

Natural Remedies for Glaucoma

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INTRODUCTION

Glaucoma is a common eye condition in which vision is lost because of damage to the optic nerve. The optic nerve carries information about vision from the eye to the brain. In most cases, the optic nerve is damaged when the pressure of fluid inside the front part of the eye rises. However, glaucoma-related eye damage can occur even when the fluid pressure is normal.

In the most common form of glaucoma, called primary open angle glaucoma, fluid circulates freely in the eye and the pressure tends to rise slowly over time. Gradual loss of vision is usually the only symptom.

A less common form of the disease, called acute or angle closure glaucoma, develops suddenly and usually causes eye pain and redness. In this form of glaucoma, pressures rise quickly because normal fluid flow within the eye becomes blocked. This happens when a structure called the angle (where the iris and cornea meet) closes.

NATURAL REMEDIES FOR GLAUCOMA

Although there is no cure for glaucoma, there are some natural health and wellness tips that might help your eyes respond as well as possible to medical treatment. Natural remedies for glaucoma are not enough to treat the condition on their own and will not cure the disease, but they may be a good supplement to prescribed treatment.

Be aware of “fast fixes” and so-called miracle remedies for glaucoma you may find online. Always speak to your eye care specialist before beginning a new regimen that could affect your condition or your health, or interact with your current treatment [1-3].

Natural supplements for glaucoma

If you have a vitamin or mineral deficiency, natural and over-the-counter supplements can be taken to restore it, including:

- Zinc
- Calcium
- Magnesium
- Vitamins A, B-complex, C and E

All are particularly important for those with glaucoma. If you feel

that your nutrition intake is inadequate, taking a daily multivitamin can help.

Herbs for glaucoma

Certain herbs are believed to aid in glaucoma treatments. Specifically, ginkgo, bilberry, and forskolin may have some benefits.

1. Ginkgo (*ginkgo biloba*): In some scientific models, this herb has shown an increase in ocular blood flow.
2. Bilberry (*vaccinium myrtillus*): Bilberry is popular thanks to its strong antioxidant nature. One study showed that bilberry decreased retinal ganglion cell damage in mice, but there have been no studies showing such an effect in humans.
3. Forskolin (*coleus forskohlii*): This herb may lower IOP when applied topically by reducing the rate of aqueous fluid within the eye [4].

NATURAL PREVENTION OF GLAUCOMA

If you are at risk for glaucoma, there may be certain everyday habits that you can start or stop to lower your risk of a diagnosis. In addition to maintaining a healthy diet and exercising moderately, consider incorporating the following into your lifestyle:

- Maintain a healthy weight. Both high and low body mass indexes (BMIs) can increase the risk of glaucoma.
- Avoid smoking.
- Consider meditation. Stress appears to increase a person's risk of high IOP. Some research has shown meditation can help reduce eye pressure if practiced regularly.
- Practice good dental hygiene and see a dentist on a regular basis. Some research has shown that periodontal (gum) disease is associated with an increased risk of primary open-angle glaucoma (POAG).
- Get screened for glaucoma. This is especially important if you have a family history of the disease [5].

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Received: September 04, 2020; **Accepted:** September 21, 2020; **Published:** September 28, 2020

Citation: Bubella RM (2020) Natural Remedies for Glaucoma. J Eye Dis Disord. 5:e145. DOI: 10.35248/2684-1622.20.5.e145

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