



# Vascular Health

## Holistic Solutions for Chronic Venous Insufficiency, Varicose Veins and Other Vascular Problems

Blood is the life-giving fluid of the body. Through a vast network of arteries, blood is carried to the body's tissues, where oxygen and nutrients are exchanged for carbon dioxide and waste. Then, through an equally vast network of veins, the blood is carried back to the heart to be replenished and recirculated. Because heart attacks and strokes are leading causes of death, problems with the arteries and heart often get more attention than problems with the veins, but it is important to keep the venous portion of the circulatory system working properly.

Vascular conditions like varicose veins, spider veins and easy bruising aren't just cosmetic issues, they are signs of deeper health problems. Varicose veins, for example, are an indication of chronic venous insufficiency (CVI). This occurs when vascular damage impedes the body's ability to move blood from the legs towards the heart. This causes blood to pool in the legs, where it can cause swelling, pain and, in some cases, leaking fluids causing edema.

Symptoms of CVI include capillary impermeability and bruising of muscle tissue, edema, swelling and heaviness, low-grade inflammation, itching, irritation and potential ulceration. There may also be palpable nodules due to fibrin accumulation and pressure, and congestion in the abdominal, prostatic and uterine regions. Chronic Venous Insufficiency may be an underlying issue in hemorrhoids, uterine fibroids in women and prostate problems in men.

### Varicose Veins

The enlarged, deformed and knotted varicose veins typically affect the legs, ankles and feet. This is because the veins in the lower half of the body have to work against gravity to bring blood back to the heart. Since there is minimal pressure in the veins, they contain tiny valves that keep blood from flowing backward and "pooling." If these valves don't close all the way, blood moves backward in the veins, causing them to become distended, or varicosed.

Varicose veins are usually visible on the skin, but they can also make their presence known through restless legs, throbbing, cramping, swelling and even pain that gets worse when you sit or stand for long periods. Varicose veins can eventually cause blood clots, which can dislodge and lead to stroke, heart attack, pulmonary embolism or deep vein thrombosis.

There are a number of factors that pre-dispose a person to varicose veins. First, they are four times more common in women and are very common in pregnancy. Prolonged sitting or standing and inactivity can inhibit venous circulation, as can chronic constipation and straining to pass the stool. Finally, there may be a genetic tendency for the problem as there is a family history of varicose veins in 50% of the people who suffer from them. Age also contributes to the risk of CVI and varicose veins.

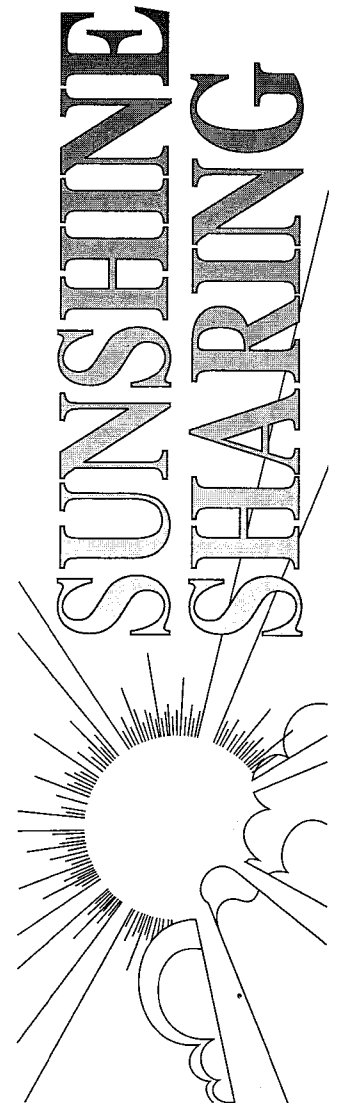
### Other Venous Problems

Spider veins are like varicose veins except they are smaller and closer to the surface of the skin. They can be red or blue and look like spiderwebs or tree branches. They are typically found on the legs and face. Spider veins are a sign of poor circulation and have many of the same causes as varicose veins.

Furthermore, when a person bruises easily, this is also a sign of venous problems. It indicates that blood vessels, particularly the veins, lack tone and are easily damaged, allowing blood to pool in the tissues. Many of the remedies that aid varicose veins and spider veins will also help a person not to bruise so easily.

In this issue of *Sunshine Sharing*, we'll explore some lifestyle changes, dietary changes and supplements that may heal CVI, varicose veins, spider veins, bruises, hemorrhoids and other problems related to a lack of vascular health.

