



## *Your Monthly Update*

*Dear Colleague*

Welcome to the November 2009 newsletter from Pure Bio Ltd.

### *Did you know:*

Aspirin may prevent plaque build-up but its blood-thinning qualities can also cause stroke and abdominal bleeding. Overall, its risks outweigh any benefits when taken by a healthy individual, according to the Anti-thrombotics Trialists collaboration at Oxford University (Lancet, 2009; 373: 1849-60)

The chosen topic for this month is:

## **Varicose veins**

### **Protocol Summary**

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Nutritional Supplements</b>	<b>Botanical Medicine</b>
<b>Other</b>	Flavonoids (hydroxyethylrutosides) Proanthocyanidins Grape pip Vitamin E	Butcher's broom Gotu kola Horse chestnut Witch hazel Dandelion Bilberry
<p><b>Primary</b> – Reliable and relatively consistent scientific data showing a substantial health benefit.</p> <p><b>Secondary</b> – Contradictory, insufficient, or preliminary studies suggesting a health benefit or minimal health benefit.</p> <p><b>Other</b> – An herb is primarily supported by traditional use, or the herb or supplement has little scientific support and/or minimal health benefit.</p>		

## Symptoms

Varicose veins are weakened, enlarged blood vessels which result from damaged venous valves. Under normal circumstances these valves prevent blood from pooling, but if blood cannot circulate freely, the excess pressure allows the water to escape into the surrounding tissues, causing oedema. This is the reason for the associated heaviness, tiredness and aching of varicose veins. Leg cramps are also more likely to occur due to the impaired circulation. As the deterioration progresses, the veins become painful and inflamed. The resulting lack of circulation affects the surrounding tissues, causing the skin to become itchy and thin. Brown skin discoloration can also occur. Ultimately leg ulcers may begin to develop.

Surgical removal of varicose veins exacerbates the situation as it increases the demands on an already overburdened venous system.

In the early stages, varicose veins are preventable and treatable, but as the process continues, the condition becomes more difficult to heal. Varicose veins may also lead to blood clots or thrombosis. Deep vein thrombosis, which can develop from varicose veins, may become a serious condition if the blood clot detaches and travels to other body parts.

Varicose veins, which affect about half of all people in middle age, occur more commonly in women; often precipitated initially by pregnancy.

## Causes

Veins become varicose when they are overburdened with blood, which can occur for a number of reasons. While the veins feed blood back to the heart, they are easily susceptible to excess strain. Exercise, especially leg exercises like walking and biking, helps the venous system return blood to the heart, whereas standing for long periods of time will significantly and increasingly increase the pressure on the veins. Sitting for prolonged periods has a similar effect and crossing the legs while sitting further interferes with circulation. In hot weather, the veins are naturally distended and circulation is more sluggish. Walking as much as possible and putting the legs up at the end of the day will ease the problem. Pressure on the venous system from straining while constipated increases the risk of varicose veins, as does haemorrhoids and varicocele. Pregnancy also puts pressure on the veins in the legs and can also cause haemorrhoids. Age and obesity increase the risk of varicose veins, due to a loss of tissue elasticity.

## Lifestyle Modification

- Lie supine with the legs elevated for ten to fifteen minutes every day before bed. This helps to prevent varicose veins; and reduce the pain of an existing problem.
- *Swim, cycle and walk briskly to improve circulation and help keep the bowels regular.*
- Walk barefoot whenever possible, ideally on sandy beaches.
- *Douche the knees and thighs regularly with cold water and alternating hot and cold foot baths to improve circulation and help avoid blood stagnation.*

- Elevate the bed mattress 20cm at the foot end.
- *Avoid sitting or standing for prolonged periods of time.*
- Avoid tight socks or stocking tops, or anything that hinders blood circulation to and from the lower extremities.
- *Avoid crossing the legs when sitting.*
- If the varicose veins have deteriorated beyond repair, use compression stockings with supportive shoes.

## Nutrition

General dietary advice is directed at a healthy diet that will improve circulation and ensure a regular and healthy bowel activity.

