Vinpocetine

What Is Vinpocetine Used for Today?

Some evidence supports the idea that vinpocetine can enhance memory and mental function, especially in those with Alzheimer's disease and related conditions. It is also widely marketed for enhancing memory in healthy people, but there is no real evidence that it is helpful for this purpose.

It has been hypothesized that vinpocetine helps people with Alzheimer’s disease by enhancing blood flow in the brain, safeguarding brain cells against damage, and inhibiting a substance known as phosphodiesterase. It has also been tried as a treatment for reducing brain damage following strokes.

What Is the Scientific Evidence for Vinpocetine?

Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Conditions (Dementia)

A 16-week, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial of 203 individuals with mild to moderate dementia found significant benefit in the treated group. Benefits have been seen in other studies as well. However, a major review found that overall the evidence that it works remains too weak to rely upon, due to limitations in study quality.
Strokes

In a single-blind, placebo-controlled trial, 30 individuals who had just experienced a stroke received either placebo or vinpocetine along with conventional treatment for 30 days. The results showed that participants in the vinpocetine group experienced a significantly reduced level of residual disability as measured at 3 months.

A few other studies, some of poor design, also provide suggestive evidence that vinpocetine may be helpful for strokes. However, much of the existing evidence is too preliminary to rely on, and a recent review combining two relatively high quality studies involving 63 subjects was unable to determine whether or not vinpocetine provided any benefit for stroke patients.

Note: People who have had strokes are sometimes advised to take blood thinning drugs. There are concerns that vinpocetine may interact adversely with some medications of this type. See Safety Issues below.

Dosage

The usual dose of vinpocetine is 10 mg capsules 3 times per day, although dosages ranging from half to twice that amount have been used in studies. Vinpocetine reportedly is better absorbed when taken with a meal.

Safety Issues

No serious side effects have been reported in any of the clinical trials. However, there is one case report of vinpocetine apparently causing agranulocytosis (loss of certain white blood cells).

Vinpocetine inhibits blood platelets from forming clots, and for this reason it could cause problems if it is taken by individuals with bleeding problems, during the period immediately before or after surgery or labor and delivery, or in combination with medications or natural substances that also affect platelet activity, such as:

- Aspirin
- Clopidogrel (Plavix)
- Ticlopidine (Ticlid)
- Pentoxifylline (Trental)
- Garlic
- Ginkgo
- Policosanol
- High-dosage vitamin E

The drug warfarin (Coumadin) affects blood clotting, but not through actions on platelets. One study found only a minimal interaction between warfarin and vinpocetine. Interestingly, it was in the direction of decreased clotting. Nonetheless, combination therapy with vinpocetine and warfarin should not be attempted except under the supervision of a physician.

Safety in pregnant or nursing women, young children, or those with severe liver or kidney disease has not been established.

Interactions You Should Know About
If you are taking:

- Blood-thinning drugs, such as aspirin, clopidogrel (Plavix), ticlopidine (Ticlid), or pentoxifylline (Trental): Simultaneous use of vinpocetine might cause bleeding problems.
- Natural substances with blood-thinning properties, such as garlic, ginkgo, policosanol, or high-dose vitamin E: Simultaneous use of vinpocetine might in theory cause bleeding problems.
- Warfarin (Coumadin): Vinpocetine might impair the action of the blood-thinning actions.

References [+]


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