari precoci e neurodegenerative.

È impossibile non considerare l'importanza del fegato per la salute e la longevità. Il fegato elabora i nutrienti necessari per sopravvivere e produrre energia dal cibo che assumiamo. Produce decine di enzimi e di altri fattori vitali per la coagulazione del sangue, per il sistema immunitario, è necessario al controllo metabolico della glicemia e dei livelli dei lipidi nel sangue. Produce la bile, che aiuta a emulsionare e assorbire i grassi. Funge da deposito dello zucchero che viene rilasciato quando necessario per sostenere il fabbisogno energetico. Disintossica il corpo dalla maggior parte delle tossine chimiche che ingeriamo, tra cui l'alcol e i farmaci. E' deposito di minerali come ferro e rame e di alcune vitamine.

Il 100% del sangue proveniente dal tubo digerente va direttamente al fegato per essere elaborato, il fegato è costantemente esposto ad alti livelli di grassi, zuccheri e sostanze chimiche potenzialmente dannose provenienti dal cibo. E' molto sensibile alle fluttuazioni di zucchero nel sangue e soprattutto agli effetti dell'obesità.

L'epidemia di obesità e la sindrome metabolica sono responsabili di una crescente minaccia per la salute e la longevità.

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