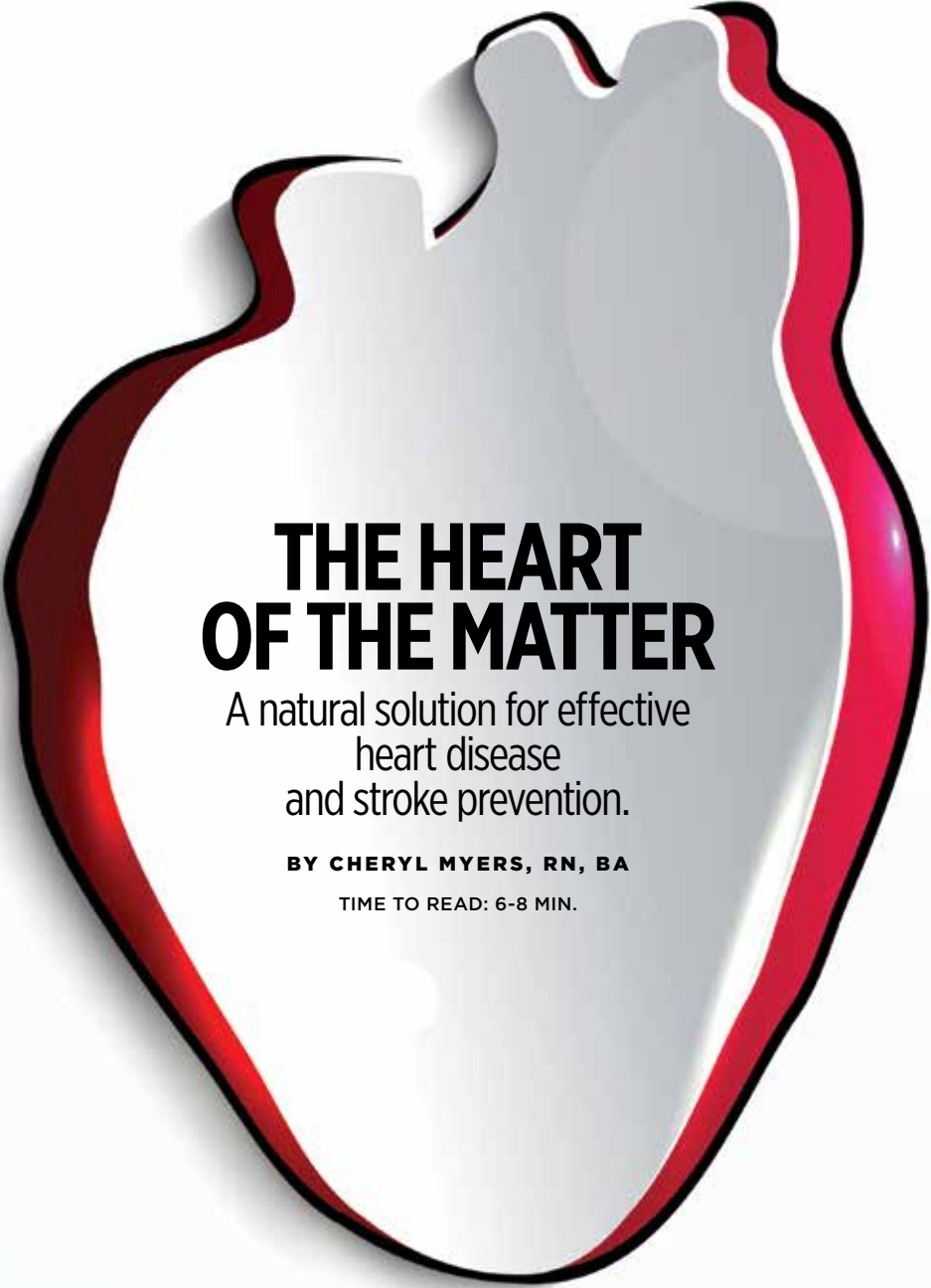




THE HEART OF THE MATTER

A natural solution for effective
heart disease
and stroke prevention.

BY CHERYL MYERS, RN, BA

TIME TO READ: 6-8 MIN.

EVERY 40 SECONDS IN THE U.S., SOMEONE IS STRICKEN BY A HEART ATTACK, ACCORDING TO THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION.

Furthermore, the conditions causing cardiovascular disease are incredibly common. More than 45 percent of American adults have high blood pressure and stroke is counted as the leading preventable cause of disability.^{1,2}

Many patients feel helpless in the face of heart disease. They may have a

vague understanding of prevention, but often feel resigned that if their parents died of a heart attack, the same likely will happen to them. Quite honestly, that may be true. With an increase in age, the risk of heart disease often becomes the leading cause of death. There is a big difference, however, in having heart disease at age 42 vs. 92.

Part of the answer for prevention lies with natural medicines.

THE TAKEAWAY

With heart disease and stroke becoming a common cause of death in the U.S., it's likely you have patients who are at risk. To protect against heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, and much more, a time-tested botanical can make a measurable difference: amla.

