It’s well-known that cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a very serious problem. Affecting the health of the heart, blood vessels and even the brain, CVD is the top killer of Americans today. As you can see from statistics below, prevention is key when promoting a healthy heart. Sadly, though, most of us live in a way that is very destructive to the cardiovascular system. Modern science tends to apply an “after-the-fact” approach to CVD, opting for powerful drugs and invasive surgeries that don’t really resolve the primary causes but rather treat only symptoms. Fortunately, modern science has overwhelmingly demonstrated that a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and other whole foods can dramatically lower the risk of conditions affecting the heart and blood vessels.

There also exist in nature certain medicinal plants with the ability to boost the body’s own defense mechanisms and offer additional protection against everyday factors that threaten our cardiovascular health. One such plant is the renowned jiaogulan herb.

Cardiovascular Disease: Getting to the Heart of the Problem

How Bad is the Heart Disease Problem?

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both women and men in the United States.
- Research suggests that dollars spent on heart disease drugs will reach $23 billion by 2012.
- In the United States each year, cardiologists perform more than 900,000 angioplasties and 121,000 carotid endarterectomies to help prevent stroke.
- Up to 50% of bypass surgeries fail, requiring another bypass to restore adequate coronary blood flow.
- More than a quarter of all U.S. deaths are attributed to cardiovascular disease.
- In 2009, heart disease cost more than $304.6 billion.

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What Is Jiaogulan?

Jiaogulan (pronounced jee-ow-goo-lahn), particularly the five-leaf variety scientifically known as Gynostemma pentaphyllum, is a part of a 5,000-year-old Chinese herbal legacy.

For generations, it was called xiancao, the “immortality herb,” because it is associated with superior health and longevity among the inhabitants of small provinces in southern China. Many are reported to live well beyond 100 years of age.

The herb is now getting worldwide attention because of emerging scientific research supporting its many diverse health benefits. In fact, there have been more than 300 scientific papers about jiaogulan published in respected journals to date.

Jiaogulan is currently used in China to prevent and treat 54 different diseases and conditions. Its demonstrated versatility in health applications is attributed to the presence of bioactive molecules called saponins. More than 9,000 studies have explored the health benefits of saponins, and experts proclaim that jiaogulan contains a broader and more powerful range of these beneficial compounds than any plant found in nature. These include unique and highly active gypenoside saponins that are found only in jiaogulan.

Choosing the Right Jiaogulan Product

To experience the most benefit from jiaogulan, it is important to pick the right product. As the herb’s popularity has grown, a number of jiaogulan products have emerged, though most of these products are of inferior quality. In fact, several hybrids of the plant have been developed to minimize the bitterness inherent in natural jiaogulan. Unfortunately, eliminating the bitter elements also reduces the level of bioactive gypenoside saponins.

For the best benefits, choose standardized high potency products made to U.S. quality standards using non-hybridized jiaogulan sourced from its original home in China. For superior absorption and results, look for a liquid full-spectrum jiaogulan tonic that is prepared from the entire plant and not just from the leaves.

Diabetes, Heart Disease and Jiaogulan

Diabetes is a major contributor to cardiovascular disease and incidence rates of both conditions continue to rise. The good news is that jiaogulan may help reduce the risk of diabetes. Preliminary findings show that the herb and its saponins can improve insulin sensitivity and normalize blood glucose, cholesterol, LDL lipids and blood “stickiness,” thereby providing protection from both diabetes and heart disease.

9 Ways Jiaogulan Can Protect the Cardiovascular System

1. **Lower your cholesterol.** More than 20 clinical papers demonstrate that jiaogulan can lower total cholesterol and LDL “bad” cholesterol while raising HDL “good” cholesterol. The studies show an effectiveness of 67 to 93 percent.

2. **Improve your blood lipids.** Clinical studies at many universities, institutes and hospitals in China—including one noteworthy trial—have shown that jiaogulan can dramatically lower levels of dangerous blood lipids (including triglycerides) by up to 85%.

3. **Protect against arterial plaque (atherosclerosis).** Jiaogulan has clearly demonstrated ability to lower serum cholesterol, triglycerides and LDL (unhealthy blood lipoprotein), while increasing HDL (the “healthy” blood lipoprotein), jiaogulan can help to prevent and treat atherosclerosis, the primary condition that leads to heart attack, stroke and other serious cardio events.

4. **Strengthen your heart.** Several studies suggest that jiaogulan can improve the working ability of the heart muscles and improve its pumping function for enhanced overall efficiency.

5. **Normalize your blood pressure.** Research shows that because of its two-way adaptogenic action, jiaogulan can lower hypertension and raise hypotension, keeping the blood pressure at normal range.

6. **Prevent dangerous blood clots.** In a clinical study on 56 healthy persons and 44 patients with cardiovascular diseases, a high-saponin jiaogulan tonic inhibited platelet aggregation and actually broke up existing clots.

7. **Prevent heart attacks.** Jiaogulan can help prevent heart attacks by keeping arteries open and clear, making the heart stronger, lowering high blood pressure, inhibiting oxidation of LDL cholesterol, and preventing the formation of blood clots.

8. **Protect against stroke.** Jiaogulan can help to prevent strokes in exactly the same ways it can prevent heart attacks—by maintaining an undisturbed flow of blood and oxygen to the brain.

9. **Provide free radical protection.** Jiaogulan can significantly increase the production of two powerful antioxidants—superoxide dismutase (SOD) and glutathione peroxidase. Other research indicates that the herb is an excellent inhibitor of free radicals, thereby minimizing the damage and inflammation involved in the various cardio conditions that affect the heart, blood vessels and brain.