



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Nigella sativa

This information describes the common uses of Nigella sativa, 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?

Black cumin seed has not been shown to treat cancer in humans.

Black cumin seed is used for cooking and in traditional medicine in India, Arabia, and Europe. Laboratory studies have shown that some components have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects. Small clinical suggest that black cumin seed may help to control high blood pressure, asthma, diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis.

## What are the potential uses and benefits?

- **To treat cancer**  
Animal studies have shown that black cumin seed can stop the growth of tumor cells and reduce the incidence of tumors. However, the effects in humans are unclear.
- **To protect the body from the adverse effect of radiation therapy**  
Topical application of an *N. sativa* gel decreased the severity of acute radiation dermatitis in breast cancer patients.
- **To decrease hypertension**

Small studies suggest benefits in lowering hypertension.

- **To decrease symptoms of asthma**

Studies show that black cumin seed may help to prevent asthmatic symptoms.

- **To treatment rheumatoid arthritis**

One study shows black cumin seed oil when taken orally, can help reduce symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis

- **To treat diabetes**

Small studies show benefits of black cumin seed in patients with diabetes.

## What are the side effects?

- Topical use of pure *N. sativa* oil caused allergic reactions.
- High doses of *Nigella sativa* caused liver and kidney damage in rats. Human data are lacking.

## What else do I need to know?

### Do Not Take if:

- You are taking cytochrome P450 substrate drugs: *Nigella sativa* may increase the risk of side effects of these drugs. 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](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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