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Cancer Center

[Make an Appointment](#)
[Back](#)

[Find a Physician](#)
[Search About MSK](#)
[Treatment](#)
[Learn About Cancer & Treatment](#)

ABOUT US

[Our mission, vision & core values](#)

[Leadership](#)

[History](#)

[Inclusion & belonging](#)

[Annual report](#)

[Give to MSK](#)

FOR THE MEDIA

What is it?

Magnetic therapies have no role in the diagnosis or treatment of cancer.

The term “magnet therapy” encompasses practices as simple as wearing magnetized bracelets, to using magnetized mattresses, to therapy that involves large magnetic field-generating machinery. People have different theories for why magnets might have an effect upon the body, but they generally claim that magnets act upon the body’s molecules, ions, or “energy field” to correct disruptions.

Thus far, there is no scientific support for this idea. Lab studies suggest static magnetic fields may modulate ion transport and related cell and neuronal activity, but the significance of these findings is unknown.

Patients have used magnetized products to treat pain associated with fibromyalgia, neuropathy, sciatica, and arthritis, but any benefits identified in studies are often similar to placebo. Some technologies like pulsed magnetic therapy and transcranial magnetic stimulation are being evaluated for potential in

reducing pain and depression, but these are different from products that are promoted in the market.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- To relieve pain from arthritis, muscle strains, post-polio syndrome, or other conditions

Studies failed to find any effect of magnets on pain. In the few trials that did, design flaws and possible placebo effects have called results into question.

Evidence is lacking to support use of magnet therapy:

- To reverse aging
- To treat cancer
- To improve fatigue
- To treat AIDS
- To stimulate the immune system
- To treat infections
- To reduce inflammation
- To treat insomnia
- To treat multiple sclerosis
- To improve strength, stamina
- To reduce stress
- To improve circulation
- To relieve nerve pain from conditions like diabetic neuropathy
- To prevent nausea, vomiting
- To improve wound healing

What are the side effects?

Pain, nausea, dizziness

Case Report: One patient using a magnetic mattress developed a blistering skin condition.

Regular use of low-intensity magnets is relatively safe. The World Health Organization reports that magnetic fields up to 2 Tesla (20,000 G) appear to be safe.

What else do I need to know?

Patient Warnings:

- Magnetic bracelets, necklaces, braces, or other devices should be removed from the body before getting an x-ray or MRI.
- Various state consumer protection agencies and the FDA have prosecuted marketers of magnetized devices and therapies, forcing them to stop making unsupported claims of health benefits.

Do Not Take if:

- You are pregnant.
- You have a cardiac pacemaker.
- You are getting an x-ray or MRI.

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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