

[IMAGE]

Should You Forget Ginkgo Biloba?

The herb *ginkgo biloba* has been used in China for hundreds of years to enhance memory, improve mood, and alleviate headaches. Many Americans currently take the supplement for the same reasons, as it is marketed to offer these benefits, but proof of its success has been limited to few tests of memory and to people suffering from an illness.

In a recent study, 115 people over 60 years old took 40 milligrams of ginkgo three times per day (the recommended dosage) for six weeks, while another 115 took a placebo at the same frequency for comparison. Neither group was aware of which type of pills they were taking.

No improvements in memory or mental sharpness were observed in either group, based on a battery of neuropsychological tests. Even when different outcome measures like verbal memory, concentration, and attention were looked at separately, the supplement offered no significant benefits.

So should you bother taking ginkgo biloba? The verdict is still out. If the supplement does offer improvements to concentration and memory, it has yet to be scientifically proven. In the meanwhile, other ways to keep a sharp mind include an antioxidant-rich diet, low alcohol consumption, and performing regular leisure activities to give your mind a workout.

Reference:

Solomon PR, Adams F, Silver A, et al. Ginkgo for memory enhancement: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2002;288(7), pp. 835-840.

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