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Flaxseed comes from the flax plant. It has omega-3 fatty acids and fiber. Flaxseed is also a source of plant-based estrogens that have hormone-like effects in the body. They may help mild menopausal symptoms like hot flashes.

Flaxseed is in many different foods including crackers, waffles, and oatmeal. You can also get flaxseed whole or grounded to use in foods and drinks.

## What are the potential uses and benefits?

Flaxseed is used to:

- Prevent breast, prostate, and colon cancer
- Control blood sugar level in patients with type-2 diabetes
- Lower high cholesterol
- Manage symptoms of menopause (permanent end of menstrual cycles) such as hot flashes and night sweats
- Treat constipation (difficult or infrequent bowel movements)

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

It's generally safe to use flaxseed in food and drinks but talk with your healthcare providers before taking flaxseed supplements. Herbal supplements are stronger than the herbs you would use in cooking.

Supplements can also 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 flaxseed can include:

- Allergic reactions
- Increased bowel movements (poop)
- Constipation (having fewer bowel movements than usual)
- Having gas

## What else do I need to know?

- Talk to your doctor if you're going to have radiology procedure such as double contrast barium enema. Flaxseed may affect the results of your test.
- Talk with your doctor or Registered Dietitian if you have questions about adding flaxseed to your food or taking it as a supplement.

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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