

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

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Cancer Center

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FOR THE MEDIA

Several studies suggest nettle may help relieve symptoms of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) and osteoarthritis, but additional studies are needed.

Nettle is a perennial herbaceous flowering plant native to Asia, Europe, and North America. The root is widely used to treat BPH, allergies, arthritis, and inflammation. Nettle is usually combined with herbs such as [saw palmetto](#) and [pygeum](#) for the treatment of BPH.

Limited data from clinical studies suggest nettle may be helpful for arthritis and symptoms associated with benign prostatic syndrome. A combination of saw palmetto and nettle reduced nighttime urinary frequency, and was similar to some drugs in patients with lower urinary tract symptoms or BPH. Nettle might also help improve blood sugar control, but additional studies are needed. Although anticancer properties have been described in lab studies, clinical trials have yet to be conducted.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- To treat allergies
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.
- To treat arthritis
Clinical trials support the topical use of nettle for arthritis, but larger studies are needed to confirm these data.
- To treat benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH)
When combined with other herbs, nettle has shown positive results in clinical trials.
- To clear up chest congestion
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.
- To treat urinary tract disorders and difficult or painful urination
Nettle was shown to have beneficial effects in clinical studies.
- To calm muscle spasms
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.

What are the side effects?

Case reports

- With nettle tea intake, enlarged breasts in a man and nipple discharge in a woman.
- Hives in a breastfed infant following a mother's use of water boiled with stinging nettle to heal nipple cracks.
- Low blood sugar in a 78-year-old man after taking an herbal remedy containing nettle for BPH.
- Allergic rhinitis in 2 patients following exposure to nettle pollen.

What else do I need to know?

Do Not Take if:

- You are taking CYP450 substrate drugs: Animal studies suggest nettle may increase the risk of side effects of these drugs. Clinical relevance has yet to be determined.
- You are taking diuretics or blood pressure drugs: Animal studies suggest nettle may have additive effects. Clinical relevance has yet to be determined.

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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