

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

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Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

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Slippery elm may help relieve minor cough or sore throat, but there is no evidence it can treat infections, cancer, or other serious medical conditions.

Slippery elm is a tree native to North America. Its bark is used to treat gastrointestinal disorders, sore throat, cough, and skin ulcers. A formula containing slippery elm improved bowel habits and symptoms in patients with constipation-predominant irritable bowel syndrome.

Slippery elm is one of the components in [Essiac](#), an herbal formula used as an alternative cancer treatment.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- To treat coughs and bronchitis
The mucilage content in slippery elm is thought to relieve coughs and throat irritation, but human data are lacking.
- To treat cancer
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.
- To treat diarrhea
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.
- To treat irritable bowel syndrome
In a small study, a formula containing slippery elm improved bowel habits and symptoms in patients with IBS.
- Topically, to treat skin sores
The mucilage content in slippery elm is thought to have a soothing effect when applied topically, but human data are lacking.

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.

Slippery Elm - Last updated on June 30, 2022

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