

# MASSAGE



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# HOLISTIC HEALTH NOTEBOOK

## Another trigger for chronic pain

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Several years ago, a dear friend told me about the problems she was having with vulvar pain. She described the sensation as “sitting in a bowl of crushed glass.”

Being Internet savvy, she found pri-

mary research and clinical work on the oxalate connection to not only vulvar pain but other types of pain that are not explained by normal physiological triggers. She showed me the research and explained how her pain virtually disappeared by going on an oxalate-free diet and taking a few specific supplements.

This was a fascinating new line of inquiry. Of course we are familiar with the connection between oxalates and kidney disease. Kidney patients are often counseled to avoid spinach, strawberries, chocolate, and other foods that contain oxalates. But it is not commonly known that oxalates can cause other problems.

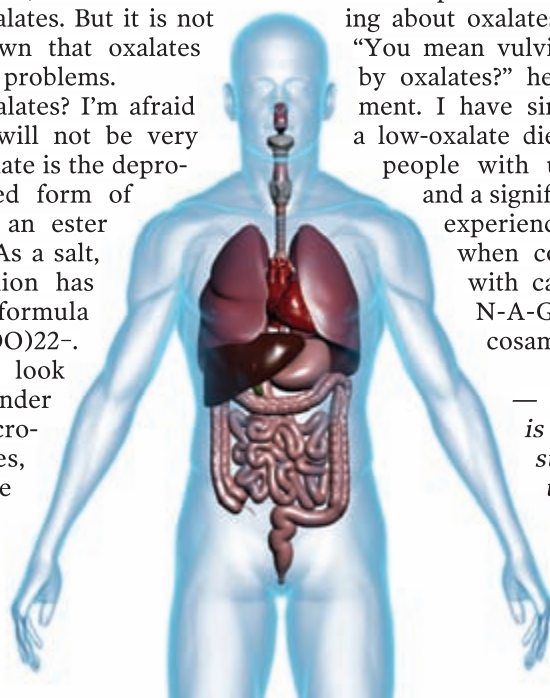
What are oxalates? I'm afraid the definition will not be very helpful. An oxalate is the deprotonated, charged form of oxalic acid or an ester of oxalic acid. As a salt, the oxalate anion has the chemical formula C<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub><sup>2-</sup> or (COO)<sub>2</sub><sup>2-</sup>. But when you look at an oxalate under a powerful microscope, it does, indeed, look like crushed glass. When these sharp particles gather in the vulvar region or other tis-

sues, they can cause excruciating pain.

A couple years ago, I sat down to a delicious buffet lunch featuring a wide variety of salads. By the time I reached the salad bar, all the salads were depleted except for the spinach. I had just learned about oxalates and was trying to avoid them, in the interest of relieving some serious pain I was experiencing. When I joined my tablemates, I commented “only spinach salad left! Darn!” A kidney doctor happened to be sitting at my table and he looked up in surprise. “You have kidney disease?” he asked.

So I explained what I was learning about oxalates and vulvar pain. “You mean vulvitis can be caused by oxalates?” he asked in amazement. I have since recommended a low-oxalate diet to a number of people with unexplained pain, and a significant number have experienced great benefit, when combining the diet with calcium citrate and N-A-G (n-acetyl-glucosamine). ■

— Ms. Simontacchi is a certified lifestyle educator at the offices of Dr. Alan Gruning in Fort Myers and owner of the Island Nutrition Center on Sanibel.



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