

- Blood—Circulation / Cardiovascular System

Cardiovascular health common problems and the role of nutrition

Waikato Herald · 11 Jun 2021 · 13 · John Arts John Arts (B.soc.sci, Dip Tch, Adv.dip.nut.med) is a nutritional medicine practitioner and founder of Abundant Health Ltd. For questions or advice contact John on 0800 423559 or email john@abundant.co.nz. Join his all new newsletter at www.abundant.co.nz

Cardiovascular health is all about the transport of blood which carries oxygen and nutrients from our heart and lungs to nourish individual cells. Our focus here is to look at common problems and identify the role of nutrition to both help and prevent problems.

This is a brief overview and you should contact me for personalised nutritional advice.

A healthy body will have blood that is able to flow smoothly throughout our body.

To achieve this, the processes that manufacture blood will ensure that the liquid plasma, red blood cells, platelets and white blood cells that form our blood are made seamlessly.

Good blood is able to bring oxygen and nutrients to cells so that our cells can function at their best.

Common problems include poor red blood cell formation caused by low levels of nutrients especially iron and vitamins B12 and folate which can be tested and treated by your GP.

A problem often ignored is how easily blood flows.

Certain antioxidants such as grape seed proanthocyanidins (OPC) promote blood flow and in doing so can help normalise blood pressure.

Antioxidants are especially important as they reduce oxidative stress (free radical damage) in blood vessels and also help blood to flow properly.

A good multi should have the nutrients that help with blood flow.

These should include natural vitamin E, B vitamins and most importantly the potent antioxidants proanthocyanidins (OPC) in grape seed extract and anthocyanins from blackcurrants.

I prefer high quality Nz-made extracts. Your daily multi should include these nutrients. It should have a full B complex, at least 50IU of natural vitamin E and have 150mg of pure OPC with supporting anthocyanins.

This will help your blood flow, protect your heart and blood vessels and help maintain good circulatory health.

The heart itself is susceptible to many problems; most of these are influenced by nutrients.

For example, low levels of magnesium can either cause or worsen heart rhythm functions.

A good multi should provide all the magnesium needed for normal heart electrical function.

A common problem is plaque formation in heart arteries. We know that free radicals change LDL cholesterol into dangerous oxidised cholesterol, the first step in plaque formation. This, with subsequent inflammation is the real driver of coronary artery disease. To help prevent these processes your daily multi should have the potent antioxidants especially high quality OPC from grape seed extract.

These antioxidants help prevent cholesterol oxidation and intercept the processes that cause inflammation.

Another contributor to heart disease is high levels of homocysteine. This is a dangerous byproduct of our protein metabolism.

This can damage blood vessels leading to heart problems and can contribute to dementia.

Fortunately, vitamins B6, B12 and folate readily prevent high homocysteine levels.

Finally, we need to consider the health of our blood vessels.

These are complex tissues and need to stay healthy for good circulation and to maintain good blood pressure. There are many nutrients that affect blood vessel health especially vitamin C, bioflavonoids especially hesperidin and OPC.

Vitamin C is needed to form the collagen needed to give blood vessels their strength and suppleness while the OPC'S help prevent free radical damage that causes blood vessels to stiffen which results in poor circulation and often high blood pressure.

A good multi should have these in meaningful levels. I like to target 150mg of pure OPC, supporting anthocyanins, vitamin C, Vitamin E and a full B complex.

Beware though of 1 a day formulas as it is impossible to include sufficient key nutrients especially botanical antioxidants and minerals.