

Varicose Veins: Complementary/Alternative Medicine

Dilated, tortuous, superficial veins in the legs

May be without symptoms or may be associated with fatigue, aching discomfort, feelings of heaviness, or pain in the legs

Fluid retention (edema), discoloration, and ulceration of the skin may develop. Women are affected four times as frequently as men

QUICK REVIEW

- A diet high in fiber prevents varicose veins.
- Veins can be strengthened with flavonoid-rich extracts.
- Several herbal extracts have been shown to act as *venotonics-agents* that enhance the structure, function, and tone of veins-and produce excellent clinical results.

TREATMENT SUMMARY

Varicose veins are extremely common in our society, largely due to dietary and lifestyle factors. The supplements and botanicals are recommended to strengthen the walls of the vein and increase fibrinolytic activity. To treat or reduce the risk of developing varicose veins, we recommend that you:

1. Consume a diet high in fiber
2. Avoid standing in one place for long periods of time (use elastic support stocking if standing is necessary)
3. Employ measures to increase the integrity of the connective tissue and vein wall
4. Enhance fibrinolytic activity
5. Exercise regularly
6. Avoid being obese

Diet

Consume a high-complex-carbohydrate diet rich in dietary fiber. The diet should contain liberal amounts of proanthocyanidin- and anthocyanidin-rich foods, such as blackberries, cherries, blueberries etc. Garlic, onions, ginger, and cayenne should also be consumed liberally.

Nutritional Supplements

- Vitamin C: 500-3,000 mg per day
- Vitamin E: 200-600 IU per day
- Bioflavonoids: 100-1,000 mg per day
- Zinc: 15-30 mg per day

Botanical Medicines

Choose one or more:

- Horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*): use extracts that provide a daily dosage of 50 mg escin
- Gotu kola (*Centella asiatica*): use extracts that provide a daily dosage of 30-60 mg triterpenic acids
- Butcher's broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*): use extracts standardized to contain 9-11% ruscogenin at a dosage of 100 mg three times per day
- Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*): use extracts standardized to contain 25% anthocyanoside; 80-160 mg three times per day
- Grape seed (*Vitis vinifera*) or pine bark (*Pinus maritima*): use extracts standardized to contain 95% or more procyanidolic oligomers (PCOs or OPCs); 150-300 mg per day
- Bromelain (1,200-1,800 mcu): 500--750 mg two to three times per day between meals