



spotlight on herbs

Herbal Supplement Makes Mind the Matter

(NAPSA)—A hectic lifestyle and a light sleep regimen are common contributors to such absent-minded activities as misplacing your keys or forgetting the name of your favorite Italian restaurant. But Americans are responding to these disconcerting lapses in memory and concentration by taking the herbal remedy ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*).

Age-associated memory impairment (AAMI) affects up to 38 percent of individuals 50 and older. Everyday factors often contribute to AAMI, including stress, sleep changes, alcohol, smoking and medications. Keeping the arteries healthy is key, say experts, because clear arteries ensure blood flow to the brain.

Another way to reduce AAMI is by supplementing your lifestyle and diet with herbs such as ginkgo. With sales of \$310 million in 1998, ginkgo is gaining speed among the American public as a safe way to treat age-associated memory loss.

For consumers worried about whether these herbal remedies really do work, published evidence may shed some light. One 1997 study, for example, suggested that ginkgo is an effective treatment for individuals who suffer from mild to severe cognitive impairment. In addition, over 100 studies support the safety and various benefits of ginkgo preparations.

Used for centuries in traditional Chinese medicine, ginkgo is believed to counteract the symptoms of AAMI by improving circ-



photo 2001 Steven Foster

ulation to the smallest blood vessels in the brain. The herb's antioxidant properties also work to protect cell membranes. Although few serious side effects have been documented, there is concern that ginkgo may interact with blood-thinning drugs. Therefore, it is important to discuss use of ginkgo with your doctor before trying it.

In Europe, where the German Commission E has sanctioned the use of ginkgo extract for improving memory and concentration, the herb is even more popular, boasting sales of more than \$200 million per year in Germany alone. Further, the herb has also been approved by the Commission E and the World Health Organization for use in dementia, tinnitus (ringing in the ears) and difficulty concentrating.

This information has been produced by the American Botanical Council (ABC), a non-profit research and educational organization in Austin, Texas. For more scientific and technical information on ginkgo and other herb information, contact ABC at www.herbalgram.org.