



Pycnogenol

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Pycnogenol is an extract from the bark of the French maritime pine tree. Multiple active ingredients, and as importantly, multiple active metabolites have shown profound anti-oxidant and even anti-cancer activity. The active constituents include flavanoid monomers (singles) such as catechin and epicatechin that have antioxidant properties. The active ingredients also include oligomeric proanthocyanidins (OPC's) which are groupings of catechin and epicatechin.

Pycnogenol prevents the oxidation of LDL cholesterol, protects the DNA from free-radical damage, prevents stress-related blood clotting without increasing bleeding risk, increases nitric oxide synthesis leading to vasodilation, has profound anti-inflammatory activity, protects the skin from sun damage, dramatically improves wound healing while decreasing scarring, boosts many aspects of immune system function, and also lowers blood sugar while stimulating fat tissue breakdown. These multitudes of benefits come from the complex mixture of active ingredients. Although other OPC's exist such as grapeseed extract and green tea extract, the most compelling research on OPC's comes from studies looking at the activity of the trademarked product known as Pycnogenol.

Let's focus on the double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomized clinical trials (DBPCRCT's) that exist on the use of Pycnogenol on a variety of health conditions, and where you as a consumer might find a trial of Pycnogenol useful:

Menopause

A recent DBPCRCT documented that in women with menopausal symptoms, 200mg per day of Pycnogenol lead to dramatic improvement in all menopausal symptoms, and improvement in overall antioxidative status, as well as an improved LDL/HDL ratio without any side-effects.

Menstrual Cramps And Pelvic Pain During Pregnancy

Pycnogenol at a dosage approximating 100mg per day lead to profound decrease in menstrual cramps and low back pain by the second cycle with further improvements into the third cycle. Pycnogenol has both anti-inflammatory and smooth muscle relaxant properties that may explain its activity. Low doses of Pycnogenol (50mg) have been shown to be safe and effective during the third trimester of pregnancy in reducing joint pain, back pain, pelvic pain and pain due to varicose veins.

Erectile Dysfunction

In men with sexual dysfunction, the combination of Pycnogenol with the amino acid L-arginine was found to allow 92.5% of men to experience a normal erection within 3 months, without any side-effects. The appropriate dosage of Pycnogenol is 100mg per day and the appropriate dosage and formulation of L-arginine is Perfusia by Thorne at a dosage of 2 caps (1000mg) twice per day.

ADHD

In a one month trial of Pycnogenol in children with ADHD, dosed at 1mg/kg/day over four weeks, showed a significant reduction in hyperactivity and improved attention. Further studies have documented an improvement in antioxidative status in children with ADHD placed on Pycnogenol and protection of oxidative damage to DNA. This is extremely important, as the primary concern concerning side-effect of most ADHD medicines is a significant increase in damage to DNA. If your child (or yourself) requires any of the ADHD medicines, you should certainly take Pycnogenol as it will protect you from this potential cancer-causing side-effect of these medicines, and more importantly may be a better therapy in and of itself than the medicine you are using.

Diabetes

Pycnogenol has been found to be more effective than green tea extract or even a commonly prescribed diabetes medicine at slowing the absorption of carbohydrates into the bloodstream. Due to its mechanism of action, Pycnogenol can have both weight loss and glucose lowering effects.

Hypertension

At doses of 200mg of Pycnogenol per day in the treatment of patients with mild hypertension, systolic blood pressures showed an average drop of 10-15 points.

Hypercholesterolemia

Pycnogenol at dosages of 200mg per day has been shown to lower LDL cholesterol and improve LDL/HDL ratio, furthermore and probably most importantly, a decrease in oxidized LDL – the kind that causes damage, has been documented.

Retinopathy (Eye Damage)

Whether due to diabetes or hypertension has been successfully and dramatically improved through the use of Pycnogenol from 100-200mg per day. Both objective evidence of improved blood vessel function and improved vision have been observed.

Venous Insufficiency

Pycnogenol has proven to be the most effective treatment known to decrease the symptoms of leg pain, edema, and venous ulcerations in people with chronic venous insufficiency. Even low dosages of 100mg per day for 3-4 months can be profoundly effective.

Asthma

In children 6-18 years old, taking Pycnogenol at a dosage of 1mg/lb for a three month period lead to a significant reduction of inflammatory markers, an improvement in pulmonary function, and a decrease in need for rescue inhalers.

Skin Health

Evidence exists that Pycnogenol profoundly prevents the effect of sun exposure, and demonstrates a significant reduction in skin wrinkling. As well, topical Pycnogenol dramatically decreases wrinkling, profoundly accelerates wound healing, and also helps prevent scars.

Athletic Performance

Taking Pycnogenol at 200mg daily for 30 days lead to a significant improvement in treadmill exercise capacity among recreational athletes.

I have to admit that I was quite skeptical when Pycnogenol was marketed by many MLM's (Multi-Level Marketing Companies). However, over the years significant research indicates that Pycnogenol is probably indeed superior to other OPC's for the conditions listed above. Its main side-effect is expense, as it is a trademarked supplement. However, in any of the conditions we listed, a 2-3 month trial can tell you pretty quickly whether or not Pycnogenol is "worth it" for you.

Your Journey to Health and Healing,
Gary E. Foresman, MD

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