Nutritional companies are always trying to find the most potent and most effective antioxidants in the marketplace today. Once you understand that the root cause of over 100 chronic degenerative diseases is oxidative stress, or what I refer to as the dark-side of oxygen, you need to understand the primary defense against this process is the body’s own natural antioxidant defense system. The body is able to produce some of its own antioxidants such as the SOD, glutathione, and catalase systems; however, it is not enough to handle the tremendous amount of free radicals the body is producing today due to our polluted environment, stressful lifestyles, and over-medicated society. In order to bring oxidative stress back under control, you need to be eating a healthy diet that contains six to ten servings of whole fruits and vegetables each day, along with consuming high-quality complete and balanced nutritional supplements that provide the cellular nutrition I recommend to all my patients. However, many of my patients are already suffering from a chronic degenerative disease or significant health problem, which is the result of even more free radical damage and oxidative stress. In these situations, I always recommend adding, what I refer to as, enhancers to the cellular nutrition. The most potent and universal antioxidant I have used over the past 17 years is grape seed extract. In the next two newsletters, I am going to share with you some of the main reasons why I believe grape seed extract is the most critical enhancer you should consider adding to your nutritional supplement regime.

Pine Bark Extract (Pycnogenol)

Plant extracts from the French Maritime pine tree were introduced in the 1980’s and found to be a very important supplement because it contained potent bioflavonoids and procyanidins. This has been sold in the marketplace primarily by registered product called Pycnogenol. Many well-done studies have shown the effectiveness of pine bark extract and the multi-faceted health benefits. Pine bark extract is certainly a wonderful way to get these potent antioxidants; however, the release of grape seed extract in the early 1990’s has given you what I feel is a better way to supplement these potent bioflavanoids and procyanidins. In fact, research has shown that grape seed extract is even more potent than pine bark extract. This is especially true when you supplement with the highest quality grape seed extract available in the marketplace today. In any event, as I share in these next two newsletters about the different health benefits you can receive by supplementing your diet with bioflavanoids and procyanidins,
you are able to receive these health benefits by supplementing with either grape seed extract or pine bark extract. However, it is my opinion after researching the medical literature that high quality grape seed extract is significantly better and also more potent than pine bark extract.

The Most Potent Antioxidant

The first thing to understand is that procyanidins are very potent antioxidants. In fact, studies have shown that when added to cellular nutrition, grape seed extract is 50 times more potent than vitamin E and 20 times more potent than vitamin C. If it is used alone, it is only about 7 to 8 times more potent than vitamin E and 3 to 4 times more potent than vitamin C. This is because when it is combined with other antioxidants, especially vitamin C, a synergistic effect is created. Vitamin C has the ability to regenerate the procyanidins and bioflavonoids so that they can be used over and over again. Therefore, one plus one is not two, but instead, 8, 10 or even 20. This is why I always recommend using grape seed extract as an enhancer to my basic cellular nutrition recommendations, rather than on its own.

The procyanidins (proanthocyanidins) have some other unique qualities that make them a wise supplement choice. They are smaller molecules that are able to penetrate into almost all tissues throughout the body. In fact, they readily cross what is referred to as the blood-brain barrier and concentrate at high levels around the brain, nerves, and eyes. When you take some of the old antihistamines, like Benadryl, one of the most common side effects is drowsiness because it also readily crosses the blood-brain barrier. However, newer antihistamines like Allegra or Claritin do not cause drowsiness because they do not cross the blood-brain barrier. This is also true of antioxidants. Most antioxidants have difficulty crossing this natural blood-brain barrier and getting into the critical areas around and in our brain, nerves, and eyes. However, this is not the case with grape seed extract, which allows you to supplement a very potent antioxidant that readily gets into these areas and allows you to better protect these vital and sensitive organs from free radical damage.

