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Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

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Regularly drinking large amounts of mate tea can increase the risk for several types of cancers.

Mate contains compounds that are thought to have stimulant effects. Mate products have been used both for weight loss and cancer prevention.

Some lab studies suggest that mate can stop cancer cell growth, but it has not been shown to prevent or treat cancer in humans.

Drinking large amounts of mate regularly is linked to increased risks of developing prostate, lung, bladder, esophageal, or head and neck cancers.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- To lose weight
Small studies suggest mate may aid weight loss and curb appetite. However, heavy mate drinkers had higher bodyweight in a large population study.
- As a stimulant
Because of its caffeine content, mate is a known stimulant.
- To treat depression
No scientific evidence supports this use.
- To treat headaches
Caffeine may increase the effect of some drugs for headache.
- To relieve fatigue
Because of its caffeine content, mate is a known stimulant. However, the increased risk of certain cancers with long-term

use likely outweighs any benefits.

- To improve bone health

Small studies are mixed on whether mate may have any benefit on bone health.

- To promote urination

Mate contains caffeine, which can increase urination.

- To prevent cancer

Mate has not been shown to prevent or treat cancer in humans, and drinking large amounts regularly actually increases risks for several types of cancer.

What are the side effects?

Sleep disruption, palpitations, increased heart rate, stomach upset, restlessness, anxiety

Case reports

- Acute hepatitis: In a 21-year old American man, attributed to regular intake of mate tea once or twice daily for 4 months while visiting Argentina.
- Liver failure: In an adult woman, linked to chronic long-term use of mate.
- Withdrawal syndrome: In a newborn, caused by a mother's heavy intake of mate.

What else do I need to know?

Patient Warnings:

- High doses and prolonged use of mate tea are linked to increased risk of prostate, bladder, oral, esophageal, lung, and head and neck cancers.
- Heavy alcohol use and/or smoking combined with long-term mate use additionally increases the risk of cancer.
- Due to the caffeine content in mate, the following lab tests may be altered: Blood pressure, catecholamine levels, and bleeding time as measured by PT, PTT, or INR.

Do Not Take if:

- You are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- You are taking chemotherapy drugs: Mate may interfere with the actions of some drugs.
- You are taking heart or blood pressure medications: Mate may increase the effects of these drugs or cause unwanted side-effects.
- You are taking stimulant drugs (eg, Ritalin): Mate may increase the side-effects of these drugs.
- You are taking drugs for depression: Mate may increase the side-effects of these drugs.

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.

Mate - Last updated on July 7, 2022

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