**Turn the page to discover how to enhance vascular health holistically...**



### Important Notice

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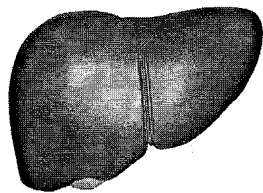
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# A Holistic Approach to Vascular Health

Before we can address vascular problems holistically, we need to understand more about the venous portion of the cardiovascular system. The human body has three major types of veins: superficial veins, which lie close to the skin, deep veins, which lie in groups of muscles and perforator veins, which connect the superficial to the deep veins. Because blood moving through the veins flows under low pressure, veins have one-way valves in them to prevent back flow. These valves require a certain amount of muscle tension or tone to work properly.

Three of the body's most important veins are the inferior vena cava, the superior vena cava and the hepatic portal vein. The inferior vena cava, the body's largest vein, runs directly to the heart, carrying blood returning from the lower half of the body. The superior vena cava is a short, yet large diameter vein that carries blood from the upper half of the body back to the heart.

Finally, the hepatic portal vein carries blood from the gastrointestinal tract and spleen to the liver. There it breaks down into a second bed of capillaries where nutrients are processed and toxins are filtered out. This blood is then collected into another vein and carried out of the liver and into the inferior vena cava. This is important to know because it helps us understand why liver problems can be the underlying cause of CVI.



## The Liver and CVI

Since the liver receives a large portion of its blood from the venous system, congestion in the liver can cause a build up of congestion in the inferior vena cava. This, in turn, creates problems in the entire venous circulation in the lower half of the body, which can compromise valve function, and cause varicose veins. However, that's just part of the problem. Congested venous circulation in the lower extremities can also contribute to hemorrhoids and edema in the lower half of the body. It may even be a contributing factor in menstrual pain, uterine fibroids and prostate problems.

This was explained by herbalist Michael Moore, in his *Medicinal Plants of the Desert and Canyon West*.

When the liver is overworked ... its blood vessels enlarge, the fluids move more slowly through it as it tries to increase its working area; it gets enlarged and congested. Blood trying to get in backs up; this is called portal hypertension. The portal vein ... draws blood from the intestinal tract and spleen; if the blood can't get in fast enough, the blood drawn from closer tissues gets in first and the other blood backs up. The farther from the liver, the more the backup. In mild portal hypertension, blood from the colon and pelvis can bypass through smaller veins into the general circulation. As these veins aren't large enough, the returning blood from the legs gets backed up going into them. With all that used junk-blood from the colon going through them, they enlarge, balloon out, and become venosities and varicosities. And so it goes, with pelvic congestion, hemorrhoids, hydroceles, chronic urethritis, enlarged prostate and cervix, eventually with leg varicosities [varicose veins].

So, if you have problems with the health of your veins, you may have a congested liver. Symptoms of liver congestion include nervous energy and difficulty falling asleep at night, waking up feeling groggy and dull, headaches, constipation, eruptive skin diseases, PMS with anger and irritability, and abdominal bloating. There may be a sense of stuffiness or pressure under the right rib cage.

If you do have liver symptoms, it may help to take **Milk Thistle Combination** to decongest the liver. This blend helps protect the liver from toxins and aids liver function in general. **Liver Balance** is another good formula for clearing congestion from the liver, particularly if you tend to be moody or irritable. If you are constipated, consider the **Tiao He Cleanse**, a colon cleansing program that includes Liver Balance. Cleansing the liver and colon will help to relieve liver congestion, reducing back pressure in blood vessels and improving blood flow through the legs and pelvis.

## Diet and Lifestyle Helps

As with any condition, diet and lifestyle play a big role in both prevention of and recovery from venous health problems. Here are some specific recommendations for improving venous circulation and healing varicose veins and spider veins.

### Exercise

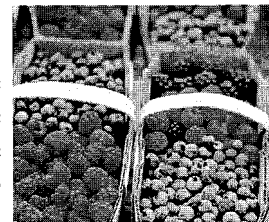
When the legs are moving (as in walking), the muscular contractions greatly enhance both venous circulation and blood flow to the brain. Perhaps you've noticed how your head will feel clearer after a walk. So, exercises like walking, jogging, swimming, low-impact aerobics, and using an elliptical machine are helpful for preventing CVI. Leg lifts, knee bends, walking on tiptoes, walking on your heels and stretching your calves can also increase your blood flow while strengthening your leg muscles. If your lifestyle or work environment requires you to sit or stand for long periods, elevate your legs frequently.



