

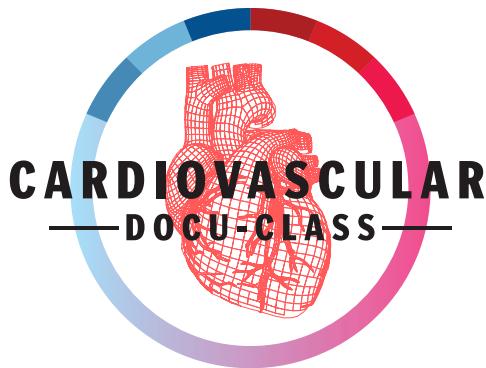
# THE ANCIENT ANSWER FOR HEART HEALTH

Plus 5 Surprising Heart Remedies



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For over 80 years, **heart disease has maintained its position as the Number One cause of death for men and women in the United States** – ahead of such killers as cancer, diabetes, pneumonia, accidents and Alzheimer's disease.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), **cardiovascular disease claims the life of one American every 36 seconds.** Yearly, a shocking total of 655,000 Americans lose their lives to conditions such as coronary artery disease, atherosclerosis, congestive heart failure and heart attacks (which strike somebody in the United States about every 40 seconds). (1)

There's no doubt about it, heart disease is at epidemic levels in the United States. In an attempt to stem the tide of the hundreds of thousands of deaths, Western medicine turns to pharmaceutical drugs such as statins, anticoagulants, beta blockers and ACE inhibitors.

While these may benefit heart conditions and help to lower blood pressure and cholesterol, these medications also feature a litany of toxic side effects.

For instance, beta blockers can cause fatigue, headaches and dizziness - while statin drugs can cause muscle pain, liver damage, increased risk of diabetes and disturbing neurological side effects such as memory loss and confusion. (2) Even more concerning, some blood pressure medications have been linked with increased risk of pancreatic, lung and liver cancer.

### **Could there be another, less toxic, approach to managing heart disease?**

For the answer, we will look to traditional botanical medicines, many of which have been trusted and utilized since antiquity. Now, scientific research is beginning to support and affirm the ability of these time-honored natural interventions to lower blood pressure, reduce harmful cholesterol and decrease development of artery-clogging plaque – in other words, to combat heart disease on multiple fronts.

Just keep in mind, when dealing with any cardiovascular issue ... it's best to consult with an experienced healthcare provider to help guide you on the best course of action.



## HAWTHORN – A HUMBLE SHRUB OFFERS DRAMATIC CARDIOPROTECTIVE BENEFITS

While the hawthorn plant features clusters of eye-catching crimson berries in the fall, it appears at other times of the year as a nondescript, thorny, common-looking shrub - with nothing to indicate its remarkable gifts to heart health.

But, appearances are deceiving.

Hawthorn, botanically known as *Crataegus oxyacantha*, just might be the respected grandfather of all traditional heart remedies.

Hawthorn leaves, berries and flowers have been used in folk and traditional medicine for centuries. In fact, the ability of hawthorn leaves to treat heart disease was praised by the legendary first-century Greek physician Dioscorides. (3)

**Research has shown that hawthorn berries are high in procyanidins, disease-fighting compounds that dilate the coronary arteries.** This vasodilation helps to ensure healthy circulation while lowering blood pressure, which is a known factor for heart disease.



**Hawthorn extracts also strengthen and tone the heart muscle and enhance powerful, regular heartbeats** – meaning that they can help increase exercise tolerance and protect against congestive heart failure.

In addition, **hawthorn has powerful anti-inflammatory effects**, helping to quench the systemic chronic inflammation that sets the stage for atherosclerosis and coronary artery disease. (4)

Clearly, ancient healers were “on the ball” when they advised hawthorn for ailing hearts!

Incidentally, hawthorn extracts are currently used throughout Europe to improve exercise capacity and treat mild to moderate congestive heart failure, a serious condition in which the heart can’t pump enough oxygen-rich blood throughout the body. Unfortunately, the United States seems to lag behind Europe in the use of hawthorn for this purpose – although some knowledgeable healthcare providers in the U.S. have long endorsed it.

