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# PLANET HEALTH NEWSLETTER

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## THE BEST BRAIN BOOSTERS OF THEM ALL

The best brain booster of them all is the herb Ginkgo biloba. Ginkgo helps healthy people keep their cognitive powers, and it helps people with Alzheimer's to fight for them. Several double-blind studies show that ginkgo helps cognition in seniors (Human Psychopharmacol Clin Exp 2002), including significantly improving memory and speed of processing as well as significantly improving mood and ability to perform daily activities. In an important 20-year study, 3,612 people aged 65 or over had a slower rate of cognitive decline than people taking either the drug piracetam or nothing.

If you're younger than the people in these studies, don't turn the page yet! Ginkgo also helps memory in young people. Double-blind research shows that ginkgo benefits mental performance in healthy adults 45-65.

But what if you know someone who is already battling Alzheimer's? The best answer is still ginkgo. A double-blind study of people with dementia found clinically significant improvement in memory, attention and cognitive function on ginkgo, while those on placebo continued to decline. A subsequent analysis of neuropsychiatric subscales found significant improvement of delusions, hallucinations, apathy, agitation, anxiety, irritability and depression on ginkgo, but no improvement on placebo.

But does ginkgo work as well as drugs? Better. When researchers compared ginkgo studies to studies that used two conventional drugs, they found that all three significantly helped, but that ginkgo produced fewer side effects. Later research found more people respond, and

respond better, to ginkgo than to the cholinesterase inhibitor tacrine. When researchers compared ginkgo to four cholinesterase inhibitors, they found ginkgo to be better and safer than tacrine and comparable to the newer donepezil.

## BRAIN BOOSTERS WHEN YOU'VE HAD A STROKE

A small double-blind study has shown that pomegranate polyphenols enhance "cognitive and functional recovery after ischemic stroke." It significantly improves neurological, language and attention scores as well as functional independence and locomotion and leads to less time in hospital. Ginkgo also improves neurological function in people who have suffered a stroke.

## 10 TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR BRAIN YOUNG

### 1. Ginkgo biloba

240 mg of Ginkgo biloba extract improves cognition, attention, memory and executive function in people with amnestic MCI, a type of MCI in which the risk of Alzheimer's is increased.

### 2. Dark Chocolate

Dark chocolate lower the risk of cognitive decline in healthy elderly people. It even significantly improves cognition in people who have MCI, especially improving processing speed, executive function, language and working memory.

### 3. B Vitamins

When people with MCI who are at high risk of dementia or Alzheimer's are given 800 mcg folic acid, 20 mg B6 and 500 mcg B12 for nearly two years, they have seven times less shrinkage of the grey matter in their brains than people given a placebo. That shrinkage is an important sign of progression of Alzheimer's and dementia.

### 4. Blueberry

Blueberry juice or powder improves memory, learning, access to words and concepts, and brain activity in people with MCI. Several studies show that blueberry powder or extract improves cognition, learning and memory in older adults.

### 5. Green Tea

When older adults drink green tea every day, their risk of dementia drops by 74 percent, and their risk of MCI by 68 percent. When people who already have Alzheimer's, dementia or MCI take a standardized green tea extract, their total dementia scores and short-term memory scores improve significantly.

### 6. Ashwagandha

When seniors with MCI take 600 mg of ashwagandha, their memory, executive function, attention and information processing speed improve significantly.

### 7. DHA

The omega-3 fatty acid DHA significantly increases IQ, including sub scores for long and short-term memory in people with MCI. It also significantly slows atrophy of the hippocampus, the region of the brain associated with memory.

### 8. Pycnogenol

Free radical damage contributes to the impairment of cognition in old age. When elderly people take Pycnogenol, free radical damage goes down significantly, and working memory improves significantly.

### 9. Resveratrol

When healthy, overweight seniors take resveratrol, they remember words significantly.

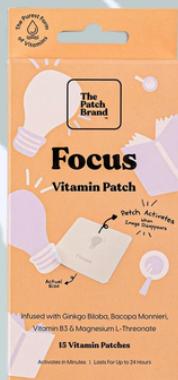
### 10. Lion's Mane

Elderly people with MCI were given 1 g of the mushroom lion's mane three times a day for 16 weeks. The mushroom significantly improved cognitive function.

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