

Ginkgo biloba doesn't prevent cardiovascular events but may have potential peripheral artery disease benefits

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Ginkgo biloba didn't prevent cardiovascular death or major events such as heart attack and stroke in people age 75 and older, but the herb may affect peripheral vascular disease, according to research reported in *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*, a journal of the American Heart Association.

“Surprisingly, Ginkgo was associated with a reduction in peripheral artery disease, but the number of patients was small. The difference was statistically significant,” said Lewis H. Kuller, M.D., Dr.P.H., first author of the study and distinguished university professor of public health and professor of epidemiology at the University of Pittsburgh.

Ginkgo biloba contains a class of nutrients -- flavonoids -- found in fruits, vegetables, dark chocolate and red wine, which are believed to offer some protection against cardiovascular events.

The new findings come from the randomized, 3,069-patient Ginkgo Evaluation of Memory Study, whose researchers reported last year that the herb had no effect on dementia. As part of the study, researchers also assessed the herb's role in preventing cardiovascular disease.

During an average 6.1 years, participants received either 120 mg of EGb761, a highly purified form of Ginkgo biloba or placebo twice daily. Participants were mostly white (95 percent) average age 79. More than

half (55 percent) had high blood pressure and 25 percent had a history of cardiovascular disease.

During the trial, 385 patients died; 164 were hospitalized with heart attacks; 151 had strokes; 73 had transient ischemic attacks; and 207 experienced chest pain. Researchers found no significant differences between the Ginkgo biloba and placebo groups in any of these outcomes.

Among the 35 people who had major treatment for peripheral artery disease, 23 received placebo and 12 got Ginkgo biloba, a statistically significance difference.

“Clearly you can’t make a national recommendation based on these numbers, but the data is intriguing,” Kuller said. “[Peripheral artery disease](#) is a major public health problem and the preventive therapies are not very good. My feeling is that ginkgo and its class of agents, flavonoids, should be further evaluated to see if they have some benefit.”

The American Heart Association recommends that people get nutrients and beneficial plant compounds from a diet rich in vegetables and fruits, low fat and fat free dairy products, whole grains and fiber, with limited added sugars, low saturated fat and cholesterol.

Provided by American Heart Association ([news](#) : [web](#))

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