Sadly, the CDC reports that about one-half of all people diagnosed with congestive heart failure will not survive more than five years. (5)

Some studies support the ability of hawthorn extracts to help improve these odds.

In a review of studies published in Natural Medicine Journal, the author cited an important study designed to assess the effects on hawthorn on morbidity and mortality in patients with Class II and Class III congestive heart failure. The study did not include those with Class IV heart failure, the most serious stage.

One group of participants received 450 mg of hawthorn extract twice a day for two years, while another group was given placebo. All participants continued to take their prescribed heart medications as well.

The scientists found that hawthorn extracts reduced sudden cardiac death in a subgroup of patients with left ventricle ejection fraction of 25 percent and above. The left ventricle ejection fraction (LVEF) refers to the percentage of blood pumped out with each contraction.

Participants with LVEFs towards the higher end seemed to experience the most benefit from hawthorn extracts.

**Other benefits attributed to hawthorn extracts include alleviating congestive heart failure by regulating cardiac rhythm, improving symptoms - such as shortness of breath and fatigue - increasing exercise tolerance, reducing angina (a form of chest pain) and improving quality of life. (6)**



The investigators also cited a separate study involving 1,011 patients with class II congestive heart failure. Again, the results were encouraging.

After the participants received 450 mg a day of hawthorn extract for 24 weeks, an astonishing 83 percent saw a complete resolution of ankle edema, a common symptom of heart failure.

And, 50 percent experienced a resolution in nocturia, or nighttime urination - a common symptom of heart disease that can lead to impaired sleep. In addition, ejection fractions improved, exercise tolerance increased and patients reported a greater sense of well-being.

Hawthorn is available in supplemental form, with experts advising an extract standardized to 18.5 percent oligomeric procyandins. Natural health experts typically recommend hawthorn extract amounts of 250 to 500 mg a day - but check first with your integrative healthcare provider before taking hawthorn for heart conditions.

## **BENEFICIAL BLOOMS – COLORFUL HIBISCUS IS A BOON TO HEART HEALTH**

Featuring brilliant red blossoms, hibiscus – botanically known as Hibiscus sabdariffa and traditionally referred to as red sorrel – is a common garden and landscaping plant in subtropical and tropical landscapes.

But hibiscus does a lot more than beautify gardens and lawns.

**Like hawthorn, hibiscus is a traditional remedy to lower blood pressure and support heart health. It has also been used to combat obesity and maintain healthy weight.**

And, like hawthorn, hibiscus has been put to the test with scientific research. In a review of randomized clinical trials published in the scientific journal Fitoterapia, the authors evaluated the effectiveness of hibiscus in treating hyperlipidemia (excessive fats in the blood) and high blood pressure.

The scientists found that hibiscus extracts significantly lowered blood pressure in adults with hypertension and type 2 diabetes. Not only that, but it worked as well as Captopril, one of the popular “go-to” pharmaceutical drugs for high blood pressure!

And the beneficial effects did not stop there.

**Hibiscus extracts lowered triglycerides, along with levels of harmful LDL cholesterol implicated in the development of atherosclerosis.**

Noting the lack of adverse effects, the impressed investigators called hibiscus a “promising” intervention for high blood pressure and atherosclerosis. (7)

Researchers think that hibiscus extracts owe their therapeutic effects to their abundant amounts of anthocyanins – the natural plant pigments responsible for the bright red hue of the flowers. Also found in raspberries and blueberries, anthocyanins are potent antioxidants that help to decrease risk of atherosclerosis by inhibiting the harmful oxidation of fats.

Natural healers may recommend one or two cups a day of hibiscus tea to support heart health.

You can brew this relaxing tea by steeping ½ teaspoon of the dried, ground flowers in 8 ounces of hot water. Sometimes known as “sour tea,” hibiscus tea has a tart but pleasing flavor that you can sweeten further with honey or stevia.

Commercial hibiscus tea bags are also available at health food stores.



