



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Feverfew

This information describes the common uses of Feverfew, 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?

Feverfew may benefit patients with migraine headaches.

One or more compounds found in feverfew are thought to prevent migraines. One such compound, parthenolide, was found to block the formation of inflammatory proteins. A feverfew extract was shown to reduce the number of migraine attacks and also decrease the mild headache that occurs before a migraine attack. Feverfew also showed anticancer effects in lab studies. Human studies are needed.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- **To prevent migraine headaches**
A few studies support this use. Post-feverfew withdrawal syndrome (consisting of muscle stiffness, anxiety, headaches, nausea, and vomiting) can occur after patients discontinue using this herb.
- **To treat arthritis**
Although compounds in feverfew show anti-inflammatory activity in the laboratory, a clinical trial did not support this use.

- **To relieve painful and heavy menstruation**
No scientific evidence supports this use.
- **To treat psoriasis**
Although compounds in feverfew show anti-inflammatory activity in the laboratory, human data are lacking.

What are the side effects?

- Stomach upset
- Red, itchy rash
- Mouth ulcerations when chewing fresh feverfew leaves
- Withdrawal symptoms (post-feverfew syndrome): May occur when patients stop taking feverfew after a long period of time. These include muscle stiffness, anxiety, moderate pain, headache, nausea, and vomiting.

What else do I need to know?

Do Not Take if:

You are allergic to ragweed, chrysanthemums, marigolds, or other members of the Compositae family.

You are taking Cytochrome P450 3A4 substrate drugs: Feverfew may increase the risk of side effects of these drugs. Clinical relevance is not known.

You are taking anticoagulant/antiplatelet drugs: Feverfew may increase the risk of bleeding. Clinical relevance is not known.

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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