



Heart Vitalizing Hawthorn

Heart disease is the Number One killer of Americans!! Considering the sometimes serious side effects of drugs that treat this disease, such as dry mouth, fatigue, sexual dysfunction, and medication interactions we clearly need to explore other alternatives. Hawthorn is just such an alternative.

Hawthorn provides a gentle, consistent, beneficial effect on the heart and circulation, making it a useful first choice for people with cardiovascular conditions, particularly weakened heart function.¹ It is especially suitable for early-stage congestive heart failure, where it provides a good initial alternative to stronger drugs like digitalis, as well as for the pain of angina.

HISTORY

Traditional European and Chinese herbalists prescribed hawthorn for very different purposes. In Chinese medicine, hawthorn is used as a sour digestive aid. In Europe, the heart has consistently been the focus.

Modern attention centered on hawthorn when it was discovered that the berries, leaves, and flowers contain polyphenol compounds called oligomeric procyanidins (OPCs) and flavonoids, including vitexin, quercetin, and hyperoside. The leaves and flowers contain larger concentrations of these components particularly the OPCs. However, data confirm that, as with most herbs, hawthorn's active components come from the whole plant and work synergistically as an effective remedy

HERBAL EFFECTS

Hawthorn makes the heart a more efficient pump, partly by increasing blood supply to the heart muscle.² and partly by improving its forceful contraction.³

Hawthorn also increases the output of blood from the heart and decreases the resistance of body blood vessels to the normal flow of blood, thereby increasing circulation to the extremities.⁴

Hawthorn, with its high polyphenol content, is also a potent antioxidant, so it counteracts the damaging effects of free radicals on the cardiovascular system. It has a very good record of safety.

These actions make hawthorn ideal for treating mild arrhythmias, especially in the elderly, whose hearts gradually weaken and become more unstable as they

age. Hawthorn also will lower blood pressure, but gently, so it is suitable only for mild hypertension

Particularly encouraging is the recent use of hawthorn for congestive heart failure (CHF). Research shows that this herb may slow the progression to more advanced stages of CHF and delay the need for stronger drugs.⁵ One recent eight-week study demonstrated substantial benefit for people with CHF. Subjects, aged 45 to 73 years, received 600 mg of hawthorn extract or a placebo. After exercise on a bicycle, those taking the herb showed definite improvement. The herb group had reduced systolic blood pressure and heart rate.⁶ Angina pectoris or heart pain from lack of oxygen to the heart muscle, also is treatable with hawthorn, which increases the blood and oxygen to the starved heart muscle, especially after exertion.⁷ The herb also lowers cholesterol levels.⁸

All the properties of hawthorn taken together make it ideal for the recovery of strength in the heart muscle after a heart attack. For those who have already had a heart attack, taking a maintenance dose offers protection from further damage during times of oxygen loss.

USING HAWTHORN

Hawthorn berry has been combined with garlic and/or cayenne, two other well-known cardiovascular herbs, also antioxidants. It typically takes up to two months to reach maximum benefit.

Take hawthorn berry in capsules starting at 500mg twice daily and slowly increasing the dose. Recent studies have shown better results in chronic congestive heart failure with doses of up to 900 mg per day.⁹ No contraindications (including pregnancy and lactation) are known, but you should always discuss taking supplements with your primary care physician.

References:

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