

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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Dong quai is an herb used in traditional Chinese medicine to treat menstrual (monthly period) cramps and menopausal (permanent end to your menstrual cycle) symptoms such as hot flashes.

You can take dong quai in supplemental form as a pill or liquid extract.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

Dong quai is used to:

- Treat premenstrual symptoms such as breast swelling and tenderness, mood swings, bloating and headache
- Treat menstrual cramps
- Treat symptoms of menopause (permanent end of menstrual cycles) such as hot flashes

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

Talk with your healthcare provider before taking dong quai 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 below.

What are the side effects?

Side effects of using dong quai may include:

- Photosensitivity (sensitivity to light)
- Photodermatitis (skin sensitivity to light, causing swelling, itching, or redness)
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling bloated
- Diarrhea (loose or watery bowel movements)
- Fever (temperature is 100.4° F (38° C) or higher)

What else do I need to know?

- Talk with your healthcare provider if you’re taking blood thinners such as warfarin (Coumadin®, Jantoven®). Dong quai may increase your risk of bleeding.
- Avoid dong quai if you’re pregnant. Dong quai can raise your risk of miscarriage (when a pregnancy ends on its own).
- Avoid dong quai if you’re breastfeeding.
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you have a hormone-sensitive cancer (like some breast or prostate cancers). Dong quai may worsen your condition.

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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