



HORSE CHESTNUT & GRAPE SEED EXTRACT

The European secret for healthy veins

“Horse chestnut preparations could be called one of the best kept secrets of European phytomedicine... It is the single most widely prescribed remedy in Germany for edema with venous insufficiency.” (Foster)

Persons with varicose veins often feel conspicuous. They may hesitate before they wear shorts or swimsuits, always conscious of the dark bulging veins that can be quite painful. Are there natural, yet safe remedies that help prevent the onset of varicose veins or even make them less noticeable? Yes. Consider horse chestnut seed extract and grape seed extract as the first line of choice. However, varicose veins are only one blood vessel condition. The horse chestnut, grape seed combination may be helpful for persons suffering from blood vessel permeability. That condition often results in frequent nose bleeds, hemorrhoids, and edema.

Varicose veins affect women four times as much as men. For the most part, they are only cosmetically unappealing and pose little danger. Varicose veins appear when enzymes destroy the proteoglycan network in the veins. “This facilitates the passage of electrolytes, proteins, and water through the venous walls, thereby producing edema. The enzymes also act not only to reduce the strength of the vessel walls but to cause them to dilate as well.” (Tyler) Long hours of standing, heavy lifting, even the strain of childbirth, can affect the fragile veins, causing them to lose their tone. As the blood pools, the venous valves are damaged and veins bulge. Unfortunately, once the valves have been damaged, there is no going back. But natural remedies such as horse chestnut and grape seed can do much to limit the action of damaging enzymes, tone veins, improve the look of small varicose veins and prevent new ones from forming.

Horse chestnut seed extract has been used for years in Europe to treat many circulatory problems, particularly varicose veins, chronic venous insufficiency, hemorrhoids and edema.

STRENGTHEN VEINS WITH HORSE CHESTNUT (*Aesculus Hippocastanum*)

In recent years scientists isolated *aescin* (*escin*), a triterpenoid saponin glycoside, from horse chestnut seed. This active is very effective in reducing the enzyme activity that causes varicose veins to develop. “The compound also restricts edema by reducing the transcapillary filtration of water and

protein. It has some beneficial diuretic effect as well. In addition, it has been shown to increase the tonus of the veins, thus improving return blood flow to the heart... All of these actions would prove beneficial for the treatment of varicose veins. (Tyler) “Escin is purported to be 300 times as strong as rutin, another important bioflavonoid for veins. “Researchers have reported success using aescin, which is a complex mixture of triterpenoid saponin glycosides, for cerebral tumours, meningitis, encephalitis, cerebral edemas resulting from cranial trauma, and other brain-fluid problems.” (Lenz) By itself, horse chestnut extract helps to maintain blood flow and can reduce the feeling of tired, heavy legs.

CHRONIC VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Chronic venous insufficiency is a condition that can become quite serious and may require hospitalization in its later stages. That is why it is best to treat it early with horse chestnut and other botanicals that have proven effective in clinical studies.

In 1996, *The Lancet* described the benefits of horse chestnut seed extract for people with chronic venous insufficiency. The study of 240 patients with chronic venous insufficiency showed that horse chestnut seed extract was almost as effective as compression stockings. The group was divided into three: those on placebo, those using compression stockings and those on horse chestnut seed extract. All of the participants had chronic venous insufficiency for at least one year and over half had it for five years. After 12 weeks the lower-leg volume decreased an average of 46.7 mL with compression therapy, and 43.8 mL with horse chestnut extract. Those on placebo had an average increase of 9.8 mL. According to the researchers, “HCSE (horse chestnut seed extract) offers a treatment alternative to compression for patients with edema from chronic venous insufficiency.” (Diehm)

SYNERGISTIC BENEFIT FROM GRAPE SEED EXTRACT

Grape seed extract works synergistically with horse chestnut. Physicians in Western Europe have used grape seed extract for years to treat all sorts of circulatory disorders. Grape seed extract can strengthen tiny blood vessels, reducing bruising and the tendency to develop varicose veins. Proanthocyanidins are the beneficial flavonoids in grape seed extract. These flavonoids are superior antioxidants, protecting capillaries, veins and arteries from free radical damage and they also enhance the performance of

HORSE CHESTNUT AND GRAPE SEED EXTRACT

vitamin C, essential for collagen formation.

In a controlled clinical trial, grape seed extract (Endotelon®) was compared with semi-synthetic diosmine in 50 patients with symptoms of chronic venous insufficiency. Both preparations made a noticeable improvement in symptoms, but the grape seed extract the advantage in rapidity and duration of action. (Delacroix)

Grape seed proanthocyanidins increase the tone and elasticity of capillary walls, making them more resistant to hemorrhages, ruptures and infection.

Varicose veins have low collagen levels, perhaps caused by the increased activity of collagen destroying enzymes. Grape seed proanthocyanidins inhibit these enzymes and may also help with swollen legs and water retention that is more common as we age. Worn down capillaries let fluids leak through. Sitting or standing for long periods without moving pools the fluid causing the familiar "swollen legs." Grape seed extract has been successfully used to decrease edema, even after surgery.

SAFETY AND DOSAGE

The saponins in horse chestnut may be irritating to the gastrointestinal tract for some persons. The German Commission E monograph on horse chestnut states no contraindications, interactions with other drugs, or restrictions during pregnancy and lactation, however, other sources are more conservative. "Horse chestnut should be avoided by patients with existing renal or hepatic impairment... In view of the pharmacologically active constituents present in horse chestnut use during pregnancy and lactation is best avoided." (Newall)

Grape seed extract is exceedingly safe even in high doses with no potential mutagenic or teratogenic (causing birth defects) effects.

As a crude herb, horse chestnut may contain some toxic ingredients, therefore only standardized extracts should be used. Natural Factors Horse

Chestnut and Grape Seed Extract are standardized extracts, providing superior support for vein and capillary tone, and strength. Natural Factors horse chestnut extract is standardized to 20% escin, the triterpene glycosides key to its effectiveness, and GrapeSeed-Rich extract guarantees a minimum 95% polyphenols.

Blood vessel problems are not confined to middle age. Women may first notice hemorrhoids and varicose veins during pregnancy, but vein problems can even start in the teenage years.

Not only is horse chestnut and grape seed extract an excellent varicose veins preventive, by toning the walls of our veins and capillaries, this botanical combination may slow their relentless progress. Singly, these herbal extracts work well. Combined into a formula, their synergistic action is highly effective.

KEY REFERENCES

Delacroix P., "Double-blind trial of Endotelon® in chronic venous insufficiency," *Rev Medecine*; 22: 1793-1802; 1981

Diehm C., Trampisch, R., et al., "Comparison of leg compression stocking and oral horse chestnut seed extract in therapy in patients with chronic venous insufficiency," *The Lancet*, 347: 292-294; 1996

Foster S., "The remarkable horse chestnut," *Health Foods Business*, August, p 72; 1998

Lenz E., "Herbs to watch: Horse chestnut," *Herbs for Health*, September/October, p 24; 1994

Newall C.A., et al., "Herbal Medicines: a Guide for Health-care Professionals," *The Pharmaceutical Press*; 1996

Tyler V., "Herbs of Choice: The Therapeutic Use of Phytomedicinals," *Pharmaceutical Products Press*; 1994