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Memorial Sloan Kettering  
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There is no evidence to support use of burdock to treat cancer, infections, diabetes, or other medical conditions.

Certain components of burdock were shown to stop the growth of bacteria and fungi in lab studies. In animal experiments, the root extract lowered blood sugar, stimulated uterine contractions, induced an immune response, and protected against DNA mutations. A clinical study found that application of a cream containing burdock extract improved the appearance of wrinkled skin.

Some burdock teas are contaminated with alkaloids such as atropine from the belladonna plant, which can cause undesirable effects on the nervous system. Burdock is also one of the ingredients in the herbal tea [Essiac](#), which is promoted as an alternative cancer treatment.

## What are the potential uses and benefits?

- To treat cancer  
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.
- To lower blood sugar in diabetes  
A small study found that burdock reduced proteinuria and improved post-meal blood glucose levels and lipid metabolism in patients with diabetic nephropathy.
- To treat eczema and psoriasis  
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.
- To treat AIDS  
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.
- To treat microbial infections  
Although certain compounds in burdock can stop the growth of bacteria and fungi in lab studies, human data are lacking.

- To promote urination  
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.
- To reduce wrinkles  
One clinical study found that application of a cream containing burdock extract improved the appearance of wrinkled skin.  
More studies are needed to confirm this effect.

## What are the side effects?

- Allergic Contact Dermatitis
- Anaphylaxis characterized by redness over the entire body and dyspnea : In a 53-year-old man after one hour of consuming boiled burdock. His symptoms resolved following treatment.
- Acute liver injury: In a 36-year-old woman following intake of an herbal liver detox tea containing burdock. Symptoms abated after discontinuing the tea.

## What else do I need to know?

Do Not Take if:

- You are allergic to chrysanthemums: You may exhibit cross-sensitivity to burdock.
- You are pregnant: Burdock may stimulate the uterus and increase the risk of premature delivery.

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.

Burdock - Last updated on March 13, 2023



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