

THE NATURAL PATH

*Your Guide to Good Health & Vitality
Cutting Edge Research Made Easy*

by Linda Woolven, B.A., Master Herbalist, Acupuncturist and Ted Snider, B.Ed., M.A.



PREVENTING & TREATING GLAUCOMA NATURALLY

GLAUCOMA IS A LEADING CAUSE OF BLINDNESS. HERE ARE SOME KEY NATURAL TIPS FOR AVOIDING IT.

Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness. It is a condition caused by increased pressure within the eyeball. The focus in treating glaucoma is on improving collagen, which keeps the tissue of the eye strong and intact, and on reducing pressure in the eye.

For that, vitamin C and bilberry are crucial.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C is perfectly suited to treating glaucoma because it addresses both of the goals of glaucoma treatment. It is crucial for the manufacture of collagen, and it reduces pressure in the eyeball. Several studies have looked at whether vitamin C can significantly reduce pressure in the eyeball in people with glaucoma, and at least six of them have confirmed that it does (*J Holistic Med* 1981;3:167-72).

Bilberry

Bilberry is rich in flavonoids called anthocyanosides, which not only increase vitamin C levels, but strengthen collagen in their own right. Bilberry has actually been shown, not just to stop progress, but to improve vision (*Arch Med Int*

LOOK INSIDE

- Herbal Mouthwash
- Ginger for Painful Periods
- Hawthorn for High Blood Pressure
- Anthocyanins Keep Seniors Smart

Continued on Page 4

NATURAL HELP FOR VARICOSE VEINS



FOR SOME, VARICOSE VEINS ARE A COSMETIC CONCERN; FOR OTHERS, THEY CAN BE A SERIOUS HEALTH CONCERN. NATURE CAN HELP.

Varicose veins are enlarged, bulging veins, usually in the legs. For some, they do not cause pain. For others, they can cause achy, heavy feeling legs; swelling in the lower legs accompanied by burning, throbbing and muscle cramps; and itching around the vein.

Spider veins are the small, mild varicose veins that spread just below the skin's surface like a blue or red spider web.

Varicose veins and spider veins are caused by weakened or damaged valves that are supposed to open to allow blood to return to the heart from the legs and then close to stop the blood from flowing back. In varicose veins, the weakened valves allow the blood to flow back and pool in the veins.

Conventional treatment usually includes exercise, raising your legs when sitting or lying down and compression stockings. But nature can also help.

A new single-blind, controlled study set out to see what would happen if you added grape seed extract to conventional therapy. The study included 176 people

Continued on Page 2

Photo by Ted Snider



Lifesaver: More Evidence that Ginseng Helps with Stress

Ginseng may be the most famous herb for stress. This new study shows the reputation is well deserved. 86 people who were experiencing stress and tension were given a placebo or 1,485mg of Korean white ginseng with 5.47 mg of Rg1 and Rb1 twice a day for 12 weeks. The ginseng group had significantly greater reduction in composite stress index, an average of self-reported and neurophysiological stress measures, and in neurophysiological stress measures (*J Ginseng Res.* November 2025;49(6):725-733).



NATURAL HELP FOR VARICOSE VEINS



from Page 1

with varicose veins. They all did conventional therapy, but half added 150mg of grape seed extract twice a day for 12 weeks.

For the half that added grape seed extract, there was a significantly greater reduction in blood flowing back into the legs in both superficial and deep veins. Significant improvement in blood flow in the deep veins is important, the researchers say, because they cannot be treated by surgery or ablation.

Significantly more people in the



Photo by Ted Snider

grape seed group experienced improved venous reflux (43 people versus 21), and the improvement in symptoms and quality of life was greater.

This study suggests that supplementing grape seed extract can improve varicose veins and that adding it to lifestyle modifications is more effective than those changes alone (*J Vasc Surg Venous Lymphat Disord. January 2026;14(1):102355*).

Bilberry

People who have problems with veins can benefit from bilberry's powerful ability to decrease the

permeability and fragility of veins and to keep them flexible. Bilberry is able to protect the small blood vessels known as capillaries from damage, to repair and strengthen them, and even to stimulate the formation of new, healthy ones. The flavonoids in bilberry also improve circulation through the larger blood vessels. All of these effects on blood vessels make bilberry a valuable herb for varicose veins (*Min Cardioangiol* 1978).

Horse Chestnut

Several studies have validated horse chestnut's use for varicose veins. In studies of people with chronic venous insufficiency and varicose veins, horse chestnut significantly improved symptoms, including leg swelling, itching, heaviness and tension as well as cramps (*Adv Ther.* 2006;23(1):179-190; *Cochrane Database Syst Rev.* 2012 Nov 14;2012(11):CD003230).

Butcher's Broom

Butcher's Broom is another traditional herb that is valuable for chronic venous insufficiency



(*Arzneimittelforschung.* 2002;52:243-50) and varicose veins (*Drugs Exp Clin Res.* 1988;14(4):277-83).

