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.

Glucoma 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 anti-cancer 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,
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