



Another reason for staying slim: to ward off dementia.

## Positive Strokes for Massage

If you head to the massage table when your muscles are in knots, you're among the legions of Americans who place themselves in good hands. Massage is a growing trend: Two out of five adults have experienced it, and 12 percent of the population received at least one massage during 2004, according to a survey by Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals. An overwhelming number of clients gave the therapy a thumbs up: 96 percent of the clients expressed favorable feelings.

For more on good-hands work: [www.massagetherapy.com](http://www.massagetherapy.com).



## Trimmer Waist, Brighter Future

Here's another reason for shedding extra pounds: Being obese or overweight during middle age may predispose you to dementia in older age. A population study of Kaiser Permanente participants compared the results of their health exams performed between 1964 and 1973 with clinical diagnoses of dementia (exams performed between 1994 and 2003).

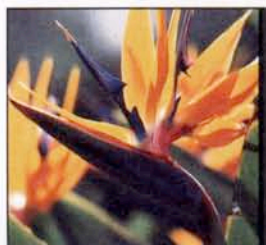
Of the people diagnosed with dementia—including Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia—during their

60s, 70s or 80s, 10 percent had been obese and 36 percent overweight 30 or 40 years earlier. The results show that compared with those who were of normal weight at midlife (age 40 to 45), obese people had a 74 percent greater risk of dementia in later life, while those who were

overweight had a 35 percent greater risk.

To lower your risk of health problems, eat healthfully, maintain a normal body mass index, and follow an exercise regimen—no matter what your age.

(For more in-depth information on dementia, see page 64.)



Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage.

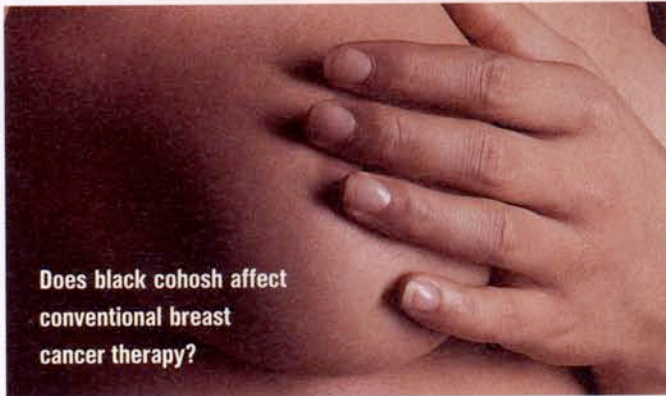
—Anais Nin (1903-1977) diary entry, June 1942



## Does Black Cohosh Help or Hinder Breast Cancer?

Since 2003, when evidence that hormone replacement therapy (HRT) might increase risk of cancer and cardiovascular disease in

the effects of three brands of black cohosh on five common anti-cancer agents. Their results show the herb had no effect on radiation or the drug



postmenopausal women, the herb black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) has gained in popularity.

Many women with breast cancer take black cohosh during radiation or chemotherapy because of menopausal symptoms brought on by the treatments—yet few discuss their use of complementary methods with their physicians. Because of this trend, a group of Yale University researchers is investigating whether the herbal medicine alters the cancer cell-killing action of medical treatments.

Their study, done in vitro using breast cancer cells from mice, tested

4-HC and that it actually increased the toxicity (effectiveness) of two cancer drugs (doxorubicin and docetaxel) on breast cancer cells. However, black cohosh decreased the effectiveness of the cisplatin drug.

"[In vitro] studies are interesting, but their clinical relevance to human experience is ambiguous at best," says Mark Blumenthal, executive director of the American Botanical Council in Austin, Texas. The Yale researchers agree that in vivo studies, or studies using live animals instead of petri dishes, are necessary,

and they're continuing work with live mice. In the meantime, they say black cohosh is potentially consequential to the outcome of conventional cancer therapy, and they state that breast cancer patients should be discouraged from taking the herb until its effects

are better defined.

This study may be preliminary, but it points out the need to inform your doctor if you are considering or currently using black cohosh during cancer treatment.

(For more information on black cohosh, see page 95.)

## Ginkgo: A Boost for MS Patients?

For centuries, *Ginkgo biloba* has been used to improve memory, and more recently the herb has proven beneficial for some Alzheimer's patients. Now there's hope that ginkgo might help improve attention and cognitive function in people with multiple sclerosis (MS).

A team of scientists tested the ability and speed of 39 MS patients to identify colors and words. They found the group that took ginkgo answered four seconds faster than the group that didn't. To put those results in context, the time difference is comparable to the difference in scores between healthy people in their 30s and those in their 50s.

While their study was preliminary, the researchers believe it helps support ginkgo use by MS patients.



Ginkgo biloba