

## **The safety of herbal teas containing ginkgo leaves cannot be evaluated due to insufficient data**

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An assortment of herbal teas by established manufacturers contains varying amounts of ginkgo leaves. In marketing these teas, it is implied that they could increase mental fitness similar to the effects of medicinal products that contain ginkgo extract. The tea mixtures available in supermarkets, chemist's shops or health food stores are regarded as food by the manufacturers. The central laboratory of German pharmacists (Zentrallaboratorium Deutscher Apotheker e. V.) has analysed a number of these tea mixtures and concluded that they contain unsafe amounts of ginkgolic acid. In all products that were analysed, ginkgolic acid exceeded the tolerable amount derived for medicinal products.

BfR finds that a conclusive health assessment of herbal teas containing ginkgo leaves is not possible at this time due to insufficient data on the total of biologically active ingredients. According to the pharmaceutical assessment, it is suspected that high concentrations of ginkgolic acid can have adverse health effects. BfR deems further investigation necessary in regard to the extent to which the intake of ginkgolic acid and related compounds (other alk(en)ylphenols) is linked with genotoxicity and the triggering of hypersensitivity reactions. The causal relationships of additional adverse reactions associated with the pharmaceutical use of ginkgo leaf extracts such as increased risk of haemorrhaging remain in need of clarification.

The BfR evaluation of these herbal teas is based on the safety assessment guidance of the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) for botanical preparations. According to this, doubts regarding the safety of foods of plant origin are justified if previous use has indicated potential health risks and standard toxicological data that could remove these doubts are not available.

The full version of this BfR Health Assessment is available in German on [http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/208/die\\_sicherheit\\_von\\_ginkgoblaetter\\_haltigen\\_tees\\_kann\\_wegen\\_mangelnder\\_daten\\_nicht\\_beurteilt\\_werden.pdf](http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/208/die_sicherheit_von_ginkgoblaetter_haltigen_tees_kann_wegen_mangelnder_daten_nicht_beurteilt_werden.pdf)