



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Rooibos Tea

This information describes the common uses of Rooibos Tea, 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?

Although lab studies suggest rooibos tea is rich in antioxidants, studies in humans are very limited.

Lab studies suggest rooibos tea contains compounds that may prevent tumor growth and slow aging, but studies on this have not been conducted in humans. Some compounds isolated from rooibos leaves showed estrogenic activity. Therefore, patients with hormone-sensitive cancers should use caution before taking rooibos.

## What are the potential uses and benefits?

- **To treat skin conditions such as acne, eczema and wrinkles**  
Although rooibos is used to treat acne, eczema, and to prevent wrinkles, clinical evidence is lacking.
- **To prevent cancer**  
Some lab studies suggest rooibos may inhibit tumor growth, but others indicate that rooibos leaves have estrogenic activity. Human studies are needed.

# What are the side effects?

## Case report

**Liver toxicity and low platelet count:** In a 37-year-old patient about to undergo laparoscopic surgery. The cause was identified as long-term large amounts of rooibos daily. The procedure was switched to open surgery instead, to reduce the number of medications that would have to be metabolized by the liver.

**Elevated liver enzymes:** In a 42-year-old woman who drank large amounts of rooibos tea. Liver enzyme levels normalized within 1 week after stopping ingestion.

# What else do I need to know?

## Special Point:

Rooibos tea has antioxidant effects and may interfere with the action of certain chemotherapeutic agents.

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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