

Ginkgo biloba and physiological impotence? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I'm interested in taking Ginkgo Biloba, used to facilitate peripheral circulation, to aid in physiological impotence. Are there side effects? Could it work? Any feedback?

Thanks.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Some people swear by Ginkgo biloba, calling it a miracle herb with the power to fix anything from Alzheimer's to erectile dysfunction. But what are the facts? Scientifically speaking the data is less clear.

According to available research, Ginkgo has been used effectively to improve cognitive function in patients with Alzheimer's disease and dementia, as well as to improve memory in healthy adults and to treat peripheral vascular disease. Though it shows some potential with sexual dysfunction, the results have been mixed. In fact, Ginkgo's effectiveness appears to be limited to relieving sexual dysfunction that is caused by selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI) antidepressants and not more generalized physiological causes. Some of ginkgo's success with treating sexual dysfunction is believed to be the result of the placebo effect.

Though ginkgo is considered safe, there are some side effects such as headache, nausea, upset stomach, vomiting, and irritations around the mouth. Because of ginkgo's ability to thin the blood, experts advise that you not take ginkgo if you are currently taking medication for diabetes, aspirin, ibuprofen or anticoagulant drugs such as heparin and warfarin. Doctors also advise caution to patients with bleeding disorders or those who are taking drugs, herbs (such as garlic, ginseng and red clover), or supplements that may increase the risk of bleeding.

Ginkgo biloba is usually sold as an extract because many of the plant's parts, including its seeds, are considered poisonous and their consumption could lead to seizures and death. You may want to avoid these altogether.

Overall, Ginkgo could work for you either through the placebo effect or because of actual biochemical interactions — it just might not be your best bet. If you are interested in help with impotence you may want to speak with a health care provider. They can help you determine possible causes, the best treatment options, as well as answer any other questions you may have about Ginkgo biloba and its effects.

Alice!

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