

Ginkgo biloba trialled as stroke treatment

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Researchers in China have suggested that a supplement derived from the ginkgo biloba tree may help improve the recovery of thinking and memory abilities following a stroke. Their findings are published today in the journal *Stroke and Vascular Neurology*.

The effects of a stroke can vary widely from person to person. People may experience a range of problems with [brain function](#) following a stroke, including difficulties with movement, speech, or different aspects of memory and thinking. Many people will recover brain function after a stroke, others may experience long-term neurological problems which can include a progressive deterioration in the blood supply to the brain leading to [vascular dementia](#).

Ginkgo biloba extract, derived from the leaves of the ginkgo biloba tree, had previously been investigated as a potential method of preventing or treating diseases that cause [dementia](#). However, there has been a lack of good evidence to show that the supplement has any beneficial effect.

Researchers in this study looked at the use of ginkgo biloba extract alongside a daily dose of aspirin for treating people who recently experienced a stroke. Participants took a daily dose of 450 mg of ginkgo biloba extract alongside 100 mg of aspirin for six months after a stroke. This group of patients was compared against a [control group](#) who only took 100 mg of aspirin for the duration of the trial. Patients were followed up 12, 30, 90 and 180 days after starting the treatment and their thinking skills were assessed at these time points.

Results show that patients taking ginkgo biloba extract performed slightly better on a number of thinking and memory tests from 30 days after stroke. Participants' vascular health was also looked at two years after the treatment in a second separate analysis of the results. Results showed that there was a no marked difference between the control group taking aspirin alone and those also taking ginkgo biloba.

Dr. David Reynolds, Chief Scientific Officer of Alzheimer's Research UK, said:

"While this study suggests that ginkgo biloba extract may help people to regain cognitive function more quickly after a stroke, it didn't employ all of the rigorous methods we'd expect to see in a clinical trial. The researchers were able to tell which participants received the ginkgo biloba extract and which didn't – a set up that can strongly influence results.

"This study didn't show ginkgo biloba having any effect on whether people experienced subsequent strokes or whether or not people went on to develop vascular dementia. While more research can help to get a clearer idea of any potential benefits of [ginkgo biloba](#) after a stroke, there have been extensive trials investigating the effects of this herbal extract in people with dementia and they have not shown convincing evidence of a benefit.

"The best current evidence suggests that when it comes to reducing your risk of dementia, what is good for your heart is also good for your head. Eating a [healthy balanced diet](#), keeping physically and mentally active, not smoking, drinking only in moderation, maintaining a healthy weight and keeping cholesterol and blood pressure in check are all good ways to support healthy brain ageing. Anyone who has any concerns relating to the treatment of a [stroke](#) or their risk of developing dementia should speak with their doctor."

Provided by Alzheimer's Research UK

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