Foods which will prevent constipation (high-fibre foods) include:

- Raw vegetables including the stems
- fruit including the peel
- cabbage – red and white
- Brussels sprouts
- nuts and seeds
- dried plums
- figs
- dates
- wholegrain breads and cereals

Flax seeds are a natural laxative, and can be added to cereal or taken as flax seed oil and used as a dressing for salads or baked potatoes. Flax seeds also absorb water and therefore soften the faeces.

Avoid saturated fats from red meat and trans-fatty acids found in hydrogenated oils such as margarine and most commercially processed foods. The bitters in grapefruit juice have a stimulating effect and help alleviate varicose veins. Wheat germ has a high natural content of vitamin E, which has a dilatory effect on the blood vessels. To optimise the integrity of the blood vessel walls, eat foods rich in vitamins B and C, such as whole grains, green vegetables and citrus fruits.

## Nutritional Supplement Treatment Options

A controlled clinical trial found that oral supplementation with hydroxyethylrutosides (HR), a type of flavonoid that is derived from **rutin** (found in [Aqua-Balance](#)), improved varicose veins in a group of pregnant women.

A small, preliminary trial found that supplementation with 150 mg of [Pycnogenol](#) per day improved the function of leg veins after a single dosage in people with widespread varicose veins.

[Vitamin E](#) is well-documented in helping to improve circulation and tissue elasticity. It also prevents the formation of blood clots.

[Grape Pip](#) is a polyphenol that has been shown to maintain healthy collagenase and elastase, thus supporting vascular endothelial integrity.

## Botanical Treatment Options

Although **witch hazel** is known primarily for treating haemorrhoids, it may also be useful for varicose veins. Topical use of witch hazel to treat venous conditions is approved by the German Commission E. Application of a witch hazel ointment three or more times per day for two or more weeks is necessary before results can be expected.

Since varicose veins are largely precipitated by constipation and poor blood circulation, botanical options are directed at the use of herbs that support liver function:

[Dandelion root](#) stimulates the liver and increases bile flow.

[Chicory tea](#) improves liver and kidney functions.

[Horsetail](#) strengthens connective venous tissue.

[Horse chestnut](#) seed extract decreases capillary permeability, increases the tone of slack and dilated veins and helps to reduce venous inflammation and thrombosis. It can be taken orally or used as an external application for various disorders of venous circulation, including varicose veins. Studies in humans have shown that a standardized extract of horse chestnut seed reduced the formation of enzymes thought to cause varicose veins. Topical gel or creams containing 2% aescin can be applied topically three or four times per day to the affected limb(s). Additionally, horse chestnut can be added as an infusion to bath water.

[Ginkgo biloba](#) has a supportive role to both veins and arteries. Ginkgo has been shown to cause vasodilation, particularly of the peripheral blood vessels.

[Bilberry](#) strengthens capillary and vein walls and also helps to relieve constipation.

[Arnica gel](#) can be massaged into the legs for symptomatic relief of varicose veins.

Oral supplementation with **butcher's broom** or **gotu kola** may also be helpful for varicose veins.

## Homeopathy

Varicose veins should be treated primarily with physical therapy. However, if the veins have become inflamed and painful, homeopathy can promote healing. Choose one of the remedies below in a 6c strength, repeating three times daily until symptoms improve or for up to two weeks. Dissolve 2 tablets under the tongue.

**Arnica** is useful for treating veins that have been affected by bruising and pain after an injury.

**Hamamelis** is indicated in many venous problems and should be used if bruising remains. Like Arnica, it provides symptomatic relief to venous soreness and bruising.

Pulsatilla is often useful for healing varicose veins that develop during pregnancy. Indications for use are if the veins are swollen and painful and are aggravated by heat and allowing the legs to hang.

## **Tissue Salts**

*Take 4 tablets four times daily under the tongue.*

Calc fluor helps to re-establish tissue elasticity, if the veins are not inflamed but the tissues have become sluggish. The skin is typically tinged blue.

Ferr phos is useful if the tissues have become inflamed and there is heat, throbbing pain and redness.

Mag phos is useful for relieving painful leg cramps associated with varicose veins.

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