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## Alleviating the Pressure

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BART RATE

bpm

PATIENT ID

1067 5033 6918

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# Alleviating the Pressure

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HEART RATE  
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**By Carolyn Steber**

**A**pproximately 67 million, or one in three Americans, have high blood pressure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Yet that number could be even higher, as high blood pressure rarely shows any signs or symptoms. "Headache, dizziness, shortness of breath and blurred vision could be symptomatic of high blood pressure, but regular blood pressure screenings are critical since the symptoms may not appear until after damage has occurred," said Dan Lifton, CEO of New York-based Quality of Life Labs.

The lack of symptoms is why high blood pressure is often called "the silent killer," offered Cheryl Myers, head of education and scientific affairs at Wisconsin-based EuroPharma, Inc. "To a lot of people, being told that they

have high blood pressure comes as a complete surprise," she said.

Also known as hypertension, high blood pressure is a common condition in which the force of the blood against artery walls is high enough that it may eventually cause health problems, according to the Mayo Clinic. "When blood pressure stays elevated over time, it can inflict damage on the body," said Natalie Jones, MS, CNS, product information specialist at Florida-based Life Extension. "The excessive pressure on the artery walls can damage blood vessels, as well as organs in the body. Uncontrolled hypertension can lead to an increased risk of serious health conditions, including congestive heart failure, heart attack, stroke, atherosclerosis, brain damage, vision loss and kidney failure, among other things."

Blood pressure is determined by the amount of blood the heart pumps and the amount of resistance to blood flow in the arteries. The American Heart Association (AHA) sites the normal blood pressure range as a systolic (top number) reading of less than 120, and a diastolic (lower number) reading as less than 80. When the reading is high, the cause can often be difficult for doctors to determine. "Most people have what's called 'essential hypertension,' which means doctors don't know the cause," said Arnold Gitomer, owner of Willner Chemists, a nutritionally oriented pharmacy in New York, NY. In these cases, general stress is often the culprit. But an unhealthy diet and sedentary lifestyle can also cause trouble by leading to chronic inflammation and poor cardiovascular function, said Myers. "Too much sitting during the day and too

many processed, high-sodium foods will catch up [to you] eventually, and sometimes sooner than later."

Other risk factors include smoking, a family history of high blood pressure, obesity and age. And with the large number of Baby Boomers in the U.S., the pre-hypertensive and hypertensive population is increasing faster than ever, leading to a strong market for cardiovascular supplements.

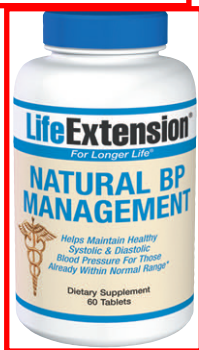
### Natural Interventions

High blood pressure has become the condition that consumers most often treat with prescription medications, according to a 2012 Mintel report. But many find they are unhappy with the long list of potential side effects such as dry cough, dizziness, headaches and impotence. "As a result, many individuals have turned to a more natural approach for managing their blood pressure, including lifestyle modifications (diet, exercise, mental health) and integrating dietary supplements into their daily regimen," said Jones.

Life Extension offers a variety of supplements that help naturally control blood pressure, including Cardio Peak with Standardized Hawthorn and Arjuna. The hawthorn in Cardio Peak contains specific bioflavonoid complexes that help to promote normal circulation and efficient heart muscle function, while the arjuna extract complements the effect of the hawthorn by enhancing heart muscle tone and supporting healthy endothelial function, Jones explained.

The company also offers Natural BP Management, which provides a multi-nutrient formulation of CVH-15, grape seed extract and pomegranate extract. CVH-15 is derived from whey protein and naturally inhibits angiotensin-converting enzymes, while grape seed increases blood vessel dilation and pomegranate provides antioxidant support. "Natural BP Management is the first broad-spectrum nutritional supplement to combine potent, standardized concentrations of the novel nutritional agents," Jones said.

EuroPharma also offers several products that help keep blood pressure numbers in a healthy range while building the strength and flexibility of arteries and improving blood flow. Myers recommended two products: Blood Pressure Health and



Mesoglycan.