Gotu Kola

Gotu kola helps varicose veins by regulating metabolism in the connective tissue of the vascular wall (*Int J Clin Pharmacol Res.* 1990;10(4):229-33). It has been shown to help people with varicose veins when traveling by plane. Flyers using gotu kola had less leg swelling and decreased circulatory problems compared to a control group (*Angiology* 2001).

More Herbal Help

Shepherd's Purse and ginkgo can

also help as can topical witch hazel and calendula.

Pregnancy & Varicose Veins

Varicose veins are common during pregnancy. The increase in blood volume during pregnancy increases the pressure in the veins. Hormonal changes also contribute.

A study of pregnant women with varicose veins compared the use of elastic compression stockings to pine bark extract. The dose of the pine bark extract was 100mg a day. There were 133 women in the study.

At both 3 and 6 months, the women in the pine bark extract group had fewer varicose veins. Both groups



had significant improvement at 6 months, but the improvement in the pine bark group was superior. At 6 months, 13.3% of the women in the compression stocking group were suffering from edema, but only 3.2% of the pine bark group were.

The pine bark group also had fewer spider veins and cramps, and fewer of them needed treatment, including surgery. More of the women in the pine bark group were satisfied with their treatment.

The researchers concluded that pine bark extract improves the varicose veins of pregnancy and that the proper functioning and shape of the veins return faster when women use it (*Int J Angiol* 2017;26(1):12-19).

Bilberry has also been shown to help varicose veins during pregnancy (*Quad Clin Ostet Ginecol* 1987).



Spotlight: Herbal Mouthwashes Versus Prescription Mouthwash

The Pharmaceutical Competition

Chlorhexidine is a prescription mouthwash that kills the bacteria that grows in plaque and causes gingivitis. It cannot be swallowed, and it can cause severe irritation or chemical burns in young children. It has several common side effects, including staining your teeth, increasing tartar build up on your teeth and changing your sense of taste. It may also cause mouth irritation, swollen glands and irritation to the tip of the tongue.

Aloe Vera

Aloe is safer and works just as well as chlorhexidine. When 345 people were given 10ml of aloe vera juice for 30 days, it was as effective as chlorhexidine in decreasing plaque and gingivitis. The researchers concluded that the results favour aloe as a safe alternative to chlorhexidine (*Oral Health Dent Manag* 2014;13:14-19).

A second study found that when

people swish chlorhexidine or 100% pure aloe vera juice 4 times a day for 4 days, both significantly reduce plaque, but the aloe is safer (*Ethiop J Health Sci* 2014;24:139-44).

And one more: a single-blind study found that chlorhexidine and 99.6% aloe vera leaf gel, rinsed for 1 minute twice a day, both significantly reduced plaque, but it was reduced significantly more with aloe. And chlorhexidine had more side effects (*J Int Soc Prev Community Dent*;2016;6(3):251-255).

You Never Thought of This

There are also natural mouthwashes you'd never think of. The herb holy basil has been shown in triple-blind research to be as effective a mouthwash as chlorhexidine at reducing plaque and gingivitis, with both significantly reducing gingival bleeding and plaque (*J Ayurveda Integr Med* 2014;5:109-16).

A 0.25% lemongrass oil mouthwash produced significantly better scores on the plaque index and on the gingiva index than chlorhexidine in only 2

weeks (*J Contemp Dent Pract.* 2023 Jun 1;24(6):396-402).

The Latest News: Black Seed

The most recent mouthwash study put chlorhexidine up against a 20% *Nigella sativa* (black seed) mouthwash. People swished one or the other twice a day for two weeks. Both significantly reduced scores on the plaque index and the bleeding index, suggesting that the herbal mouthwash works just as well as the prescription mouthwash (*J Integr Complement Med.* 2026 Mar;32(3):277-283).



Photo by Ted Snider

NATURAL PATH NEWSFLASH



Photo by Ted Snider

Ginger for Painful Periods

96 women with painful periods (dysmenorrhea) were given a placebo or 100mg of ginger extract standardized for 20% gingerols twice a day for 3 months.

Pain severity improved by 31.2% in the ginger group versus 6% on placebo. Dysmenorrhea severity scores improved by 62.4% with ginger while they worsened on placebo. Working ability improved 68.4%, pain intensity by 63.3%, and pain duration by 57.5%. Menstrual flow was reduced by 31.9% on ginger versus 17.1% on placebo.

Cureus. 2026 Aug 21;18(8):e114903.

Hibiscus for High Blood Pressure

A new meta-analysis has, once again, validated hibiscus as an important herb for high blood pressure.

Compared to placebo, hibiscus significantly improved systolic, diastolic and mean arterial blood pressure as well as pulse pressure.

It also significantly improved insulin levels and insulin resistance as well as total antioxidant capacity and markers of oxidative stress and inflammation.

Complement Ther Med. May 2025;89:103135.

Ageless!



Anthocyanins Keep You Smart

This meta-analysis of 59 controlled studies included mostly studies on older adults.

It found that supplementing flavonoid anthocyanins or adopting anthocyanin-rich diets significantly improved global cognition as well as specifically improving visuospatial processing/reasoning and attention, processing and psychomotor speed, verbal speed and fluency and episodic and working memory.

