



Artichoke

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Artichoke may help lower cholesterol

Shannon Quinn is the author of Death by Deception: Unmasking Heart Failure which discusses using herbs and diet to reduce cholesterol and increase heart health.

More than a trendy appetizer or pizza topping, artichokes have found a place on the phytomedicinal menu for their ability to fight heart disease by lowering cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

The artichoke's spiny green flowers, which are eaten like a vegetable, contain a substance called cynarin. A recent study showed that this compound may help rid the body of artery-dogging cholesterol and lower triglycerides, thus reducing the risk of heart disease.

The study, performed at the PISGAH Bio-Med Research Center in Asheville, N.C., used concentrated, expressed artichoke flower juice to lower total cholesterol levels by an average of 35 points in 12 weeks: triglyceride levels fell by almost 50 points.

Cynarin works by boosting the production of bile in the liver. Bile breaks down fat and cholesterol and expels it from the body.

On average, Americans have higher cholesterol and more body fat than their European counterparts according to Wallace Brawley, Ph.D., who headed the North Carolina study. He said total cholesterol should be about 200 parts per deciliter, but



in the U.S., the average is 210 for people under 20 and a whopping 280 for people age 60 and older.

"The average weight is also 15-26 pounds higher for Americans than Europeans." Brawley said. "It's a reflection of dietary habits." it is known that a higher weight is often associated with higher cholesterol levels.

Not an cholesterol is bad though: some cholesterol is needed by the body to manufacture steroids, sex hormones, and to ensure proper brain function.

Chock fun of additives, preservatives and pesticides the standard American diet provides an unhealthy dose of fat and toxins. Gradually the body's main filter - the liver - is overwhelmed. Brawley explained.

We all have a build up of toxins in the liver from pollution, additives in our food, and the day-to-day abuse of our bodies " he said. e drive to work breathing exhaust fumes, and we may have alcohol or other addiction problems. We are exposed to things every day we don't even know about."

Improved liver function may turn out to be the main benefit of cynarin, and cholesterol reduction may just be a result of that renewed health, he said. In Europe, expressed artichoke juice has been used for years as a liver tonic. In fact, a 1969 French experiment using the juice to treat liver and kidney problems was so successful that the scientists took out a patent

on it, according to Jean Carper, author of The Food Pharmacy.

Liver scans performed on some of the North Carolina study participants showed improved liver function in the first 12 weeks. Brawley said. 'We're continuing the study to see if maybe liver improvement is the primary function and cholesterol benefit is secondary due to bile production.

In the 1940s, Japanese scientists noted that artichoke juice "enhanced well-being" while stimulating production of bile and lowering cholesterol. Studies done during/ that time by scientists in both Switzerland and Texas showed that blood cholesterol levels dropped significantly after eating artichokes.

Over time, Brawley said he expects results to prove artichoke juice is as effective as prescription cholesterol medication - without the side effects. Cholesterol medication can cause headaches, constipation, and gas. More serious secondary side effects include impaired liver function, gallstones, and cancer.

To see the long-term effects of the artichoke Mice, some of Brawley's 40 study subjects have been continuing to take two of the 500 mg capsules twice a day for a total of nine months. In the first weeks,

