FEELING FORGETFUL? HERE'S HOW THIS HERB CAN HELP LIFT YOUR BRAIN FOG.

Some call it a “senior moment.” Others say their “brain went for a walk.” But all of us have lost our trains of thought at one time or another. As we get older, these bouts of memory loss can become more frequent and may be more serious. But luckily, there’s a simple herb—ginkgo biloba—that could be just the ticket to keeping our minds sharp.

Ginkgo’s powerful one-two punch against mental aging hails from its duo of beneficial chemicals: flavonoids and terpenoids. Flavonoids are powerful antioxidants that reduce the damage caused by free radicals—unstable compounds in our bodies that contribute to many health problems, including Alzheimer’s disease. Terpenoids improve circulation by widening blood vessels and reducing blood clotting, allowing for increased blood flow to the brain, which boosts short- and long-term memory, and heightens mental clarity. This is what makes ginkgo therapy an exciting prospect.

Researchers at the New York Institute for Medical Research found that patients with mild to moderate dementia show some memory stabilization after taking daily 120mg doses of ginkgo, according to a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in October 1997. Two subsequent studies suggest that doses as high as 240mg a day may increase cognitive function.

Possible side effects of high-dose ginkgo supplementation include headaches, nausea and restlessness. These symptoms are mild, however, and lowering the dose usually solves the problem. Also, since ginkgo thins the blood, it should be avoided by people who suffer from blood-clotting disorders or who take other anticoagulants, such as aspirin.

Despite these minor drawbacks, ginkgo’s potential to fight memory loss keeps scientists intrigued. Currently, a clinical trial testing long-term use of ginkgo is underway. And this latest research may lead us to redefine what it means to have a “senior moment.”