



## ANGINA

**Hawthorn** (*Crataegus*, various species) In Europe, hawthorn berry preparations are widely used to treat mild angina. Extensive research has demonstrated that hawthorn extracts improve heart function by opening up the coronary arteries. This in turn improves the blood and oxygen supply to the heart. Hawthorn also decreases blood cholesterol levels, another heart-healthy benefit, and it is safe to use for extended periods of time, according to European clinical experience. Commission E, the German expert panel that evaluates medicinal herbs for the German government, approves hawthorn for a number of heart problems.

**Angelica** (*Angelica archangelica*) Calcium channel blockers are a standard class of anti-angina drugs, and angelica contains 15 compounds that act much like these channel blockers. Similar compounds appear in other plants in the carrot family: carrots, celery, fennel, parsley and parsnips.

**Bilberry** (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) Bilberry contains compounds known as anthocyanins that have a cholesterol-lowering effect. This herb is also a vasodilator that opens blood vessels and lowers blood pressure. Anthocyanins help prevent formation of the blood clots that trigger heart attack.

**Garlic** (*Allium sativum*) and **Onion** (*A. cepa*) both of these spicy herbs help treat heart disease by lowering cholesterol and blood pressure and by preventing formation of the blood clots that trigger heart attack.

According to one study, munching one clove of garlic daily cuts cholesterol by 9 percent. Every 1 percent decrease in cholesterol translates to a 2 percent decrease in heart attack risk, so a clove a day reduces risk of heart attack by 18 percent. Onions have similar benefits, although not as pronounced.

**Ginger** (*Zingiber officinale*). It seems that ginger is an antioxidant that offers the blood vessels some protection against the damage caused by cholesterol. Ginger also boosts the strength of heart muscle tissue, as does the medication digitalis.

**Kudzu** (*Pueraria lobata*). Chinese clinical studies attest to the anti-angina benefits of kudzu. In one study, 71 people took 10 to 15 grams of a root extract a day for 4 to 22 weeks. During this time, 29 were much improved, 20 showed some improvement, and 22 showed little or no improvement. Kudzu extracts dilate coronary arteries, increasing blood flow and decreasing blood pressure. They also help stabilize heart rhythm. Kudzu root preparations have produced no adverse effects in human trials.

**Purslane** (*Portulaca oleracea*). Antioxidants are substances that protect cells from damage caused by free radicals, highly reactive oxygen molecules in the body. And they appear to play a key role in preventing heart disease

**Willow** (*Salix*, various species). Studies have shown that low-dose aspirin--anywhere from 30 milligrams to a standard 325-milligram tablet a day--helps prevent heart attack by preventing the formation of blood clots. This is a major concern for people with angina. Willow bark is herbal aspirin. A daily cup or two of willow bark tea would probably provide the equivalent of the low aspirin dose recommended for heart attack prevention. Remember, though, that if you're allergic to aspirin, you probably shouldn't take aspirin-like herbs, either.

**Evening primrose** (*Oenothera biennis*). Primrose is an excellent source of gamma-linolenic acid (GLA), a compound that lowers both cholesterol and blood pressure. GLA also has an anti-clotting effect.

**Flax** (*Linum usitatissimum*). Flaxseed contains an abundant amount of alpha-linolenic acid, a compound that many claim has heart-protective ability.