

## Cold Hands, Warm Heart



### By Dr. Jean-Jacques Dugoua, ND

It seems like everyone is complaining of cold feet these days. You hop into bed and your husband or wife screams because your feet are so cold. You get out of bed during the night and realize that your floor is warmer than your cold feet. Wouldn't it be nice to get more heat flowing to your hands and feet?

#### Blood Circulation

Blood flows throughout the veins, arteries and capillaries of our body to bring oxygen, heat and nutrients. The heart and the circulatory system are quite simply a pump and hoses, respectively. The "pump" (your heart) sends blood through your lungs, recollects it and then sends it along full of oxygen and nutrients to the rest of your body. The "hoses" (your arteries) carry oxygenated blood to your tissues, while your veins carry deoxygenated blood back to the heart. A fairly efficient system if all works well.

#### Heart disease made easy

We hear a lot about heart disease after all, it's the number one cause of death in North America. But what is heart disease? Heart disease happens when there are problems with the plumbing. The pump gets blocked or malfunctions (heart attack), a hose to the brain gets blocked (stroke), one of the hoses narrows (atherosclerosis) or one of the hoses bulges or bursts (aneurysm). In the case of people with chronic cold hands and feet, they may have poor blood circulation.

#### Improving your circulation

There are a number of ways of improving your circulation. Here are just a few for you to consider:

- **Exercise:** During strenuous exercise the body's heat production may exceed 1000 watts. Exercise improves blood flow to muscles and to the peripheral system (your hands and feet).
- **Ginkgo Biloba:** Ginkgo biloba was shown to increase blood circulation to different parts of the body. Ginkgo biloba was also shown to be effective in the treatment of intermittent claudication, a disease characterized by leg pain due to atherosclerosis of the lower extremities. In patients with dementia and cerebral insufficiency (lack of blood flow to the brain), ginkgo was shown to improve symptoms by increasing blood flow to the brain. In cases of erectile dysfunction, ginkgo has been shown to improve blood flow to the penis.
- **Arginine:** Arginine was shown to improve vasodilation (relaxation of blood vessels), treadmill exercise time and quality-of-life scores in patients with stable angina. When blood vessels are relaxed, there is improved blood flow.
- **Garlic:** Garlic was shown to improve symptoms of atherosclerosis and intermittent claudication. As a bonus, it also improves your ability to fight the cold and flu.
- **Nutrition:** A healthy-heart diet should include at least five servings per day of fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are low in saturated fats, are cholesterol-free and are high in complex carbohydrates and dietary fibers. Sure it's the winter, but you can still get your hands on an orange or a snow pea.