



How Can Herbs Help Alzheimer's?

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Using Herbs for Alzheimer's Disease

While medicinal herbs are not a cure for Alzheimer's disease, they can serve as useful alternative and complementary therapies for treatment with pharmaceuticals. Learn more about herbs for Alzheimer's and what they can do to help.

What Is Alzheimer's?

Alzheimer's disease impacts the entire body, not just the brain. In advanced stages of Alzheimer's, basic activities like the ability to move and eat may become impaired. Because Alzheimer's is a complex condition that results in many changes, a wide array of herbs are used to treat and prevent the disease.

Alzheimer's is just one of many types of dementia. Most dementias, Alzheimer's disease included, generally do not arise without other health problems. The most common dementias are mixed types, meaning the majority of individuals who have dementia have multiple origins of the condition. For example, a person who has Alzheimer's disease may also have vascular dementia.

Therefore, herbal treatment cannot just focus on brain health. An effective treatment plan must be individualized and help target exact the kind of dementia an Alzheimer's patient is facing. Several researchers have determined that the brains of people who have Alzheimer's contain high levels of toxins, including pesticides and aluminum, in their brains. This shows the necessity of ensuring the organs of detoxification are kept in top working form, which can be done with herbs.

How Herbs for Alzheimer's Are Used to Prevent and Treat the Disease

Herbs are best employed for the long-term maintenance of overall health of the brain, circulation and entire body. Relying on the use of one herb to prevent and treat Alzheimer's dementia is not sufficient; a combination of herbs that promote the health of the entire body is essential.

If Alzheimer's is diagnosed, herbs may be employed to enhance mood stability, rest and energy levels. Herbs provide nutrition and are useful for the treatment of complications that may result from Alzheimer's disease. For example, if a person is eating poorly and suffers from constipation, herbs promote healthy elimination patterns.

Topical herbal remedies are used to ensure the person's skin remains healthy if a person is bedbound or incontinent by preventing infections that may arise from immobility.

Ginkgo Biloba

Ginkgo, also known as maidenhair tree, has been scientifically studied for decades as an aid to brain health. The herb has traditionally been used for thousands of years to promote healthy circulation and brain function.

It has been found to be effective for reducing cognitive decline among aging adults, including memory loss and forgetfulness. Ginkgo aids the ability to concentrate and focus, and it can help stabilize symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.

The herb works via several mechanisms:

- Supports the transmission of electrical and chemical messages in the brain.
- Relieves inflammation, improves oxygenation of the tissues and supports healthy glucose metabolism.
- Supports the growth of healthy nerve cells within the brain and protects nerves from damage.
- Relaxes the blood vessels within the brain, which improves circulation.
- Increases activity of brain waves, prevents confusion and relieves dizziness.

Many individuals worry about possible future cognitive decline, particularly if they have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or if other family members have the condition. Ginkgo not only enhances memory, it relieves stress, which may impair cognition.

Ginkgo also acts as a mild antidepressant and can be useful for relieving irritability, which may develop as Alzheimer's disease progresses. Ginkgo is usually well tolerated and must be taken for two months before maximum effectiveness is reached. Do not use ginkgo if blood thinners are used. This herb may cause transient gastrointestinal disturbances, headaches or dizziness. Like all substances, ginkgo has the potential to precipitate allergic reactions.

Other herbs that enhance cognition and circulation within the brain:

- Gotu kola
- Ashwaghandha
- Eleuthero
- Sage
- Rosemary
- Coffee
- Rooibos
- Black tea
- Green tea

Herbs Feed the Brain

The brain must be nourished in order to function at its best. Several herbs provide macro and micro nutrients to support brain health, and may be consumed liberally:

- **Nettle contains a wide array of nutrients.** The herb is a great source of calcium and magnesium, which aid transmission of nerve impulses throughout the brain and the rest of the body. It also promotes healthy glucose metabolism, which the brain needs to function.
- **Green oats.** These are also known as milky oats. It's a gentle herb that reduces stress. Like nettle, milky oats is a great source of calcium and magnesium. The herb relieves inflammation of nerves.
- **Hemp, sesame, chia and flax seeds.** These contain high concentrations of protective fatty acids that reduce inflammation within the brain. They should be consumed raw, like sprinkled over cereal each morning, or you can use flax or hemp seed oils. Store seeds in the refrigerator so they stay fresh.

Herbs Soothe the Mind

Herbs can not only feed the brain, but they can soothe the mind as well. The following herbs can be very useful for people with Alzheimer's:

- **Skullcap.** This enhances health of the entire nervous system. Its abilities to soothe and lift the spirit have been recognized for centuries. Skullcap helps stabilize moods, so it is useful for treating anxiety and

compulsive behaviors.

- **German chamomile.** of course, this makes a tasty tea that soothes nervous tension and frustration. This can be incredibly useful for someone with Alzheimer's.
- **Lemon balm.** This is yet another herb that makes a delicious, relaxing tea. Lemon balm has antidepressant actions that can aid cognition, and it can also relieve irritability, insomnia and headaches.
- **Linden, passionflower, red clover and valerian.** They are all useful herbs. They may be employed to relieve anxiety, insomnia and excess energy.

Detoxification Supports Brain Health

Detoxifying herbs include burdock root, milk thistle seed and dandelion root. They bind with toxins and aid in their elimination.

Detoxifying herbs may be used long-term. They are rich in nutrients, but unfortunately, these herbs are bitter in flavor, except for burdock root. They are best consumed as tinctures or capsules.

Herbs are very useful for the prevention and treatment of Alzheimer's disease. Check with a qualified health care practitioner if you plan to use them for the treatment and prevention of this condition. Let your health care practitioner know of all medications, herbs and supplements you are using.