

# Gallstones

## Low Carbohydrate Diet

People are usually advised to go on a low-fat diet if they have gallstones. Recent research suggests this is the wrong advice and could make matters worse. A low refined carbohydrate diet with plenty of fibre is what is needed. Refined carbohydrates, like sugar and white flour, reduce the conversion of cholesterol into bile salts. Normal bile salts keep cholesterol in solution but eating a high refined carbohydrate diet can crystallise bile salts into stones.

A New Zealand study found those with gallstones had more sugar in the diet and that increasing sugar by 40 grams daily (8 teaspoonfuls) doubled the risk of gallstones.

Two recent studies found some foods help – one found green vegetable and soya beans helped and another found a high consumption of olive oil reduced gallstones.

Vegetarians have less gallstones.

## Increase Good Fats

Healthy fats help gallbladder function. Foods which contain essential fats include oily fish (eg herrings, mackerels, anchovies, pilchards, sardines, wild (not farmed) salmon), seeds, nuts and eggs (free range or organic). Absence of these fats hampers gallbladder function. **This is why weight loss diets are known to trigger gallstones.** Avoid harmful fats such as fried foods and hydrogenated (trans) fats.

## Food Intolerances

Another study found food intolerances are implicated in some cases of gallstones. Eliminating these proved an effective treatment. In one study all 69 patients became symptom free. Common food intolerances were to coffee, pork, eggs and milk. A Dr Brennan found foods that trigger gallstones (in order) were eggs, pork, onion, poultry, milk, coffee, pulses, corn and nuts.

## Herbal Remedies and Nutrients

Milk thistle (silymarin) and dandelion can both help. A study published in the British Medical Journal found a combination of turpenes dissolved gallstones (pinene, camphene, cineole, menthone and menthol). These are not easy to find but there is a preparation called Rowachol contains these turpenes.

Another study found taking 1200mg of lecithin daily helps to prevent gallstones.

Vitamin C & E, B vitamins may also help. Taurine prevents gallstones in animals.

## Weight

The chance of gallstones double if you are 10% overweight and the risk goes to six-fold if you are obese. However, it is important to lose weight slowly – no more than 2 to 3 pounds a week as rapid weight loss increases the risk of gallstones.

## OTHER REMEDIES

A number of other strategies are thought to help.

### **Bile Acid Factors**

Smaller gallstones can be dissolved with bile acid factors. This takes time but they will halve in size after about 6 months.

### **Onion Soup**

If you take strong onion soup three times during daily, this will help with passing the gallstones.

### **Asparagus Juice**

This is an unusual juice but can help get rid of gallstones. It can be combined with other juices.

### **Olive Oil**

Start with a teaspoonful daily and slowly increase.

### **Lemon Water**

A glass every morning and evening.

### **Gallbladder flush**

There are several versions of this well-known treatment for gallstones which involve using a combination of olive oil and lemon juice to flush out the stones.

The mixture is best taken in the evening. Before you take this mixture, it is best to have a fast or alternatively to have only grapefruit juice for breakfast and the same for lunch and have the olive oil and lemon juice in the evening. Then take three quarters of a cup of olive oil and half a cup of lemon juice. (Another version suggests 10 fl oz of cold pressed virgin olive oil and 5 fl oz of lemon juice with a teaspoonful of sodium bicarbonate. Another suggests 1 pint of olive oil with the juice of 10 lemons. The exact quantity is probably not too crucial).

After you have taken the olive oil and lemon juice, go to bed and lie on your right side with your knee towards your chest. If necessary, repeat the process one week later.

After using this mixture, you may feel some nausea. Next day you may see small bright green gallstones in your stool. However, there is some uncertainty about whether these are true gallstones.

### **After cholecystectomy**

After cholecystectomy many patients get thin bile and they may need a low fat diet, sometimes helped by artichokes and lecithin. They may need bile salts to prevent mineral deficiency.

