



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Bloodroot

This information describes the common uses of Bloodroot, how it works, and its possible side effects.

Tell your healthcare providers about any dietary supplements you're taking, such as herbs, vitamins, minerals, and natural or home remedies. This will help them manage your care and keep you safe.

What is it?

Bloodroot has not been shown to treat cancer in humans.

Bloodroot is a perennial flowering herb native to eastern North America. It has been used for inflammation, cough, infections, as an antiplaque agent, and for cancer treatment. Sanguinarine, a compound present in bloodroot, was shown to have antimicrobial activity and to inhibit growth of new blood vessels. Use of bloodroot for skin lesions may result in serious harm. Other side effects of bloodroot include dizziness, vertigo, nausea, and vomiting.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- **Cancer**
Extracts of bloodroot have been studied in the laboratory and in animals for their anticancer effects. Traditional use of bloodroot for cancer is associated with serious adverse effects.
- **Cough**
There is not enough scientific evidence to support this use.
- **Inflammation**

This use is not backed by any studies.

- **Infection**

This use is not backed by any studies.

What are the side effects?

Topical: Skin irritation, burning and lesions in the mouth and throat.

Case Reports

Disfigurement, worsening lesions: With topical use of bloodroot salves to treat skin lesions, with some cases requiring hospitalization.

What else do I need to know?

Patient Warnings:

- Inappropriate use of bloodroot for cancer treatment can have severe adverse effects.
- Bloodroot should not be used in individuals with glaucoma.

Special Point:

Unapproved use of bloodroot paste externally as cancer treatment has been linked to disfigurement.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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