## CAYENNE PEPPER – A SURPRISING CULINARY AND MEDICINAL SUPERSTAR

Cayenne pepper, a key ingredient in chili, buffalo wings and other delicacies, is treasured by cooks worldwide for its spicy flavor and its satisfying “heat.” Botanically known as *Capsicum annuum*, cayenne pepper is also prized by natural healers for its health-giving effects.

Cayenne’s health benefits are contributed by its active ingredient, a compound known as capsaicin. Capsaicin supports heart health with its vasodilatory effect on arteries, which allows blood to flow through more easily and reduces blood pressure. It also reduces LDL cholesterol.

**But, cayenne’s most important contribution to heart health may be its ability to combat obesity or being overweight – which increases the risk of heart disease.**

Not only does capsaicin have the intriguing effect of causing thermogenesis – which causes an increase in metabolism and helps to burn calories – but it actively reduces the production of the appetite-stimulating hormone known as ghrelin. This can create a feeling of satiety, or fullness, leading people to eat less. (8)

In fact, research has supported the ability of capsaicin to promote weight loss and reduce food cravings. In a placebo-controlled two-day study published in International Journal of Obesity, people who drank a capsaicin-rich beverage at every meal reported less hunger - and ate 16 percent less calories and fat than those who had received only placebo. (9)



Cayenne pepper is generally recognized as safe in the amounts found in foods – so go ahead and sprinkle this zesty seasoning into eggs, marinades, casseroles, chilis, soups - and, of course, chicken wings. If you are unaccustomed to eating spicy foods, you might want to start off with a small pinch of cayenne.

For a more consistent amount, powdered cayenne is available in capsule form, with natural healers recommending levels of 30 to 120 mg one to three times a day. Before supplementing with cayenne, get the “thumbs-up” from your integrative doctor.

## **GARLIC IS A CARDIOPROTECTIVE “WARRIOR,” FIGHTING HEART DISEASE AND ATHEROSCLEROSIS THROUGH MULTIPLE MECHANISMS**

Garlic, botanically known as Allium sativum, has a long history of use in folk and traditional herbal medicine to treat diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and infections. Research has shown why garlic is such a time-honored remedy for so many ills.

Garlic’s active constituent, a compound called allicin, is strongly antioxidant and anti-inflammatory. Research has shown that **garlic extracts reduce proinflammatory markers such as C-reactive protein, interleukin and homocysteine, an amino acid linked with higher risk of heart disease.**

And, garlic ramps up the fight against heart disease by increasing the body’s production of beneficial nitric oxide, thereby enhancing widening and relaxation of the blood vessels and helping to lower blood pressure.



Garlic also appears to be a sworn enemy of the artery-clogging plaque that triggers atherosclerosis and heart disease. In a study involving patients aged 40 to 75, researchers found that aged garlic extract dramatically reduced the amount of plaque in the coronary arteries of participants with metabolic syndrome, a cluster of unhealthy conditions that can include obesity, high blood sugar, high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol. (10)

In an influential study published in *Maturitas*, people who were not able to control their blood pressure with medication were given 960 mg of aged garlic extract daily for three months. Their blood pressure dropped by an average of 10 points - similar to decreases accomplished by pharmaceutical medications. (11)

While using fresh garlic generously in recipes is obviously a healthy choice, many experts advise aged garlic extract capsules as the best way to obtain cardiovascular benefits. Aged garlic extract is derived from fresh organic garlic that has been aged in ethanol for 20 months - a process which increases the content of disease-fighting flavonoids and antioxidant water-soluble compounds. Here's a tip: look for a formulation that is standardized to 0.6 percent allicin. (12)

A typical amount might consist of 300 to 1,000 mg a day of aged garlic extract in divided servings, but first get the "go-ahead" from your doctor.

## **ANTI-INFLAMMATORY, ANTOXIDANT GINGER REDUCES RISK OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND STROKE**

With thousands of years of use in Ayurvedic and Traditional Chinese Medicine, ginger, botanically known as *Zingiber officinale*, is held in such esteem that it is often referred to as "the universal medicine."

