

Materia Medica for the Cardiovascular system

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Flavonoid-rich cardiovascular anti-inflammatories

Hawthorn berry, leaf and flower

This is the premiere tonic herb for the entire cardiovascular system, helping to reduce inflammation in the blood vessels, protecting against the hardening of the arteries, reducing blood pressure if it is elevated, opening blocked circulation, and protecting against heart attack. It is safe and very food-like, and usually taken at high doses: 1 tsp. of tincture 2-3 times a day, or 2-3 capsules 2-3 times a day, or a few tablespoons of Hawthorn berry jam daily. A tea of the leaf and flower is also rich in flavonoids and quite effective.

Blueberry and Bilberry

Food like and delicious, these antocyanidin-rich herbs help to protect the small blood vessels and capillaries throughout the system, and especially in the eye and kidneys. Eat ¼ to ½ cup of fresh or frozen berries daily for prevention, and little more to manage active microvascular damage. Especially useful in diabetic conditions.

Circulatory enhancers

Ginkgo biloba standardized extract

The extract of Ginkgo helps with poor circulation and the associated complications thereof. Cold hands and feet, poor brain circulation in older folks, and any case where adequate circulation to the periphery is compromised. Especially useful in conditions such as Raynaud's Syndrome. It can also help with anxious, unfocused conditions. Take 120mg to 480mg daily of the extract, standardized to 24% gflavo-glycosides.

Cayenne fruit

A very warming circulatory enhancer. Use with caution in conditions where the digestion might become upset. Very useful to improve conditions where vital heat is low, and hands and feet are cold. Start with a low dose – 1-2 capsules daily – and work up as tolerated. Spicing foods with cayenne works too, but not everyone can take it!

Blood pressure normalizers

Hawthorn (see above)

Garlic

Excellent at enhancing circulation, warming the periphery, and controlling blood pressure and cholesterol. At least 2-3 cloves a day, or a garlic supplement if dietary consumption at high levels is difficult or undesirable. Use caution – can have blood-thinning effects.

Crampbark

Antispasmodic that helps relax the smooth muscle lining the arteries, increasing peripheral circulation and lowering blood pressure. Valerian works similarly, too. ½ to 1 teaspoon of the tincture 2-3 times a day.

Coleus forskholii

Ayurvedic remedy that is especially useful in controlling blood pressure as it creeps upward in the elderly. Also mildly relaxing for anxious conditions. Start with 2 capsules twice a day, or as directed by the manufacturer.

Nervine relaxants attuned to the cardiovascular system

Linden

Also known as Lime blossom, a cooling and calming nervine remedy that opens the circulation and relaxes the mind. Best taken as a tea, made with 4TBS of flowers per quart of water. Can be combined with other herbs in tea form (such as Hawthorn).

Valerian

Calmative, it also enhances circulation to the hands and feet and can help reduce blood pressure. Also useful for insomnia. Start with ½ tsp. of the tincture three times a day.

True cardio-tonics

Nigh-blooming Cereus

A beautiful cactus, it is used to strengthen the heart muscle in conditions of heart failure, and aid in recovery after a heart attack. It can help relieve the oppressive pain of angina when due to poor heart function. Dose is low; between 5 and 10 DROPS of the tincture taken 2-3 times daily.

Regulators of blood lipids (cholesterol, triglycerides)

Garlic (see above)

Fenugreek

These seeds, taken as capsules, help to reduce the uptake of dietary fats and cholesterol. They must be taken with food, at a dose of about 2-3 capsules with every meal.

Flax

The seeds or expressed oil from the seeds help to alter the physiology's balance of fatty acids towards a more balanced ratio of omega3, 6, and 9 fatty acids. This reduces the production of cholesterol in the liver, as well as reducing overall cardiovascular inflammation. The daily dose is 1-2 tablespoons of the oil, and 2-3 tablespoons of the ground seed.

Venotonics

Horsechestnut

Specific for varicose veins, spider veins, and chronic venous insufficiency. Seems to work on the walls and valves of the veins, reducing swelling, pain and inflammation. Consequently, it can have a positive effect on edema if it is due to poor venous tone. 2-3 droppers of the tincture, twice daily, is a good place to start.

Gotu Kola

Circulatory enhancer that is helpful for cold hands and feet, but most specific for chronic venous insufficiency, where it acts synergistically with Horsechestnut. Fresh leaves can be eaten, or the tincture can be taken at a dose of 3-4 droppers of the tincture, twice daily.

Lymphatics

Cleavers

Helps to remove built-up fluid, most often present in the feet and legs, when due to either deficient heart energy or poor venous return. Must be combined with other herbs (e.g. Hawthorn, Cereus in the former case; Horsechestnut in the latter). The tea is good – 3TBS per quart of water. The tincture is taken at a dose of 3 droppers twice daily.