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help yourself



## Horse chestnut seeds provide hemorrhoid relief

Joe Skelton

I was visiting my cousin Don the other day and I noticed that he was walking awkwardly and his face showed signs of discomfort.

When I asked him what was wrong, he replied, "I've got hemorrhoids and nothing seems to be helping. The over-the-counter ointment I've been trying is useless."

"Have you thought about using horse chestnut?" I asked.

"Get serious," he retorted, "how can a horse chestnut help hemorrhoids? Besides that sounds positively painful."

Don was surprised to learn I was serious and that I wasn't referring to large nut-like object.

I explained how, since the 1500s, extracts of the hard dark-brown

seeds of the horse chestnut tree (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) have been providing relief from chronic venous insufficiency (CVI), which include varicose veins and hemorrhoids (piles). Hemorrhoids are simply enlarged or varicose veins of the anus and rectum.


Key constituents of the horse chestnut seeds include: hydroxycoumarins, flavonoids, tannins, and aescin, which is the most active ingredient. The combination of constituents in the horse chestnut seeds appear to initiate a chain reaction which ends enzyme attacks on blood vessel walls, decreasing the risk of the vessels leaking fluid

into surrounding tissues which promotes swelling. The extract also helps the blood vessel walls to contract and regain their normal firmness and functional readiness, providing for improved blood flow.

For relief of hemorrhoids, sufferers can take the horse chestnut seed extract internally in tincture or capsule



form. It has been reported that, "Many clinical trials in humans have shown that (horse chestnut seed standardized extract), formed into sustained-release pellets, packed in capsules, and consumed twice a day for a daily total of 600 milligrams (mg), effectively relieves the symptoms of CVI." (*Prevention*, Oct 99). In addition, the extract is effective when made into a lotion or gel for external application to relieve pain and itching. People have also used the extract in sitz baths for treating hemorrhoids.

A few days after my cousin Don began treatment, he was singing the praises of horse chestnut seed extract. "I tell people suffering with hemorrhoids to forget about mainstream over-the-counter products and instead encourage them to visit their local natural health store and purchase a product that contains horse chestnut seed extract." 

Joe Skelton is a writer who is particularly interested in issues and topics that relate to the natural health industry.

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