However, if you already have varicose veins, experts recommend that you avoid activities such as high-impact aerobics, jogging and strenuous cycling, as they raise the blood pressure in your legs and may cause varicose veins to become more pronounced. Furthermore, while moderate exercise can relieve the symptoms of varicose veins, there is no evidence that it gets rid of them by itself.

### Diet

Varicose veins and spider veins are veins that have lost tone and become stretched and enlarged. A lack of tone in the veins can also make one prone to easy bruising. Vitamin C, flavonoids, polyphenols, proanthocyanidins and other antioxidant compounds in foods can increase the tone of blood vessels, preventing swelling and bruising, and aiding the healing of varicose veins.



In particular, blue and black colored berries, purple grapes and pomegranates are very helpful for improving tone in blood vessels. So are citrus fruits (with some of the peeling) and **rose hips**,

which are an excellent remedy for easy bruising. Also consider taking **Citrus Bioflavonoids with Vitamin C** if you have spider veins or bruise easily.

In addition to consuming antioxidant rich berries and fruits, it is also helpful to avoid table sugar, high fructose corn syrup and other refined carbohydrates. These simple carbohydrates spike insulin production, which increases insulin levels and impairs circulation. This is also helpful in managing one's weight and maintaining normal weight also puts less stress on circulation in the lower part of the body.

## Clothing

Clothing that fits tightly around your legs or your groin can impede blood flow and make varicose veins worse. High-heeled shoes also cause problems. It is best to wear tennis shoes or flats because these encourage the use of your calf muscle when walking.

For those who already have varicose veins, compression stockings can help. These special stockings gently squeeze the legs, helping the blood circulate more efficiently. Compression stockings are available in most pharmacies and medical stores. They must be properly fitted to your legs, however, so ask your pharmacist to help you with this.

## Herbs for CVI

Herbs can be very helpful for improving venous blood flow, toning blood vessels and healing varicose veins and other vascular problems. Two of the best herbs for this purpose are butcher's broom and horse chestnut.

### Butcher's Broom

Butcher's broom has been demonstrated in clinical studies to control CVI and lymph edema. It contains steroidal saponins that help to tone veins. Ruscogenin, one of the major components, also exerts an anti-inflammatory effect. Due to its vasoconstrictive properties, butcher's broom may help to decrease hemorrhaging and swelling in injured tissue. Butcher's broom can also be helpful for hemorrhoids, spider veins and for preventing blood clots (especially when used with 800 mg. of Vitamin E daily).

Butcher's broom combines well with **Mega-Chel** to help reduce varicose veins. Mega-Chel is loaded with antioxidants and nutrients that aid blood flow, prevent cholesterol from oxidizing and reduce arterial plaque formation. Taking 2-4 capsules of Mega-Chel and 4-6 capsules of butcher's broom daily can increase blood circulation, tone veins, prevent bruising and aid in healing ulcerations in the legs due to poor circulation.

### Horse chestnut

Horse chestnut has been shown in many studies to improve symptoms of CVI. It contains a mixture of triterpene glycosides or saponins that are anti-inflammatory, tone the veins and reduce capillary wall permeability to reduce swelling. It is helpful for varicose veins, peripheral vascular disease, edema and heaviness in the legs. It is also useful for hemorrhoids that are due to portal vein obstruction. Horse chestnut may also be helpful for easing sharp shooting pains in the back, reducing pelvic congestion and pain in PMS, and reducing prostate inflammation and swelling.

Both of these herbs are present in **Vari-Gone**, an excellent natural remedy for CVI, varicose veins and spider veins. Besides butcher's broom and horse chestnut, Vari-Gone also contains vitamin C, rutin, hesperidin and lemon bioflavonoids, antioxidants that tone blood vessels. Taken internally, this formula can ease swelling and heaviness in the legs, reduce swelling in varicose veins and may even be helpful for prostate swelling and uterine fibroids.

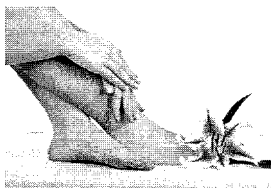
## Improving Circulation and Blood Flow

Remedies that enhance the flow of blood will take stress off the veins and help to promote healing. A good remedy to consider here is **HS II**, which contains hawthorn, capsicum and garlic. **Hawthorn** berries contain constituents that increase the pumping force of the heart muscle and boost cardiac output. In short, they reduce resistance to blood flow. They also contain constituents that improve vascular tone.

**Capsicum** is widely known for its ability to boost blood circulation throughout the body. This is especially useful for those with spider veins, which are essentially tiny capillaries filled with stagnant blood that has leaked from a surrounding vein. Taking cayenne internally helps to dilate (expand) these blood vessels and increase their efficiency, thereby reducing stress on the surrounding capillaries.

Another circulatory remedy that may ease varicose veins is **ginger**. According to Dr. Sharol Tilgner, naturopathic physician and author, ginger may be particularly helpful for varicose veins because it has the ability to break down fibrin, a substance that gets deposited near varicose veins and causes skin to become hard and lumpy. It also enhances pelvic circulation.

Finally, studies show that curcumin from turmeric can slow or inhibit the formation of blood clots. A 1999 study on *Biochemical Pharmacology*, a 2005 study in the *Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology* and an ongoing USDA study begun in 2009 have shown that curcumin reduces the risk of clogged arteries, strokes and heart attacks. **CurcuminBP** can be used to inhibit platelet aggregation, which keeps blood flowing unimpeded and prevents blood clots and thrombosis.



## Topical Therapy

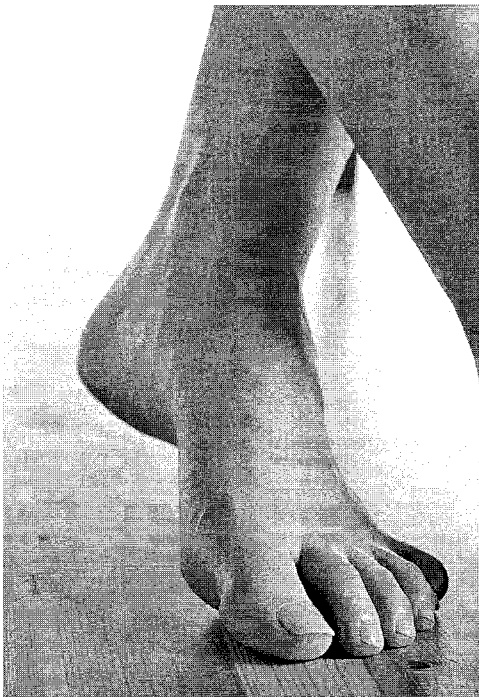
Topical applications of astringent herbs can be very helpful for healing varicose veins. Both butcher's broom and horse chestnut can shrink varicose veins, aid healing of bruises and spider veins, and reduce swelling of tissues from lymph edema when applied topically. **Vari-Gone Cream** contains these herbs and is a convenient topical product for this purpose.

**Continued on page 4**

## Additional Help and Information

For more information on CVI, varicose veins, spider veins and vascular health, contact the person who gave this newsletter to you or seek professional help. You can also consult the following sources:

*The Comprehensive Guide to Nature's Sunshine Products* by Tree of Light



# Varicose Veins Are More Than Skin Deep

Varicose Veins and Spider Veins are signs of Chronic Venous Insufficiency (CVI), which is also a factor in hemorrhoids, uterine fibroids and prostate problems. Learn about CVI and how to improve vascular health in this issue of Sunshine Sharing.

## ***Continued from Page Three***

Another great remedy for varicose veins is **white oak bark**. This astringent herb has been taken internally and applied topically to help heal both varicose veins and hemorrhoids, but it works best applied topically. One way to use white oak bark topically is to make a decoction by emptying the contents of 3-4 capsules into a cup of water and simmering for 20 minutes. Allow the liquid to cool, then soak a cloth in the warm decoction and apply the damp cloth over affected areas. This can rapidly reduce swelling and ease pain and discomfort.

An easier way to use white oak topically is to mix the contents of a capsule with a small amount of **Golden Salve** or **Vari-Gone Cream** and apply this mixture topically. This is also an effective way to aid healing both varicose veins and hemorrhoids.

## **Medical Treatments**

Medical doctors can treat severe varicose veins with surgeries such as endovenous laser treatment (EVLT), and more invasive stripping and phlebectomy procedures. Both laser and stripping procedures can lead to bleeding and bruising in the leg. The bruising can be severe and last for several weeks.

Varicose vein surgeries, however, do not correct the underlying conditions that caused the varicose veins in the first place. By using some of the holistic suggestions in this newsletter, you can overcome the liver congestion, sluggish circulation and lack of tone in the veins that caused the problems in the first place, which can not only heal these problems, but prevent them from recurring.

For additional help and suggestions, talk to the person who gave this newsletter to you.