Grape Seed Extract in Cardiovascular Health

The number one cause of death in the US, Canada, and around the world today is heart disease. Hardening of our arteries can also lead to strokes and peripheral vascular disease. As I have explained in my books and previous newsletters, heart disease is not the result of too much cholesterol floating around in your bloodstream, but is instead caused by a low-grade inflammation in your arteries. Several studies have shown that procyanidins not only decrease this inflammation in your arteries, but also help protect the fine lining of your arteries, called the endothelium. They also help reduce overactive platelet function and blood clotting. Grape seed extract has been shown to better protect our LDL or bad cholesterol from being oxidized or modified by excessive free radicals, which also significantly decreases this inflammation in your arteries. It also has the ability to improve and increase the production of nitric oxide. Nitrous oxide is critical for the natural relaxation of our arteries. When your arteries are able to relax properly you not only decrease your blood pressure, but you also increase blood flow to vital organs. Other studies using grape seed extract have shown that it not only lowers blood pressure and allows an individual to be less dependent on medication, but also increases...
blood flow to the heart by over 30%.\textsuperscript{7} In fact, studies using procyanidins in patients with high blood pressure have shown that over a 12 week period of time, patients were able to cut their blood pressure medication in half. Even patients who have heart failure showed improvement when consuming procyanidins.

\textbf{Grape Seed is Critical for Patients with Diabetes}

Physicians are aware of the fact that eighty percent of our diabetic patients will die prematurely because of a cardiovascular event like a heart attack or stroke. This was true in 1970 and is true today. This is because all of the metabolic changes that are associated with diabetes cause the arteries to age much faster than they should. Grape seed extract has been shown to level off any blood sugar spikes following a meal or snack by slowing the absorption of starches.\textsuperscript{8} This not only improves diabetic control, but also leads to a decrease in glycation, a process where sugars bind to proteins which accelerates the entire aging process.

Diabetics also have accelerated aging of their smallest arteries called the microvasculature. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in the retina of their eyes. This damage leads to leakage of their arteries and diabetic retinopathy. This is why so many diabetics eventually lose their eyesight. Several studies now show that procyanidins have the ability to help improve and strengthen these arteries located in the back of the eye.\textsuperscript{9,10} In fact, these same studies also show increased blood flow as it decreases this capillary damage. I have personally been able to help several diabetic patients who were suffering from diabetic retinopathy by adding grape seed extract to their supplement regime. This amazing improvement was documented by their personal ophthalmologist. Not only did the leakage of the vessels improve, but they had significant improvement in their vision.

Another frequent complication of diabetes is peripheral neuropathy. These diabetic patients suffer nerve damage that leads to pain, tingling, and numbness primarily of their extremities. However, this damage can occur in nerves throughout their bodies. Studies in animals have shown that grape seed extract can help prevent and actually repair this nerve damage in diabetic patients.\textsuperscript{11} Other studies in humans show that grape seed can also decrease the risk of kidney damage due to diabetes.\textsuperscript{12} All of these studies have led me to recommend grape seed extract to all of my diabetic patients. In fact, I feel adding grape seed extract to my cellular nutrition recommendations is not only essential for my diabetic patients, but critical in helping them protect their health.

\textbf{Grape Seed Extract is also an Anti-allergen and Anti-inflammatory}

Over the past decade, I have had tremendous health improvement in my patients who are suffering with arthritis and allergies. Grape seed extract has been shown in several clinical trials to shut off the inflammatory cycle and reduce almost all inflammatory products.\textsuperscript{13} This allows patients with arthritis to note significant decrease in the overall inflammation in their bodies and joints and see significant improvement in their symptoms. Other studies show improvement in the inflammation and spasm in asthmatic patients because of significant decrease of the inflammation in their airways.\textsuperscript{14} In fact, I don't believe I have had any adult or child who suffered from asthma or hayfever that did not note some improvement in their allergies within a six month period of time on
grape seed extract. Some improvement was modest and others had amazing improvement.

It is well known that most of us simply have too much inflammation in our bodies. When you add these potent procyanidins and bioflavanoids found in grape seed extract to your nutritional regime, you can significantly reduce this damaging inflammation. What is so unique about grape seed extract is that it interrupts or significantly decreases all the precursors of inflammation, or the production of inflammatory cytokine molecules.

When you combine all of the above health benefits you can receive by supplementing your diet with grape seed extract, everyone should consider adding this potent antioxidant to their supplement regime. However, this is not the end of the story. In Part 2 of this article, which will be featured in my next newsletter, I will discuss the health benefits of grape seed extract in neurodegenerative diseases, cancer, and in the protection of your largest organ—your skin. When you put all of this together, you will understand why I believe that grape seed extract is the most important and potent antioxidant in the world today.

References:


