

second opinions

» LEADERS IN NATURAL HEALTH DISCUSS ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT OPTIONS
BY MARIE MONEYSMITH

protect your gallbladder

A healthy gallbladder stores bile used by the liver to digest fats. But gallstones (made of cholesterol and calcium) can form inside the gallbladder, causing inflammation and pain, oftentimes severe. Herbs and dietary measures can help, and offer a possible alternative to surgery.

Experts estimate that some 20 million people have gallstones, but many don't even know it. Chronic indigestion and bloating can be signs of gallbladder disease.

Ellen Kamhi, R.N., Ph.D., H.N.C. » Before beginning any kind of gallstone therapy, Ellen Kamhi, R.N., Ph.D., H.N.C., says it's important to have a physician determine the size of the gallstones using imaging or sonogram. "Let a doctor decide if the stones are small enough to pass through a duct," she explains. "If a large stone becomes stuck, it can cause a potentially deadly rupture."

For anyone who has small stones or "gravel," dietary changes can help, says Kamhi. She recommends a mostly vegetarian diet free of saturated fats and eggs, along with an increase in fiber from fruits, vegetables and flax meal. Supplements of lipase, a fat-breaking enzyme, can also help. She recommends 10,000 NF (National Formulary) units of lipase with meals.

Peppermint oil and ginger are two good herbs for treating gallstones, Kamhi notes. Doses of 300 mg of enteric-coated peppermint oil capsules, plus 500 to 1,000 mg of ginger extract, both taken two to three times daily, can help relieve symptoms. "Many times, gallstones are associated with joint pain involved in both rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis," says Kamhi. "But the combination of a low-fat diet and herbs can make a big difference in symptoms."

For more information: *Ellen Kamhi, The Natural Nurse*, (800) 829-0918; P.O. Box 525, Oyster Bay, NY 11771; www.naturalnurse.com.

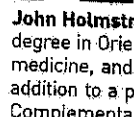
John Holmstrom, M.S.O.M., L.Ac. » The first step in treating gallstones with ayurvedic medicine involves determining

the patient's ratio of energy sources, says John Holmstrom, M.S.O.M., L.Ac. The three sources, according to ayurvedic medicine, are vata (governs the movement of mind and body), kapha (governs weight and the structure of tissues) and pitta (governs the generation and conservation of body heat). Restoring balance among these factors, says Holmstrom, is different for each patient, but usually involves dietary changes that address an individual's "excesses;" herbs to counteract, prevent and dissolve the stones; and, for those with strong constitutions, purgative formulas that stimulate the bowels. "Someone who is predominantly vata may be too weak to take a purgative formula," explains Holmstrom.

Apples, pomegranate juice, beets with their greens, parsley and radishes are good foods for preventing gallstones from enlarging, as well as treating inflammation, says Holmstrom. Other recommended additions to the diet include barley, millet, peas, garbanzo beans and cornsilk tea. Often, Holmstrom also suggests clients add mild herbs, like guggula, cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*), triphala (a combination of the



Ellen Kamhi, R.N., Ph.D., H.N.C. has a doctorate in public health and is also a board-certified holistic nurse. Involved with natural medicine for more than 30 years, Kamhi specializes in herbal and bioenergetic therapies. She is the co-author of *Arthritis: An Alternative Medicine Definitive Guide* (Future Medicine Publishing, 2000) and several other books.



John Holmstrom, M.S.O.M., L.Ac., is an ayurvedic practitioner with a degree in Oriental medicine. He has 30 years of experience in ayurvedic medicine, and was an ayurvedic horticulturist in India for six years. In addition to a private practice, he teaches at the American University of Complementary Medicine in Los Angeles, and is on the board of the California Association of Ayurvedic Medicine.



Carl Hangee-Bauer, N.D., L.Ac. is a graduate of Bastyr University and has been practicing naturopathic medicine since 1984. He has been a licensed acupuncturist since 1988. He is a member of both the American and California Associations of Naturopathic Physicians.



three fruits *harada*, *behada* and *amla*), coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*), mustard seed and turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) to food.

Two of Holmstrom's other favorite herbal supplements are goldthread (*Coptis trifolia*) and shilajit. He typically recommends two capsules of these herbs, taken twice daily. Holmstrom also suggests patients drink a glass of water combined with the juice of one whole lemon in the morning and again before bedtime.

"It takes time, but it is possible to dissolve gallstones," notes Holmstrom. "If a person is experiencing pain, though, they should see a practitioner immediately."

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Carl Hangee-Bauer, N.D., L.Ac. »

According to naturopathic principles, illness indicates an imbalance within the body, and gallstones are no exception, says Carl Hangee-Bauer, N.D., L.Ac. "They are related to how the body handles fat and hormones," he explains.

Like the other experts, Hangee-Bauer recommends a lean diet with lots of leafy greens and vegetables, especially dandelion greens, beets and artichokes. Small amounts of meat are acceptable, but not fried foods and eggs. Morning and night, he recommends drinking one glass of water with the juice of one-half lemon, 1 teaspoon of honey and a pinch of cayenne pepper as a gentle gallbladder stimulant and cleanser.

Because the gallbladder is so closely linked to the liver, it is important to provide the liver with plenty of support, says Hangee-Bauer. He favors fat-burning supplements known as lipotropics, containing choline and methionine, to speed up the removal of fat from the liver, and a combination product containing liver-friendly herbs such as milk thistle (*Silybum marianum*), dandelion root (*Taraxacum officinale*) and artichoke

(*Cynara scolymus*); follow dosage directions on the product labels.

He may also suggest patients take phosphatidylserine (PS) to make the cholesterol in bile more soluble and less likely to accumulate in stones. A typical dose is 100 mg, taken three times daily with food. "Gallstones are hard to dissolve," he explains. "But it is possible to reduce the inflammation associated with them and prevent them from growing larger."

For more information: Carl Hangee-Bauer, N.D., L.Ac., Soma Acupuncture and Natural Health Clinic, (415) 643-6600; 1615 20th St., San Francisco, CA 94109; www.somaacupuncture.com. ■

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Water, with fresh lemon juice added, is a gentle gallbladder stimulant and cleanser. Drink it first thing in the morning and before bed for best results.

