IN THE NEWS

Ginkgo Biloba May Slow Glaucoma's Progression

A small study of patients with normal tension glaucoma indicates that ginkgo biloba may slow the progression of the disease.

Glaucoma is an eye disease in which damage to the optic nerve leads to progressive peripheral vision loss. This loss can be measured with specialized visual field testing. In most glaucoma cases, the pressure inside the eye (intraocular pressure) is elevated; in people with "normal tension glaucoma," however, optic nerve damage occurs despite normal intraocular pressures.

In an effort to determine whether ginkgo biloba affects visual field loss in patients with normal tension glaucoma, Italian researchers recruited 27 patients with visual field loss from normal tension glaucoma and divided them into two groups. The first group received 40 mg of ginkgo biloba extract in pill form three times a day for four weeks, followed by a washout period of eight weeks, and then four weeks of placebo treatment comprising similar-appearing pills that did not contain ginkgo biloba. The second group received the placebo pills first, and then the ginkgo biloba extract after the washout period. On average, patients performed significantly better in visual field testing after receiving the ginkgo biloba extract than after receiving the placebo.

"Our results suggest that ginkgo biloba extract can effect an improvement in preexisting visual field damage in some individuals with normal tension glaucoma," the researchers wrote in their article published in the journal *Ophthalmology*.

"Ginkgo biloba extract has numerous properties that theoretically should be beneficial in treating non-intraocular pressure-dependent mechanisms in glaucoma. Its multiple beneficial effects, including increased ocular blood flow, and its antioxidant activity, platelet activating factor inhibition, nitric oxide inhibition, and neuroprotective activity combine to suggest that ginkgo biloba extract could play a major role in the treatment of glaucoma."

—Marc Ellman, MD

---

Broccoli May Be Tops in Health-Promoting Benefits

Cruciferous vegetables such as cauliflower, brussels sprouts, cabbage, and kale are powerful anticancer agents, but among this group, broccoli may contain the most life-extending nutrients. Rich in vitamins and fiber, broccoli also boasts special ingredients that promote good health and prevent disease.

Broccoli is unusually rich in phytochemicals that fight cancer, including indoles, isothiocyanates, and glucoraphanin, which the body converts to sulforaphane. These substances can prevent carcinogens from damaging cell DNA and causing various forms of cancer.

Indoles can reduce the risk of breast cancer by stimulating enzymes that weaken the female hormone estrogen. Isothiocyanates,
which are up to 100% higher in young broccoli sprouts than in adult broccoli stalks, stimulate glutathione S-transferase and other enzymes that prevent carcinogens from entering the cells. And sulforaphane can stimulate the production of phase II enzymes that are powerful carcinogen detoxifiers.

Since 1992, pharmacology professor Paul Talalay and his group at Johns Hopkins University have been studying broccoli's cancer-fighting properties. Their research has demonstrated that sulforaphane can prevent breast and colon cancer in mice and also destroy Helicobacter pylori, the bacteria linked to gastritis, stomach ulcers, and stomach cancer (the second most common form of cancer). Containing generous amounts of such vital nutrients as calcium, manganese, beta carotene, vitamin C, and vitamin K, broccoli's health benefits are undiminished by cooking; in fact, heat actually appears to increase indoles in broccoli.

An average serving of cooked broccoli has more vitamin C than an orange and as much calcium as an eight-ounce glass of milk, while an average broccoli spear has three times the fiber of a slice of wheat bread. Broccoli sprouts have as much glucoraphanin as a pound and a quarter of cooked broccoli. Those looking for a vegetable packed with essential nutrients and life-extending components may want to reach first for the broccoli.

—Donna Caruso

**Western Diet May Increase Prostate Cancer Risk**

Prostate cancer is 10 times more common in the US than in Japan, and new research suggests that the typical high-fat American diet may be to blame.

To confirm this hypothesis, researchers examined 50 Japanese men with prostate cancer who had undergone removal of the prostate. Half of the participants lived in Nagoya, Japan, while the other half lived in Los Angeles, CA. In other words, all the men had similar genetic backgrounds, but different dietary habits and lifestyles. The researchers examined the removed prostates, as well as blood and urine samples from all the participants. They also interviewed the men and reviewed their medical records.

Their findings suggest that Japanese men who live in the US have much poorer dietary habits than their native Japanese counterparts, as they were on average heavier, had more body fat, and had five times more triglycerides in their blood than the native Japanese men.

Furthermore, laboratory examinations of removed prostates from the two groups indicated that the cancer's DNA was arranged differently in the two samples, suggesting that diet may affect the genetic composition of the cancerous prostates.

These findings were presented at the American Urological Association meeting in Chicago on June 30, 2003. The abstract was also published in the May 2003 Journal of Urology. The results are currently being prepared for publication in a medical journal.

—Marc Ellman, MD

January 2004 LIFE EXTENSION 27
Copyright of Life Extension is the property of Life Extension Foundation and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.