Ginkgo ? what d'ya thinko?  [1]

Dear Alice,

Do you recommend the natural remedy Ginkgo as a dietary supplement for good health?

What D'Ya Thinko About Ginkgo

Answer

Dear What D'Ya Thinko About Ginkgo,

Ginkgo (Latin name, Ginkgo biloba) has been part of Chinese traditional medicine for thousands of years. It is extracted from the leaves of the hardy ginkgo biloba tree and is available in a variety of forms, including teas and tablets. Proponents of ginkgo believe that consuming the leaves increases cerebral blood flow and prevents the lumping of platelets in brain tissue. They also believe that ginkgo has other health benefits, such as slowing memory loss, improving cognitive ability, and curing conditions such as asthma, PMS, multiple sclerosis, and sexual dysfunction. For one herb, that's quite a resume!

While some claims on the Ginkgo plant may have some merit, not all are backed by research. Some studies have found that ginkgo biloba has positive effects on cognitive ability, though others have found that this may not be true. Ginkgo has been found to have possible antioxidant properties, which means that it may help the body fight free radicals. Free radicals in the brain attack healthy cells, stealing the cells' electrons. As an antioxidant, ingested ginkgo provides a target for these hungry cells, allowing them to steal ginkgo's electrons rather than from the healthy cells. Ginkgo has been found to be helpful in some patients with claudication (painful legs due to clogged arteries) and dementia. Despite these findings, more research is needed to establish ginkgo as the panacea that it's believed to be.

So, let's say you decide to ginkgo. You may be wondering about the recommended dose. For adults 18 and older, common dosage is typically around 80 to 240 mg, and may be taken two to three times a day (depending on the reason for use). It's recommended that if you're just starting to take ginkgo, it's best to not take any more than 120 mg per day to avoid some gastrointestinal upset. Ginkgo might be safe for children, but it's probably a good idea not to give it to them unless it's under the strict supervision of a health care provider.

Ginkgo, though it is natural, may cause side effects, such as bleeding, headache, nausea, dizziness, diarrhea, and allergic reactions (some of which may be severe). Moreover, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not regulate ginkgo or other supplements. As such, it's
recommended you ask your health care provider, if you are considering taking ginkgo, especially if you have a bleeding disorder or if you are taking any other medications/supplements. For more information about ginkgo, you may want to check out the section on supplements and ergogenic aids in the Go Ask Alice! Nutrition & Physical Activity archives.

Doing your homework on complementary and alternative medicine is a wise step to take? be proud of yourself for learning more info before you gink-go or gink-no.

Alice!
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Optimal Nutrition
Supplements & Ergogenic Aids

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