A Matter of Health

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By Wendy Haack
Family Nurse Practitioner

GINKGO BILOBA LEAF: Is it for me?

Ginkgo Biloba extract is one of the most commonly prescribed herbal medications worldwide and is derived from one of the oldest plant species.

Ginkgo has the ability to get across a special blood barrier in the brain. Because of this, it acts as a brain antioxidant. It has also been shown to help decrease brain injury from lack of oxygen during minor strokes. It does this by causing the arteries in the brain to dilate. This increases the utilization of oxygen and glucose by the brain. It also helps to prevent development of swelling in the brain from trauma.

Ginkgo has been shown to increase memory performance and learning capacity. It has also been shown to help individuals with equilibrium problems. Finally, in the eye, Ginkgo Biloba has been shown to reduce edema (swelling) of the retina and reduce cellular lesions in the retina.

The Commission E monograph recommends that Ginkgo Biloba leaf extract be used to treat a variety of symptomatic problems: memory deficits, disturbances in concentration, depressive emotional conditions, dizziness, ringing in the ears and headache. They also recommend Ginkgo Biloba be used in the treatment of dementia syndromes including primary degenerative dementia, vascular dementia, and Alzheimer disease.

Ginkgo is also recommended to be used in those individuals who experience pain when walking due to poor circulation. It helps to reduce and can often eliminate the pain. Finally, Ginkgo is recommended for vertigo and ringing in the ears.

Ginkgo very seldom has side effects. The types of side effects you can experience with Ginkgo are stomach or intestinal upsets, headaches or allergic skin reactions. Currently there are no known restrictions if an individual is pregnant or breast feeding. I recommend that you speak with your obstetrician or pediatrician before using Ginkgo if you are pregnant or breast feeding.

The Commission E monograph recommendations for dosages of Ginkgo are 120-240 mg of native dry extract in two or three doses a day for problems with concentration, depressive conditions, headache, dementia and Alzheimer. Oregon Health Sciences University's Alzheimer's clinic recommends 40 mg three times a day for Alzheimer.

The Commission E monograph recommends 120-160 mg per day of native dry extract in two or three doses for decreased circulation, ringing in ears, vertigo and dizziness.

Length of administration of Ginkgo should be based on severity of symptoms and should extend at least eight weeks in the case of chronic illness. There have been no known overdoses of Ginkgo Biloba.

Because of major lobbying efforts of the vitamin and herbal industry, most medicinal herbs such as Ginkgo are considered "Dietary Supplements" and so do not fall under the watchful eye of the FDA. This means there is little or no quality control industry wide. You, the consumer, have no way of knowing whether you're getting consistent quality, and the proper dosage.

This is not to say that there are no quality products on the market but rather, "buyer beware". Some brands will be better than others. Ask your pharmacist or supplier when in doubt.

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Mural, plaque for Shad Hisler dedicated

A large number of people from Morrow and Umatilla counties, young people and adults alike, gathered at the Heppner High School gym Sept. 8 for the unveiling and dedication of the mural "Mustang Thunder" and plaque in memory of Shad Hisler.

The artist who painted the mural, Michael Booth, Pendleton, spoke at the dedication, as did Shad's uncle Butch Knowles, his parents, Susan and Paul Hisler, and Tim Dickenson, HHS student body president, who accepted the gift of the mural and plaque on behalf of the student body. Shad's sister and brother, Annie and Shaun Hisler, were also present at the ceremony.

Heppner Colts start their season

By Rick Paullus

The Heppner Colts, consisting of fifth and sixth graders, opened their season on Friday, Sept. 11 with an intra-squad scrimmage held before the varsity game. The Colts were supposed to play Umatilla but the team wasn't ready yet so had to forfeit to Heppner.

The scrimmage went well with the defenses controlling play for most of the game. Jodc Coil broke free around end to score a touchdown for the blue team early in the fourth quarter. David Flynn kicked the extra point. Coil also intercepted a pass on the last play of the game and returned it for a touchdown.

The Colts' next game is Wednesday, Sept. 16, at Heppner against the Kiwanis of Hermiston. Game time is at 6:30 p.m.

The Colts are coached by Kelly Fox, John McCabe and Rick Paullus.

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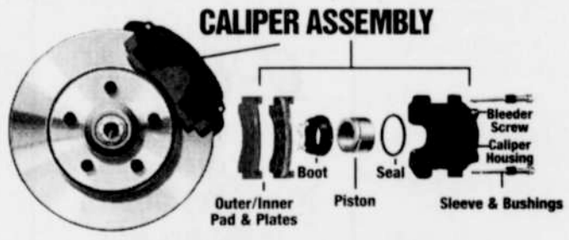

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