A natural solution

To protect against heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, and much more, a time-tested botanical can make a measurable difference: amla. This natural medicine, also called Indian gooseberry (and officially known as both *Emblica officinalis* and *Phyllanthus emblica*) has been prized in Ayurvedic practice for more than 2,000 years.

In fact, early Ayurvedic medical texts dating back to 400 B.C. considered it one of the best rejuvenating (rasayana)

herbs. Practitioners noted that it helped rebuild tissues throughout the body, reduced inflammation, protected vision, and strengthened bones.

More recently, scientific studies have further uncovered other areas of profound benefit, such as the ability to inhibit growth in human lung cancer cells, melanoma cells, and cervical cancer cells.

Additionally, amla has been shown to increase levels of the enzyme glutathione-S-transferase (GST), which

detoxifies carcinogens, boosts natural killer cell cancer-fighting activity, and prevents DNA mutations caused by aluminum, lead, and chromium. Amla certainly offers much to recommend.³⁻⁶

Creating a solid foundation

When you are counseling patients about heart disease, it is important to first listen to their fears and expectations, and help them walk back from that to a place of better equilibrium. Of course, it is important to discuss food choices and activity, smoking cessation programs, etc.

But it is also necessary to design a protocol that can be adapted over time to address specific concerns. One of the foundational products of any cardiovascular protocol is amla.

A debate rages regarding the role of cholesterol in the etiology of heart disease, while I personally believe that blood sugar, chronic inflammation, and oxidative stress in the lining of the blood vessels are the major causative factors in atherosclerotic disease. However, most can agree that the ratios of the various types of cholesterol are important to cardiovascular health. And serum numbers for triglycerides are indeed correlated to problems.

Amla can help your patients manage healthier cholesterol ratios and triglycerides naturally and effectively. A clinical study showed that participants taking amla increased high-density lipoprotein (HDL) by 14 percent and significantly decreased low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol by 21 percent. Their total serum cholesterol was reduced by 17 percent and triglyceride levels dropped by 24 percent within only three months—an impressively short time frame for treatment. Other work has found strong cholesterol balancing effects as well. It's hard to imagine synthetic prescription medications getting these same results without causing a lot of side effects.^{7,8}

Though the pharmaceutical class of drugs called statins remains popular, studies have found that amla's cholesterol balancing strength compares well to them, but without the long-term complications.

When you are counseling patients about heart disease, it is important to first listen to their fears and expectations, and help them walk back from that to a place of better equilibrium. Of course, it is important to discuss food choices and activity, smoking cessation programs, etc. But it is also necessary to design a protocol that can be adapted over time to address specific concerns.



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In other clinical research, amla improved endothelial function in patients with type 2 diabetes, and lowered LDL, VLDL, total cholesterol, and A1c levels, too. This makes it especially helpful for anyone with metabolic syndrome who may be reluctant to comply with taking an excess of supplements.^{9,10}

A healing herb

One of amla's primary actions is reducing inflammation. It has been shown to decrease levels of C-reactive protein (CRP) alone by more than 30 percent. Dropping CRP level appears to be a fairly common finding in clinical work with amla, so even though research is still ongoing, it points to a reliable consistency with the botanical.^{11,12}

Like many traditional botanical medicines, amla was an ingredient in recipes as well as being considered a healing herb. Considering it supplies a diverse range of nutrients, including amino acids, polyphenols, vitamin C, and minerals, it promotes a wide array of health benefits.⁵

It is true that circumstances can contribute to the development of heart disease and stroke. Additionally, people with a compromised cardiovascular status may feel fatigue that prevents them from their usual practice of healthy, enjoyable activity and exercise that they need to regain their strength. These individuals often need more coaching and a set plan of exercise to gradually increase stamina.

Dealing with any kind of physical limitation, such as arthritis or misalignments that cause pain or lack of flexibility can lead to a sedentary life, and this dangerous inactivity promotes heart disease. This is an area where direct chiropractic interventions can make a significant difference in heart disease, by removing obstacles to activity by reducing pain and inflammation and promoting flexibility.

This is also an advantageous aspect of amla's holistic activity. Used alone or in combination with other botanicals, it helps preserve the structure of joint cartilage. Using samples of knee cartilage from patients with osteoarthritis, amla was shown to inhibit enzymes hyaluronidase and collagenase, and seems to have great chondroprotective activity even when used in the short term. This, by extension, may help your patients remain more active longer, or rediscover the joys of being active again.^{13,14}

Amla fits perfectly within a holistic approach guided by your expertise. Encouraging patients to enjoy a healthy diet, regular physical activity, and moderate alcohol intake are some of the most effective ways of reducing their risk of stroke or cardiovascular disease. Supplementing with amla, a traditional, trusted, and tested botanical, can be a wise part of that as well, and one that you may want to explore with your patients. **CE**

CHERYL MYERS, RN, BA, is an integrative health nurse, author, and expert on natural medicine. She is a nationally recognized speaker who has been interviewed by the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Prevention* magazine. Her articles have been published in *Aesthetic Surgery Journal* and *Nutrition in Complementary Care*, and her research on botanicals has been presented at the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the North American Menopause Society.

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