The Cardiovascular System - Part 1
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What Does the Cardiovascular System Consist of?
- Heart
- Blood Vessels
  - Veins
  - Arteries
  - Capillaries
- Blood

What is the Function of the Cardiovascular System?
The main function of the cardiovascular system is the internal transport of cells and dissolved materials, including gases, wastes and nutrients.

The physical function of the heart is to propel blood and maintain blood pressure.

The function of the blood vessels is to deliver blood throughout the body. The arteries carry oxygen rich blood away from the heart, decreasing in size to become arterioles which deliver blood to the capillaries. The veins carry non-oxygenated blood back to the heart, starting out from the capillaries as smaller venules, increasing in size to become veins. Arteries and veins often lay side by side in a narrow band of connective tissue.

The function of the blood is to transport oxygen and carbon dioxide, deliver nutrients and hormones, remove waste products and assist in defense against diseases.

Common Acute and Chronic Problems for Cardiovascular System:
- Hypertension
- Arteriosclerosis
- Heart attack
- Heart murmur
- Heart flutter/fibrillation
- Stroke
- Arrhythmia
- Coronary artery disease
- Hypotension
- Atherosclerosis
- Congestive heart failure
- Tachycardia
- Pericarditis
- Bradycardia
- Carditis
- Congenital defects

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Herbal Support for Body Systems

Palpitations  Pancarditis
Paroxysmal tachycardia  Polycythemia
Septicemia  Syncope (fainting)
Varicose veins  Deep vein thrombosis
Peripheral venous disease  Peripheral arterial disease
Reynaud’s Phenomenon  Buerger’s disease
Blood clots  Vascular stenosis
Hemorrhoid  Hemorrhage

Herbal Applications for the Cardiovascular System:
Extracts  Food
Infusions  Teas

Ways to Maintain Cardiovascular System Health:
~ Reduce stress or at least rethink how you perceive stress (watch the TED talk by Kelly McGonigal [http://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend?language=en])
~ Work to lose weight if you are overweight
~ Adjust your diet to reduce unhealthy fats, excess carbohydrates and processed foods
~ Exercise several times weekly
~ Moderate alcohol consumption
~ Quit smoking
~ Be aware of any heart disease that runs in the family
~ Consume heart healthy herbs to support the cardiovascular system
~ Supplement with Coenzyme Q-10 (Co-Q-10) for lowering blood pressure with type II diabetes 60 - 100 mg BID
~ Eat foods high in vitamin A, B complex, C, E, zinc, bromeliad and flavonoids.
  • Vitamin A - Liver, carrots, dandelion greens, spinach, parsley, plantain, nettles, other green foods and yellow-orange vegetables
  • Vitamin B complex - Yeast, grains, organ meats, nuts, legumes
  • Vitamin C - Currants, broccoli, rose hips, berries, parsley, brussel sprouts
  • Vitamin E - Extra virgin olive oil, leafy greens, watercress, nuts, egg yolks, wheat germ
  • Zinc - Oysters, whole grains, brewer’s yeast, spinach, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds
  • Bromelain - 500 - 750mg TID at 1,500 MCU
  • Flavonoids - Blue-red fruits such as cherries, blueberries, hawthorns, raspberries, strawberries, st. John’s wort, calendula, lemons, oranges, rose hips. Rutin, hesperidia and quercetin are examples of flavonoids.
  • Misc foods - okra, oats, beets, artichokes, wheat germ, green leafy vegetables, raw garlic, onions and foods high in lecithin (soybeans, egg yolks, sunflower oil, liver, peanuts, whole grains, milk). Raw garlic, onion and lecithin containing foods help regain and retain elasticity in blood vessels when consumed daily.
### Herbs for the Cardiovascular System:

#### Adaptogenic Herbs
- Astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceous*)
- Reishi (*Ganoderma lucidum*)

#### Alterative Herbs
- Black Cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*)
- Burdock (*Arctium lappa*)
- Sassafras (*Sassafras spp.*)

#### Anti-inflammatory Herbs
- Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* *)
- Feverfew (*Chrysanthemum parthenium*)
- Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*)
- Horsechestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*)
- Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)
- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

#### Antispasmodic Herbs
- Cayenne (*Capsicum annuum*)
- Crampbark (*Viburnum opulus*)
- Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)
- Passionflower (*Passiflora spp.*)
- Valerian (*Valerian officinalis*)

#### Astringent Herbs
- Horsechestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*)
- Rose (*Rosa spp.*)
- Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)
- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

#### Cardioactive Herbs
- Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*)
- Lily of the Valley (*Convallaria magalis*)

#### Cardiotoxic Herbs
- Astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceous*)
- Garlic (*Allium sativa*)
- Hawthorn (*Crataegus spp.*)
- Linden (*Tilia spp.*)
- Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*)

*Extreme low dose botanical. Do not use without guidance of a skilled herbalist.

#### Circulatory Stimulating Herbs
- Cayenne (*Capsicum annuum*)
- Crampbark (*Viburnum opulus*)
- Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*)

#### Diuretic Herbs
- Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)
- Hawthorn (*Crataegus spp.*)
- Lily of the Valley (*Convallaria magalis*)
- Linden (*Tilia spp.*)
- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

#### Hypotensive Herbs
- Crampbark (*Viburnum opulus*)
- Garlic (*Allium sativa*)
- Hawthorn (*Crataegus spp.*)
- Linden (*Tilia spp.*)
- Mistletoe, European (*Viscum album*)
- Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*)
- Passionflower (*Passiflora spp.*)
- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

#### Nervine Herbs
- Kava Kava (*Piper methysticum*)
- Linden (*Tilia spp.*)
- Oat (*Avena sativa*)
- Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*)
- Valerian (*Valerian officinalis*)

#### Rubefacient Herbs
- Cayenne (*Capsicum annuum*)
- Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)

#### Vasodilator Herbs
- Black Cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*)
- Feverfew (*Chrysanthemum parthenium*)
- Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*)

#### Venotonic Herbs
- Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)
- Horsechestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*)
- Gotu Kola (*Centella asiatica*)
Recommended Herbal Books (*indicates available through library loan system):

General Body System Information
~ The Gift of Healing Herbs: Plant Medicines and Home Remedies for a Vibrantly Healthy Life by Robin Rose Bennett*
~ Herbal Medicine From the Heart of the Earth by Sharon Tilgner, N.D.
~ The Authentic Herbal Healer by Holly Bellebuono
~ Holistic Anatomy by Pip Waller

Cardiovascular System
~ Rogers’ School of Herbal Medicine Volume 3 - Cardiovascular System by Robert Dale Rogers
~ Healthy Heart: Strengthen Your Cardiovascular System Naturally by David Hoffmann*

Emotional and Spiritual Heart
~ The Secret Teaching of Plants: The Intelligence of the Heart in the Direct Perception of Nature by Stephen Harrod Buhner

Online Resources
Chris Kesser on Heart Disease and Cholesterol: http://chriskresser.com/heart-disease/
David Hoffmann: http://www.healthy.net/Health/Article/Herbal_Therapy_the_Cardiovascular_System/1502
http://www.healthy.net/scribble/article.aspx?id=1582
Varicose veins: http://www.healthy.net/scribble/article.aspx?id=1287
http://www.healthy.net/scribble/article.aspx?id=1287
Paul Bergner: http://www.medherb.com/Therapeutics/Cardiovascular_Herbs_and_hypertension.htm#_VPID_8
Corey Pine Shane: http://blueridgeschool.org/blog/2009/12/05/getting-the-blood-moving

Notes