

Concerns Regarding the Use of Dietary Supplements During Cancer Treatment

What Are Dietary Supplements?

Dietary supplements are products that contain things like vitamins, minerals, amino acids, herbs, or spices. Some examples include fish oil, turmeric, and St. John's Wort.

Lack of Rules and Studies

The government does not always check if dietary supplements are safe before they are sold. Unlike medicines, supplements do not need approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Because of this, there aren't many studies to show how safe or effective they are.

Health Claims

Sometimes, supplement labels or ads say they can prevent, treat, or cure diseases. These claims may not be true or proven.

USP Verification

The United States Pharmacopeia (USP) is an organization that checks if supplements use good-quality ingredients. Look for the "USP Verified Mark" on the label when choosing a supplement. Keep in mind, USP does not test if the supplement works or if it is safe.

Other Ways to Manage Cancer Symptoms

Instead of supplements, methods like acupuncture, yoga, and meditation might help you feel better during cancer treatment.

How to Use Supplements Safely

Always talk to your care team before starting any supplement. Once you get the okay, watch for any changes or side effects and tell your care team about them.

Common Dietary Supplements and Chemotherapy Drug Interactions

Note: This is not a full list of supplements.

Dietary Supplement	Potential Interactions with Cancer Treatment
Cannabidiol (CBD)	Increased risk of treatment toxicity
Ginseng	Increased risk of liver damage
Green tea/green tea extract	Decreased effectiveness of treatment
Maca	Decreased effectiveness of treatment
Mushroom (like Turkey Tail, Reishi, Maitake)	Increased risk of treatment toxicity. Can also decrease blood sugars in patients on medications for diabetes
St. John's Wort	Decreased effectiveness of treatment
Turmeric	Increased risk of treatment toxicity. Increased risk of bleeding
Vitamin A	Increased risk of treatment toxicity
Vitamin E	Increased risk of treatment toxicity
Vitamin D3	Increased risk of treatment toxicity
Vitamin C	Decreased effectiveness of treatment

Recommended Resource

National Institutes of Health Office of Dietary Supplements

- <https://ods.od.nih.gov>

Integrative Medicine at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

- <https://www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/diagnosis-treatment/symptom-management/integrative-medicine/herbs/search>

Notes

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Scan the QR code below to access this education sheet.



Important notice: The Association of Cancer Care Centers (ACCC), Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association (HOPA), Network for Collaborative Oncology Development & Advancement, Inc. (NCODA), and Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) have collaborated in gathering information for and developing this patient education guide. This guide represents a brief summary of the medication derived from information provided by the drug manufacturer and other resources.

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PES-299