



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Black Cohosh

This information describes the common uses of Black Cohosh, how it works, and its possible side effects.

Tell your healthcare providers about any dietary supplements you're taking, such as herbs, vitamins, minerals, and natural or home remedies. This will help them manage your care and keep you safe.

## What is it?

Black cohosh is a plant used in herbal medicine. The root of this plant is used to treat menstrual (monthly period) cramps and symptoms you may get during menopause (permanent end to your menstrual cycle), such as hot flashes.

You can take black cohosh supplements as tablets, capsules, or liquid extracts.

## What are the potential uses and benefits?

Black cohosh is used to:

- Treat menstrual cramps and pain
- Treat symptoms of menopause (permanent end of menstrual cycles) such as hot flashes
- Treat premenstrual (one or two weeks before period) symptoms such as bloating, mood swings, and irritability

Black cohosh also has other uses that haven't been studied by doctors to see if they work.

Talk with your healthcare provider before taking black cohosh supplements. Herbal supplements can interact with some medications and affect how they work. For more information, read the "What else do I need to know?" section of this resource.

## **What are the side effects?**

Side effects of using high amounts of black cohosh may include:

- Stomach upset
- Rash
- Dizziness
- Nausea (feeling like you're going to throw up)
- Vomiting (throwing up)

Although rare, a few cases of abnormal liver function and liver damage were also reported after taking black cohosh.

## **What else do I need to know?**

- Talk to your healthcare provider if you have a liver disorder. Black cohosh can worsen your condition.
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you have breast cancer, or if you're at risk of breast cancer. Whether black cohosh is safe or not is unclear.

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](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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