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Memorial Sloan Kettering  
Cancer Center

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## What is it?

Evidence is lacking to support the use of bovine cartilage to treat cancer or AIDS.

The use of cartilage products for treating cancer partially stems from the theory that since cartilage does not contain blood vessels, it must contain substances that would prevent the growth of blood vessels around tumors, a process known as angiogenesis. Catrix<sup>®</sup>, a bovine cartilage product, was used in a lab experiment against isolated samples of several cancer cell lines, with positive results at high doses. However, there is still little evidence that these effects can occur in the human body.

Because bovine cartilage supplements may contain the same specialized proteins that make up human cartilage, they might assist with the resynthesis of cartilage in people with osteoarthritis. It has also been suggested that bovine cartilage may enhance immune response, but this effect has not been shown in humans.

Bovine cartilage should not be confused with [shark cartilage](#).

## What are the potential uses and benefits?

- To reduce swelling from arthritis  
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.
- To prevent or treat cancer  
Small studies suggest that bovine cartilage may have anticancer effects, but larger studies have not been conducted.
- To treat AIDS  
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.
- To stimulate the immune system  
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.

## What are the side effects?

- Altered sense of taste
- Fatigue
- Upset stomach
- Fever
- Dizziness
- Swelling of the scrotum
- When injected, swelling and redness at the injection site

If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

Bovine Cartilage - Last updated on March 23, 2022

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