

In a large study involving healthy adults 65 years and older, use of ginkgo biloba extract was associated with a reduced decline in cognitive function over a 20 year follow-up.

Ginkgo Biloba Extract may reduce cognitive decline in healthy aging adults

Many previous studies have examined the potential benefits of various compounds such as ginkgo biloba and piracetam (Nootropyl) on cognitive decline. Unfortunately, many of these studies have been inconclusive, primarily due to small study populations, short study duration, or inadequate follow-up.

In a recent study published in the online journal PLoS ONE, researchers analyzed the association of ginkgo biloba and cognitive function in mature adults over a 20 year period.

The study group included 3,612 normally healthy (no dementia) adults 65 and over that were placed in one of three groups: 589 subjects reported using ginkgo biloba in at least one of the ten assessment visits, 149 subjects reported use of the drug Nootropyl at one of the assessment visits, and 2,874 subjects that used neither ginkgo biloba or Nootropyl. Decline in Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE), verbal fluency, and visual memory were analyzed over a 20 year follow-up.

Compared to the control group, the subjects that reported using ginkgo biloba had significantly less decline in MMSE score over 20 years. The group that used the Nootropyl had a more rapid decline in scores than the ginkgo biloba group or the group without either treatment. No difference was observed between the ginkgo and the control group regarding the verbal fluency and visual memory tests, but the Nootropyl group scores declined more rapidly.

In this study population, cognitive decline was lower in subjects who reported using ginkgo biloba than those who did not.

Amieva H, Meillon C, Helmer C, Barberger-Gateau P, Dartigues JF (2013) Ginkgo Biloba Extract and Long-Term Cognitive Decline: A 20-Year Follow-Up Population-Based Study. PLoS ONE 8(1): e52755. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0052755