

Cholelithiasis (Gallstones) – Factsheet

Gallstones are found in the gallbladder and are often referred to as cholesterol stones or pigment stones. Cholesterol stones are the most common in Australia and pigment stones which are less common are composed of bilirubin. Gallstones range in size from being as little as a grain of sand to the size of a pea. Causes and risk factors for the development of gallstones include:

- Age and gender (females)
- Ethnicity (Native American's and Pima Indian women)
- Obesity
- Endocrine disorders (insulin resistance and hyperglycaemia)
- Drug therapy (HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors, ceftriaxone and octreotide)
- Intestinal transit time
- Helicobacter species

Gallstones are often asymptomatic, however some people may develop symptoms such as; upper right abdominal pain, bloating, pressure and nausea. If gallstones go unnoticed or unmanaged, there is the potential that the cystic duct can become blocked resulting in inflammation of the gallbladder also referred to as cholecystitis.

Nutritional Considerations:

- Bitter herbs and raw foods. These herbs promote bile production and release, aiding the breakdown of foods.
- Increase omega-3 fatty acid intake to support lipid metabolism.
- Increase fibre intake both soluble and insoluble to promote healthy digestion and passing of regular stools to reduce the risk of stone formation. Psyllium husk, oat bran and wheat bran have been acknowledged for their ability to reduce serum cholesterol building up in the body.
- Eat lots of fresh vegetables and fruits particularly those high in vitamin C along with cruciferous vegetables to assist with the metabolism of cholesterol.
- Eat wholegrains that are easily digested and contain various vitamins and minerals.
- Add lecithin to meals as it can play a role in HDL formation and can assist with the breakdown and digestion of fats.
- Choose organic and lean cuts of meat where possible and reduce red meat intake to reduce trans-fats.
- Reduce/avoid refined carbohydrates, sugars, processed foods and fast food as these foods promote inflammation and are high in bad fats and sugars associated with the development of gallstones.
- Engage in regular exercise and maintain a healthy weight at this can reduce the chance of gallstone development as well as help manage those who have gallstones.

Customised nutritional plans comprising of a specific food plan with the support of nutrient/herbal supplements can be very effective in the management of gallstones. If you require support please visit www.good4younutrition.com.au