Blood Pressure Health provides olive leaf extract that has been standardized to contain 16 to 24 percent oleuropein, one of the healthy compounds found in olive oil that helps keep arteries flexible and strong, and has been shown to reduce blood pressure.

In a clinical trial, administration of a special olive leaf extract lowered systolic pressure by 11 points and diastolic pressure by five points.<sup>1</sup>

"That's very impressive, especially for anyone hovering around the higher end of 'normal' blood pressure numbers," Myers said.

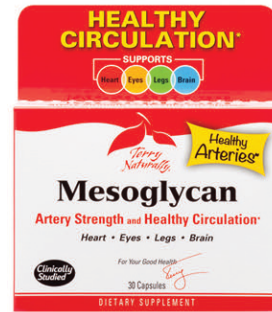
Researchers found olive leaf helps lower blood pressure because it is high in antioxidants that protect the walls of blood vessels from free radical damage. It also helps widen narrow blood vessels, acting as a vasodilator, so that blood flows more easily to the heart, said Myers. "In other words, it is like the difference you'd see when watering your garden with a narrow, brittle hose versus a wider, newer and more flexible hose," she explained. "Olive leaf extract simply helps blood vessels and arteries work better and stay healthier."

Blood Pressure Health also contains hibiscus flower extract standardized to provide at least 45 percent polyphenols, which are natural free-radical fighters, according to Myers.

"Clinical studies show a lot of promise for hibiscus for lowering blood pressure," she said, adding that in one study of hibiscus, participants with mildly elevated blood pressure experienced a seven-point drop in systolic blood pressure after consuming hibiscus tea, while participants with high blood pressure levels (over 129) had a 14-point drop. "If you've ever struggled with elevated blood pressure, you know these are great numbers."

The beneficial polyphenols in hibiscus, known as anthocyanins, are responsible for the plant's blood pressure-lowering abilities. "In the case of hibiscus, these anthocyanins work as natural angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, moderating the activity of an enzyme that cause blood vessels to narrow and blood pressure to increase," said Myers.

Retailers have had great success with Blood Pressure Health, which is sold under EuroPharma's Terry Naturally brand. "Ever since that product has been available, [my customers] have all said 'this one works,'" said Ginny Hill, owner of Hill's Health Hut in Jefferson



City, TN, who has been in the natural health industry for more than 30 years. "They like the fact that they don't have to take six pills a day. They love that their blood pressure stays in check."

EuroPharma's other blood pressure product, Mesoglycan, is an excellent source of building blocks called glycosaminoglycans, or GAGs, which are a vital and necessary component when building the walls of blood vessels and arteries, according to Myers.

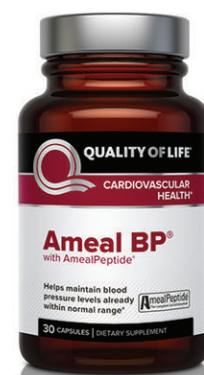
"Mesoglycan has been shown to prevent or slow atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), as well as to treat other diseases of the veins and arteries, including chronic venous insufficiency and diabetic retinopathy," she said. "Mesoglycan has more than one mechanism of action: it works on the actual formation of blood vessel walls, helping them to be strong, yet flexible, plus it helps keep blood moving through our arteries and blood vessels."

Also available is Quality of Life Labs' AmealBP, featuring AmealPeptide, a patented combination of two lactotripeptides from milk protein devel-

oped in Japan and backed by 22 human clinical studies. "It works like many anti-hypertensive medications by inhibiting the angiotensin-converting enzymes (ACE), but it's 100 percent natural and free of side effects," said Lifton.

A 2002 double-blind, placebo-controlled study followed subjects with mild hypertension as they consumed 635 mg of AmealPeptide in liquid form daily for eight weeks. "All subjects showed a significant reduction in systolic and diastolic blood pressure ... and there were no reported side effects," said Lifton, adding that many studies afterward reported similar results.

Quality of Life Labs is currently work-



# Alleviating the Pressure

ing on a multi-ingredient complex that will combine AmealPeptide with a patented hibiscus extract CardioHB and CoQ10-SR, the company's patented form of CoQ10, to create a multi-action anti-hypertensive formula, said Lifton.

