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Green Tea Extract May Help People with Down Syndrome

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Memory improved in people with Down syndrome who took EGCG

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A supplement containing EGCG (epigallocatechin-3-gallate) from $\underline{\text{green tea}}$ may improve memory capacity in people with Down syndrome, according to a study in Molecular Nutrition & Food Research.

People with Down syndrome have an extra copy of their 21st chromosome, which is associated with mild to moderate cognitive impairment; characteristic short stature and almond-shaped, upward slanting eyes; and an increased tendency to have or develop certain medical problems, including childhood leukemia, heart defects, and Alzheimer's disease

Antioxidant benefits

Green tea contains various health-promoting substances called polyphenols. Of these, EGCG is a particularly potent antioxidant that may protect against the development of various cancers, infections, stroke, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, and periodontal disease.

Previous studies have shown that EGCG can inhibit a particular gene that may account for some of the features of Down syndrome

Using mice that were bred to have Down syndrome-like characteristics, Spanish researchers aimed to investigate the effects of supplementing the mice with EGCG on the animals' cognitive function. In a separate study, they supplemented 29 young adults (ages 14 to 29) with Down syndrome with EGCG or placebo and tested the participants' cognitive function.

Here's what they found

- In mice, learning and memory impairments were corrected after taking EGCG.
- Compared with the placebo group, episodic memory, working memory, and visual memory recognition improved significantly in participants with Down syndrome who took 9 mg per kg per day of EGCG for three months.

EGCG administration also improved quality of life and social functioning

"Importantly, as for mice, in humans the biochemical results allowed us to establish a clear relationship between memory improvement and homocysteine levels, suggesting a direct dependence of cognitive improvement on (gene) activity," reported lead study author, Dr. Mara Dierssen. In other words, blood homocysteine levels served as a good proxy by which to measure the degree to which the gene that may contribute to Down syndrome was

Living well with Down syndrome

Prenatal tests such as the Quad-screen and amniocentesis can help diagnose Down syndrome before the baby is born. This allows parents the opportunity to prepare for possible complications, including congenital heart defects that can sometimes be repaired in utero (while the mother is still pregnant).

Many people with Down syndrome live into their 60s. A well-rounded team of doctors and occupational, physical, and speech therapists, coupled with educational opportunities aimed at enhancing cognitive function can help people with the condition live productive, rewarding lives.

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