

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

[Make an Appointment](#)

[Back](#)

[Search About Herbs](#)

[Bloodroot Cancer Treatment](#)

[Refer a Patient](#)

ABOUT US

[Our mission, vision & core values](#)

[Leadership](#)

[History](#)

[Equality, diversity & inclusion](#)

[Annual report](#)

[Give to MSK](#)

Bloodroot has not been shown to treat cancer in humans.

Bloodroot is a perennial flowering herb native to eastern North America. It has been used for inflammation, cough, infections, as an antiplaque agent, and for cancer treatment. Sanguinarine, a compound present in bloodroot, was shown to have antimicrobial activity and to inhibit growth of new blood vessels. Use of bloodroot for skin lesions may result in serious harm. Other side effects of bloodroot include dizziness, vertigo, nausea, and vomiting.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- Cancer

Extracts of bloodroot have been studied in the laboratory and in animals for their anticancer effects. Traditional use of bloodroot for cancer is associated with serious adverse effects.

- Cough

There is not enough scientific evidence to support this use.

- Inflammation

This use is not backed by any studies.

- Infection

This use is not backed by any studies.

What are the side effects?

Topical: Skin irritation, burning and lesions in the mouth and throat.

Case Reports

Disfigurement, worsening lesions: With topical use of bloodroot salves to treat skin lesions, with some cases requiring hospitalization.

What else do I need to know?

Patient Warnings:

- Inappropriate use of bloodroot for cancer treatment can have severe adverse effects.
- Bloodroot should not be used in individuals with glaucoma.

Special Point:

Unapproved use of bloodroot paste externally as cancer treatment has been linked to disfigurement.

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 to search our virtual library.

Bloodroot - Last updated on May 12, 2023

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