



# Gallstones and Gallbladder Problems

## Herbs and Supplements for the Gallbladder

The liver produces a substance called bile, which is stored in the gallbladder until it is needed for digestion of fats. Bile has two functions. First, it helps to emulsify fats by breaking them down and turning them into a soap-like state so they will be water soluble. This allows them to be absorbed into the bloodstream in the intestines. Secondly, bile also serves an eliminative function for the liver. It helps the liver rid itself of certain waste products such as excess cholesterol and bilirubin.

Bile is composed primarily of lecithin, cholesterol and bile salts. Up to 60% of the cholesterol produced by the body can be used to make bile, which is why low fat diets can increase cholesterol levels, since the gallbladder does not need to produce as much bile to digest fats.

Sluggish activity of the gallbladder will result in poor digestion of fats. Stools that have a greasy sheen to them and float like corks making them difficult to flush are an indication of sluggish gallbladder function. Since bile also colors the stool, the color of the stool tells us something about the quality of bile production. Clay colored stools can indicate an inadequate production of bile, while dark black or greenish colored stools can indicate a lot of toxins are being eliminated from the liver via the bile.

When the liver dumps irritating toxins through the bile, nausea and sometimes vomiting result. Diarrhea can also result from toxic bile being eliminated from the liver.

Herbs that stimulate gallbladder function and bile production are called cholagogues. Some cholagogue herbs include dandelion, Oregon grape, hops, burdock, goldenseal and garlic. Stronger cholagogues include milk thistle, blessed thistle, cascara sagrada, barberry, blue flag, celandine, Culver's root, fringetree bark, turmeric and toadflax. GallBladder Formula is a mild cholagogue formula. Milk Thistle Combination, Liver Cleanse Formula and BP-X also have cholagogue action.

A bloated, stuffy feeling under the rib cage on the right side of the abdomen is an indication that cholagogues are needed to flush the liver and clear the gallbladder. This sensation is often accompanied by a sense of slight pain or pressure in the same area, and irritability, nervousness and/or insomnia.

Gallstones are small deposits, resembling small rocks, that form in the gallbladder. If they are large or numerous enough they can obstruct the gallbladder or trigger a painful gallbladder attack. Many people have safely eliminated gallstones by doing a gallbladder flush. Here's how it is done.

Start by fasting for 24 to 48 hours on fresh, raw apple juice or fresh squeezed grapefruit juice to clear the colon. Malic acid, an ingredient in the apple juice, also softens the stones, but persons

with hypoglycemia or yeast infections will do better on grapefruit juice. If using grapefruit juice take Fibralgia, which contains malic acid and magnesium, for a similar effect.

Just before going to bed at the close of the fast, drink 1/2 cup of olive oil and 1/2 cup of lemon (or grapefruit) juice. Mix these together thoroughly like you would shake up a salad dressing. The lemon juice cuts the olive oil and makes it more palatable. It sounds and smells worse than it tastes. Next, lie on your right side for a half hour before going to sleep. In the morning, if you don't have a bowel movement, take an enema. This procedure may need to be repeated 2 days in a row.

Generally, you will pass some dark black or green objects that look like shriveled peas the day after drinking the olive oil and lemon juice. These objects are not gallstones. Gallstones that can be passed are much smaller than this, generally less than 2 millimeters in diameter. Chemical analysis of these objects shows they are composed of soap, and are created by the bile interacting with the oil. The large amount of oil causes large amounts of bile to be flushed through the gallbladder in an attempt to digest the fats in the oil. This lowers cholesterol (because cholesterol is a major component of bile) and causes smaller stones to be expelled. The materials used in the gallbladder flush can also help dissolve bigger gallstones when used regularly in smaller quantities.

There are a number of versions of this procedure, but they all rely on olive oil. This is because olive oil acts as a solvent of cholesterol, the chief constituent of gallstones. One variation that seems to work particularly well is to take a dose of Epsom salt about two or three hours prior to taking the olive oil and lemon juice. Follow the directions on the box of Epsom salts as per the dosage. Cholagogue herbs (mentioned earlier) can also be taken during the juice fast or for several months to help flush the gallstones.

There is a small chance that a very large stone could become lodged in the bile ducts, which would require that surgery be performed to remove the gallbladder. However, we are not aware of a single case of this having happened, and know that thousands of people have used this procedure. Since this procedure is typically done as an alternative to surgery, we believe it is well worth trying, as a person can go ahead with the surgery if the procedure fails to relieve the problem.

For more information on how to deal with gallstones or gallbladder problems consult your local herb specialist. For serious or persistent gallbladder problems it is wise to seek advice from a licensed physician.

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