

Test with volunteers shows wasabi improves short- and long-term memory in older people

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Wasabi roots. Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

A team of cognitive health and aging research specialists affiliated with a large number of institutions in Japan has found that ingesting wasabi can help improve both long- and short-term memory retention in older

adults. For their study, [published](#) in the journal *Nutrients*, the group gave one group of older adult volunteers daily wasabi tablets and another group a daily placebo for three months.

Wasabi is a kind of plant that grows in Japan and the Russian Far East—it has a green rhizome that some liken to horseradish. The rhizome is commonly used as both an ingredient in food and as a condiment. It has also historically been considered to be a healthy type of spice because it is known to help reduce inflammation in various parts of the body. Prior research has shown that its anti-inflammatory benefits come courtesy of 6-methylsulfinyl hexyl isothiocyanate (6-MSITC), which has also been shown to have antioxidant properties.

More recently, wasabi been rumored to help with [cognitive abilities](#) because of its supposed calming effect on the brain. Because of that, it is now sold as a supplement in many health food stores. In this new study, the research team set up an experiment to find out if such claims are true.

The team asked 72 Japanese volunteers between the ages of 60 and 80 to take either a wasabi tablet (containing 0.8 milligrams of 6-MSITC) or a placebo tablet every night before going to bed for 12 weeks. The researchers screened out people with known ailments, [mental disorders](#), [memory](#) problems and those taking certain medications or who were heavy drinkers. Each volunteer was also asked to take cognitive and [memory tests](#) before and after the test period.

The test results showed that the volunteers who took the wasabi tablets exhibited improvements in both long- and [short-term memory](#) but experienced no changes in cognitive ability. The researchers also found that those taking the wasabi tablets did better on association tests, such as connecting names to faces, which prior research has shown is a common problem in aging adults. The volunteers who were given a

placebo showed no memory or cognitive improvements, however.

More information: Rui Nouchi et al, Benefits of Wasabi Supplements with 6-MSITC (6-Methylsulfinyl Hexyl Isothiocyanate) on Memory Functioning in Healthy Adults Aged 60 Years and Older: Evidence from a Double-Blinded Randomized Controlled Trial, *Nutrients* (2023). [DOI: 10.3390/nu15214608](https://doi.org/10.3390/nu15214608)

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