

Cellulite: Complementary/Alternative Medicine

"Mattress phenomenon" (pinning, bulging, and deformation of the skin)

Possible feelings of tightness and heaviness in affected areas (particularly the legs)

Tenderness of the skin when pinched, pressed upon, or vigorously massaged

QUICK REVIEW

- Cellulite is a "cosmetic" condition that results from weakened connective tissue structures just below the surface of the skin.
- Women are affected by cellulite at least nine times more often than men

due to structural differences just below the surface of the skin.

- Slim women and female athletes usually have little or no cellulite.
- An extract of gotu kola (*Centella asiatica*) has demonstrated impressive clinical results in the treatment of cellulite when given orally.

TREATMENT SUMMARY

It must be kept in mind that cellulite is not a "disease" per se. Instead, it is primarily a cosmetic disorder. Excessive accumulation of subcutaneous fat or degeneration of subcutaneous connective tissue leads to fat-chamber enlargement and greater visibility of the "mattress phenomenon." The basic therapeutic approach is straightforward: reduce subcutaneous fat and enhance connective tissue integrity.

Varicose veins are often found in conjunction with cellulite, and the two conditions have much in common. In particular, both appear to result largely from a loss of integrity of supporting connective tissue. (See VARICOSE VEINS for further discussion.)

Diet

A diet high in complex carbohydrates and low in refined carbohydrates and fats is very important. Weight loss should be promoted in obese individuals.

Physical Measures

- Exercise: twenty to thirty minutes of aerobic exercise a minimum of five days per week
- Massage: regular self-massage of the affected area with hand or brush

Botanical Medicines

Oral Administration

- *Centella asiatica* extract: 30 mg of triterpenes three times per day
- *Aesculus hippocastanum* extract: 10-20 mg of escin three times per day

Topical Application

Salve, ointment, etc., twice per day: • Escin: 0.5-1.5%

- Cola vera extract (14% caffeine): 0.5-1.5%

- Fucus vesiculosus: 0.25-75%