

Ginkgo biloba does not improve cognition in MS patients, study finds

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Many people with multiple sclerosis for years have taken the natural supplement Ginkgo biloba, believing it helps them with cognitive problems associated with the disease.

But the science now says otherwise. A new study published in the journal *Neurology* says Ginkgo biloba does not improve [cognitive performance](#) in people with multiple sclerosis. The research was published in the Sept. 5, 2012, issue of *Neurology*, the [medical journal](#) of the American Academy of Neurology.

The current study was a more extensive look at the question after a smaller 2005 [pilot study](#) suggested there might have been some [cognitive benefits](#) in MS patients using the supplement. That study found that Ginkgo seemed to improve attention in MS patients with [cognitive impairment](#).

But the larger follow-up study, conducted with patients at the Portland and Seattle Veterans Affairs medical centers, found no cognitive benefits to using Ginkgo.

"It's important for scientists to continue to analyze what might help people with cognitive issues relating to their MS," said Jesus Lovera, M.D, the study's lead author, a former fellow at the Portland VA Medical Center and former instructor in Oregon Health & Science University's Department of Neurology, where he did much of the work on the study. Lovera is now with the Department of Neurology at the

Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center.

"We wanted to follow up on the earlier findings that suggested there may be some benefit. But we believe this larger study settles the question: Gingko simply doesn't improve cognitive performance with MS patients," said Lovera.

About one-half of people with MS will develop [cognitive problems](#), and those cognitive problems can be debilitating in some people, said Dennis Bourdette, M.D., a co-author of the study, co-director of the VA MS Center of Excellence-West at the Portland VA Medical Center and chairman of the OHSU Department of Neurology. The most common problems relate to memory, attention and concentration, and information processing.

There is no known treatment that can improve cognition with MS patients—which is partly why [MS patients](#) and researchers had hoped that Gingko biloba could help.

Lovera was also the lead author in the 2005 study, conducted at OHSU. That study included 39 participants who were given Gingko biloba or a placebo. The new study included 120 participants given Gingko or a placebo.

Provided by Oregon Health & Science University

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