Geroscience. 2026 Oct;48(5):6929-6963.





from Page 1

1985;37:29-35; *Med Food* 2012;15(9):818-23).

In one study people with high intraocular pressure, but not yet any symptoms of glaucoma, were given no treatment or 80mg of standardized bilberry extract and 40mg of pine bark extract twice a day. After 3 months, intraocular pressure was significantly reduced in the herb group compared to controls. 19/20 people on the herbs had their intraocular pressure go down. Ocular blood flow also improved significantly more on the herbs (*Mol Vis* 2008;14:1288-92).

Ginkgo

Ginkgo is rich in flavonoids related to the anthocyanin flavonoids in bilberry. So, it is not surprising that ginkgo helps glaucoma (*Klin Monatsbl Augenheilkd* 1980;177:577-83).

Double-blind research shows that ginkgo significantly improves visual field damage in people with glaucoma (*Ophthalmology* 2003;110(2):359-62). Other research also shows that ginkgo can actually improve vision in people with glaucoma (*J Med Food* 2012;15(9):818-23).

Flavonoids

The power of bilberry and ginkgo lies in their flavonoids. Pine bark, green tea and blueberries are all rich in flavonoids. When people with either open-angle glaucoma or glaucoma with ocular hypertension were given placebo or a combination of 50mg pine bark extract, 100mg green tea extract and 3mg blueberry extract, there was a significant reduction in intraocular pressure in the flavonoid group, especially in people with ocular hypertension (*Cesk Slov Oftalmol* 2015;71(6):288-92).

What does that mean for you? A systematic review and meta-analysis found that flavonoids improve vision in people with glaucoma (*Graefes Arch Clin Exp Ophthalmol* 2015;253(11):1841-50).

Saffron

A double-blind study of people with primary open-angle glaucoma who were being treated with timolol and dorzolamide eye drops added 30mg

saffron extract or placebo. After 4 weeks, intraocular pressure was virtually unchanged on placebo but significantly down with saffron (*BMC Complement Altern Med* 2014;14:399).

Nutritional Deficiencies

One study found that deficiencies of vitamin C or chromium were associated with increased pressure in the eyeball (*J Am Coll Nutr*; 1991; 10:536). A 1979 study that found that people with glaucoma usually have lower blood levels of vitamin B1 (*Ann Ophthalmol*, 1979; 11:1095-1100).

Glaucoma & The Food You Eat

Primary open-angle glaucoma (POAG) is the most common form of glaucoma. An interesting study that looked at 104,987 people who were 40 or over for an average of 16 years looked at the role of dietary nitrates in preventing POAG.

The study found that people who got more nitrates in their diet were less likely to get POAG. Those who ate the



most nitrates were a full 21% less likely to develop POAG than those who got the least.

How do you get more nitrates? Vegetables, and especially green leafy vegetables, are loaded in nitrates. 56.7% of the nitrates people in this study got came from eating leafy green vegetables. Just eating 1.45 or more servings a day of leafy green vegetables reduced the risk of POAG by 18% compared to people who ate

0.31 servings a day.

This study shows that a simple way to significantly lower your risk of glaucoma is to increase the amount of nitrates you get in your diet, and that one great way to accomplish this goal is by eating more leafy green vegetables.

Other nitrate rich vegetables include beets, carrots, radishes, lettuce, green beans, spinach, parsley, cabbage, collard greens and celery (*JAMA Ophthalmol* 2016;134(3):294-303).

Perhaps that's why another study found a 69% reduction in risk in women who eat kale and collard greens even occasionally. It also found a 64% reduction in women who eat more carrots and peaches (*Am J Ophthalmol* 2008;145:1081-1089). A second study also found a reduced risk when you eat peaches, oranges, kale, collards and spinach. It also found a 79% reduced risk with 3 or more servings a day fruit or fruit juice (*Giaconi JA, et al. IOVS* 2008;49; ARVO E-abstract 5453).

Other research has found that drinking at least one cup a day of hot tea decreases your chances of developing glaucoma by 74% (*British Journal of Ophthalmology* 2017;doi:10.1136/bjophthalmol-2017-310924).

Avoid Allergens and Corticosteroids

There are also two notable things to avoid if you have glaucoma. One is any food you are allergic to. Every single person in a 1964 study suffered an immediate rise in pressure in the eyeball when exposed to an allergen (*Ann Allergy*. 1964;22:146-50). So, find out what you are allergic to and avoid it.

The other thing to avoid is corticosteroids. Corticosteroids inhibit the synthesis of collagen, causing glaucoma to develop.

About Linda Woolven & Ted Snider



The *Natural Path* is written by Ted Snider & Linda Woolven, a master herbalist, registered acupuncturist, reiki practitioner and solution-focused counselor with a practice in Toronto. For in person or virtual appointments, call 416.782.8211.

Their latest books include *The Family Naturopathic Encyclopedia*, *The All-New Vegetarian Passport Cookbook and Chocolate: Superfood of the Gods*.

This newsletter is intended for educational purposes only and is in no way intended for self-diagnosis or self-treatment. For health problems, consult a qualified health practitioner.