New York-based Twinlab Corporation also offers a blood pressure supplement, Blood Pressure Success, which is a proprietary product that supports healthy blood pressure already within normal ranges. It includes two nutraceuticals, MegaNatural-BP and magnesium, at clinically relevant doses.

MegaNatural-BP has been shown in research using animal models to activate the enzyme nitric oxide synthase (eNOS) to produce nitric oxide (NO), an important compound for supporting healthy circulation<sup>2</sup>, according to Gene Bruno, director of category management at Twinlab. Magnesium is also included since this mineral is required for active transport of ions like potassium and calcium across cell membranes. Through its role in ion transport systems, magnesium affects the conduction of nerve impulses, muscle contraction and normal heart rhythm.<sup>3</sup>

The product was recently reformulated based on relevant dosing of MegaNatural-BP and magnesium used in human clinical research. "Even though it is more costly, Twinlab chose to use a higher dose of MegaNatural-BP, which has more human clinical research to support it. Likewise, the amount and type of magnesium in Blood Pressure Success is the same as the magnesium used in human clinical research, not just any type of magnesium," said Bruno. "We are committed to delivering products that work, and customers should be pleased with the results."



## Educating the Community

Many people are going into health food stores in search of natural solutions for

# Heart Healthy Tips

According to The University of Maryland Medical Center, there is a multitude of ways to naturally lower blood pressure.

- **Omega-3 Fish Oils:** Some studies have found these supplements benefit heart disease and hypertension by helping to keep blood vessels flexible.

- **Calcium:** Calcium has been shown to regulate the tone of the smooth muscles lining blood vessels. It has also been found that people who have sufficient dietary calcium have lower blood pressure than those who do not.

- **Weight Loss:** Even modest weight loss in overweight people can immediately lower blood pressure. Weight loss, especially when accompanied by salt restriction, may allow patients with

mild hypertension to safely reduce or go off medications, according to The University.

- **Exercise:** Regular exercise helps keep arteries elastic, ensuring blood flow and a normal blood pressure.

- **Good Sleep Habits:** Sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea, are associated with hypertension. Poor sleep also increases stress hormones, which can increase blood pressure.

- **Stress Reduction:** Reducing stress may lead to lower blood pressure. The University recommends yoga, tai chi and relaxation techniques, such as meditation.

Source: High Blood Pressure. University of Maryland Medical Center. [www.umm.edu](http://www.umm.edu).

cardiovascular health issues, said EuroPharma's Myers, even if they aren't clear on the mechanisms of action or "why" the supplements are good for them. She also pointed out the lack of understanding among consumers that the risk factors for heart attack are the same risk factors for stroke. "High blood pressure raises your risk of both catastrophic events, so even more reason to keep your blood pressure well within normal range," she said.

This is where retailers can step in to provide educational efforts. Myers suggests store owners host a "How to be Naturally Heart-Smart" event that features heart-healthy foods and supplements so consumers can learn first-hand what is good for them. "It would give people more inspiration for making their own heart-friendly meals at home, and they could talk to experts about which supplemental measures would be right for them," said Myers.

Many companies provide supplement information and educational opportunities to retailers. For example, Twinlab provides retailer training, product information, website resources and other in-store merchandizing, as well as brand advertising to support sales, said Bruno. "Retailers looking to boost sales of these products would do well to cross-merchandise them with other cardiovascular health support products like Twinlab's Omega-3 Cardio Krill, Twinlab's CoQ10 dots, garlic, etc.," he added.

EuroPharma also provides education to retail partners in the form of product

webinars for store staff, ingredient information to share with customers and in-store presentations. Ginny Hill, of Hill's Health Hut, has a rack of EuroPharma's educational materials in her store, and she provides the information to customers so they can learn about their options. "We want people to be healthy," said Myers. "After all, our shared goal in this field ... is to help create a more aware and healthier country." **VR**

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- EuroPharma, Inc., (920) 406-6500
- Life Extension, (800) 333-2562
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