



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Ginkgo

This information describes the common uses of Ginkgo, how it works, and its possible side effects.

Tell your healthcare providers about any dietary supplements you're taking, such as herbs, vitamins, minerals, and natural or home remedies. This will help them manage your care and keep you safe.

## What is it?

Ginkgo biloba is one of the oldest living species of trees. Its seeds and leaves are used in traditional Chinese medicine. Ginkgo also comes as capsules, extracts, tablets, and tea.

## What are the potential uses and benefits?

Ginkgo is used to:

- Improve circulation
- Improve memory
- Treat tinnitus (buzzing or ringing noise in one or both your ears)

Ginkgo also has other uses that haven't been studied by doctors to see if they work.

Ginkgo supplements can interact with some medications and affect how they work. Talk with your healthcare providers before taking ginkgo

supplements. For more information, read the “What else do I need to know?” section below.

## What are the side effects?

Side effects of using ginkgo supplements may include:

- Low sodium levels in your blood

## What else do I need to know?

- Talk with your healthcare provider if you’re taking blood thinners such as warfarin (Coumadin<sup>®</sup>, Jantoven<sup>®</sup>). Ginkgo may increase your risk of bleeding.
- Talk with your healthcare provider if you have a history of seizures. Ginkgo can increase your risk of seizures.
- Tell your healthcare provider if you’re taking efavirenz (Sustiva<sup>®</sup>) to treat HIV. Ginkgo can make it less effective.
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you’re taking midazolam (Versed) for anxiety, trouble sleeping, or for seizures. Ginkgo may make this medication less effective.
- Tell your healthcare provider if you’re on insulin. Ginkgo can affect how it works in your body.
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you’re taking medications such as prochlorperazine (Compazine<sup>®</sup>). Ginkgo can increase your risk for seizures when you’re taking this medication.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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