



DIETARY SUPPLEMENT FACT SHEET

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/Wellness.aspx>

Ginkgo biloba (*Ginkgoaceae*)

Also known as: Ginkgo, Ginkoba

Historical Perspective: The leaves of the ginkgo tree have been used for centuries in China for their medicinal qualities. In Germany and France, ginkgo is often prescribed for various cognitive disorders; however, these countries use standardized extracts of these herbs, meaning the dose being provided is consistent.

Common Uses: Ginkgo may be used to treat vascular diseases because of its ability to increase blood flow; this is how it may improve memory and concentration. There is not enough research on humans to show that ginkgo is effective in improving memory and concentration. Several studies have been done using ginkgo to enhance memory in Alzheimer's disease patients, but the research is conflicting. The research is strong though for use of ginkgo as an antioxidant. Ginkgo is also sometimes used to treat irregular heartbeat, asthma, hearing loss and premenstrual syndrome.

Form(s) Used: Common forms of ginkgo preparations are capsules, nutrition bars, sublingual sprays (below the tongue) and tablets. Ginkgo seeds and fruit pulp are considered toxic; do not use these forms.

Common and/or Recommended Dosage: For dementia, a typical dose is 120-240mg by mouth a day, divided into two or three doses (for example, 40mg three times a day for a total dose of 120mg). For peripheral vascular disease and tinnitus (associated with hearing loss) a typical dose is 120-160mg a day, divided in two or three doses.

Potential Side Effects:

- 1) Allergic reactions are uncommon, but have occurred (i.e., difficulty breathing; closing of the throat; swelling of the lips, tongue or face; hives)
- 2) Seizures (with excessive use of ginkgo seeds)
- 3) Headache
- 4) Irregular heart beat
- 5) Nausea, diarrhea, vomiting
- 6) Dizziness
- 7) Bleeding

Food-Drug-Supplement Interactions: Because it has similar properties, ginkgo may interact with medications that cause blood thinning such as Coumadin or Warfarin. By the same token, anyone who is on aspirin therapy or who takes Vitamin E in therapeutic doses may also be at risk for an increased clotting time. Ginkgo may also interact with Lovenox, Orgaran, Fragmin, Normiflo and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications.

Contraindication to Use: Ginkgo should be stopped a few weeks prior to any surgical procedure; the surgery team will advise for specific guidelines. In addition, if you are taking any of the medications mentioned above, consult with your health care provider before taking ginkgo.

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Research Data on Safety and Efficacy: Some studies indicate that ginkgo is helpful for memory/concentration and peripheral vascular disease; however, more studies need to be done. No other claims for its use have been validated. Ginkgo is generally safe; however, anyone taking any of the medications mentioned previously or who has any kind of bleeding disorder should be cautious. Consult with your health care provider.

Bottom-Line: Ginkgo is generally safe; however, anyone taking prescription or over-the-counter medications (especially those listed above) should consult with a health care provider, registered dietitian, or pharmacist before taking ginkgo.

References:

1. The Health Professional's Guide to Popular Dietary Supplements, 2nd Edition. Allison Sarubin Fragakis, MS, RD, The American Dietetic Association, 2003.
2. Professional's Handbook of Complementary and Alternative Medicines, C.W. Fetrow, Pharm D, Juan R. Avila, Pharm D, Springhouse, 2001.