But how did ginger earn its lofty reputation?

First and foremost, **ginger inhibits the action of pro-inflammatory molecules in the body**, such as cytokines and cyclooxygenase-2, in a way similar to that of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Highly antioxidant, **ginger also neutralizes the free radicals that oxidize LDL cholesterol -thereby reducing oxidative damage to tissues and cells.**

In animal studies, researchers found that ginger extracts reduced the “stickiness” of blood platelets and decreased the risk of stroke. For example, in one double-blind, placebo-controlled trial, participants who received 5 grams of powdered ginger a day for four weeks had greater reductions in LDL oxidation than the placebo group. (13)



And, in a review of clinical studies published in the well-regarded journal Nutrition, the authors noted that 2 to 4 grams of ginger a day can potentially protect against high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. (14)

You can use the refreshing taste of fresh ginger root to enliven salads, soups, stir fries and smoothies. Powdered ginger is available in capsule form, with experts advising amounts of 2,500 mg twice a day. Before supplementing with ginger capsules, check with your integrative practitioner.

## **CURCUMIN: TIME-HONORED PLANT PIGMENT POWERFULLY SUPPORTS HEART HEALTH**

Curcumin is the carotenoid, or natural plant pigment, that gives turmeric its brilliant yellow color. Botanically known as Curcuma longa, turmeric has long been revered in Traditional Chinese Medicine and in the Ayurvedic healing system, where it is known as haldi.

Over 12,000 peer-reviewed studies attest to the benefits of this amazing compound.

The Cleveland Heart Lab at the prestigious Cleveland Clinic credits curcumin with preventing blood clots, lowering cholesterol and reducing the inflammation that can lead to heart attacks and strokes. Curcumin also improves endothelial function - meaning that it safeguards the health of the fragile linings of arteries. (15)

Curcumin's anti-inflammatory actions have been put to the test through extensive research.

A study published in Oncogene compared the anti-inflammatory effects of curcumin with those of commonly prescribed drugs and steroids - including aspirin, dexamethasone, ibuprofen and naproxen. Along with another natural substance, resveratrol, curcumin outperformed every pharmaceutical remedy - with no adverse effects. (16)

Other studies have found that **curcumin inhibits the aggregation of blood platelets, reducing the “stickiness” of blood platelets and helping to prevent dangerous blood clots that can trigger heart attacks and strokes. (17)**

Perhaps the most ringing endorsement of curcumin's cardioprotective abilities was demonstrated in a 2017 meta-analysis of clinical trials published in Nutrition Journal. The authors concluded that 1,000 mg of curcumin for 30 days, used in conjunction with conventional drugs, helped to protect patients at risk of cardiovascular disease through improving levels of LDL cholesterol and fats in the blood. (18)

Because curcumin has poor bioavailability in the body, it's difficult to consume enough turmeric for therapeutic benefits. Fortunately, curcumin is available in supplementary form.



Look for a supplement formulated to 95 percent curcuminoids. And, opt for a product that contains black pepper - which can increase the absorbability of curcumin by an astonishing 2,000 percent.

Natural health experts recommend 1,500 mg of curcumin a day in divided servings - but discuss the matter first with your doctor before supplementing.

Heart disease is a formidable foe, one that causes too many lives to be tragically cut short. Hopefully, these natural compounds can hold the key to better heart function and a longer, healthier life.

Of course, never eliminate or reduce your prescribed medications unless advised to do so by your doctor. But - do discuss the possibility of investigating the benefits of some of these ancient remedies – with the guidance of a knowledgeable healthcare provider.

## ABOUT JONATHAN LANDSMAN

Jonathan Landsman is the creator of [NaturalHealth365.com](http://NaturalHealth365.com) and the [NaturalHealth365 podcast](http://NaturalHealth365.podcast) - which features the brightest minds in natural health and healing.

Reaching hundreds of thousands of people, worldwide, as a personal health consultant, writer and podcast host – Jonathan has been educating the public on the health benefits of an organic (non-GMO) diet along with high-quality supplementation and healthy lifestyle habits including exercise and meditation.



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