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FOR THE MEDIA

Wheat grass juice has not been shown effective in treating cancer or AIDS.

The juice extracted from the leaves of wheat grass is believed to prevent tooth decay, reduce high blood pressure and arthritis pain, and treat chronic fatigue syndrome and the common cold. It is also being promoted as a cure for cancer and AIDS. Proponents of wheat grass believe that the chlorophyll present in the leaves increases hemoglobin content in the blood because both molecules are similar in structure. It is also thought that the enzymes present in wheat grass help rid the body of toxins and carcinogens. However, none of these claims is backed by scientific studies.

Wheat grass is not known to cause any serious side effects. However, the juice can be contaminated with mold or bacteria as the leaves are grown for 7–10 days before the juice is extracted.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- AIDS

There is no scientific evidence that wheat grass prevents or treats AIDS.

- Chronic fatigue syndrome

No scientific evidence supports this use.

- Cancer treatment

There is no scientific evidence that wheat grass prevents or treats cancer.

- Strengthen immune system

A small study showed that wheat grass juice reduced fever and infection in patients receiving chemotherapy, but some patients also had nausea from ingesting wheat grass. Larger studies are needed.

- Reduce serum iron level

There is a small study showing wheat grass juice can act as a chelator and help reduce iron levels in patients with myelodysplastic syndrome.

- Ulcerative colitis

One small study has shown that wheat grass can relieve symptoms associated with chronic colon inflammation.

What are the side effects?

- Nausea, difficulties in swallowing the juice due to strong grass-like taste.
- Contamination by microbials is possible as wheat grass sprouts are grown for 7–10 days before the leaves are harvested.

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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