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Cancer Center

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Noni showed anticancer effects in laboratory studies, but results from human studies are lacking.

The juice of the noni fruit has been traditionally used in Polynesian cultures as an anticancer agent. Scientists have isolated a fraction from noni juice that is rich in complex sugars. This fraction, alone and in conjunction with chemotherapy drugs, is able to increase the survival of laboratory mice that have been implanted with lung cancer. Scientists are unsure exactly how noni exerts this effect, but observe that it enhances certain aspects of the immune system. Furthermore, noni juice acts as an antioxidant and slows the transformation of normal cells to cancer cells in animal studies.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- To treat cancer

Laboratory studies in human cell lines and animals show that noni extracts have anticancer effects both when used alone and with chemotherapy drugs. However, there is no proof from clinical trials that the same effect occurs in humans, although a preliminary study is underway.

- To treat diabetes

Although some compounds in noni have antidiabetic properties in the lab, there is no clinical evidence to support this use. In addition, noni fruit is rich in complex sugars and therefore may worsen medical conditions associated with high blood sugar levels.

- To lower high blood pressure

No scientific evidence supports this use.

- As an immune stimulant

Laboratory studies show that noni juice enhances certain aspects of the immune system, but these results are not always transferable to the human body. There is no proof from clinical trials that these effects occur in humans.

- As an analgesic

One study in laboratory mice supports this use, but there is no proof from clinical trials that the same effect occurs in humans.

What are the side effects?

Case reports

- Kidney failure and dangerously high potassium levels in the blood resulting from noni juice use.
- Liver failure requiring transplants: In a 29-year-old man with prior liver inflammation following ingestion of 1.5 liters of noni juice over 3 weeks and a 56-year-old who regularly consumed noni juice and other products.
- Acute hepatitis: In a 62-year-old woman after consuming 2 liters of noni juice over 3 months. She recovered after stopping noni juice intake.
- Coumadin resistance: In a 41-year-old woman following concurrent intake of noni juice. Symptoms improved after treatment and discontinuation of noni juice.
- Reduced effectiveness of phenytoin: In a 49-year-old man with epilepsy who also ingested noni fruit juice daily. The effectiveness of phenytoin therapy was restored when he stopped his noni juice regimen.

However, a company-sponsored study showed that dose-related adverse effects are minimal in a noni product.

What else do I need to know?

Do Not Take if:

- You have renal insufficiency: Caution is needed because noni juice has high potassium content.
- You have diabetes: Noni juice has high sugar content.

- You are taking potassium-sparing diuretics, angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, or angiotensin receptor blockers. Noni can have additive effects.
- You are undergoing chemotherapy or radiation therapy: Noni has antioxidant effects and can interfere with treatment. Clinical relevance is not known.
- You are taking blood-thinning medications such as coumadin: Noni juice can reduce their effectiveness.
- You are taking antiepileptic drugs such as phenytoin: Noni juice may reduce its effectiveness.
- You are taking drugs to increase the motility of the stomach and intestine . Noni has similar activity and may affect the absorption of other drugs or increase their adverse effects. Clinical relevance is not known.
- You are taking UGT (Uridine 5'-diphospho-glucuronosyltransferase) substrate drugs: Noni 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 to search our virtual library.

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