

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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Glutamine is a chemical that your body makes to build protein. It's also found in foods such as wheat, corn, barley, peanuts, soybeans, egg whites, and milk.

You can also take glutamine supplements as a pill or powder (which can be made into a drink by dissolving it in water).

What are the potential uses and benefits?

Glutamine is used to:

- Treat weakness and loss of muscle mass caused by cancer treatment
- Treat neuropathy (numbness or tingling hands and feet) caused by chemotherapy
- Treat nausea (feeling like you're going to throw up), vomiting (throwing up), and diarrhea (loose, watery bowel movements) due to cancer treatments
- Help recovery after surgery by reducing your risk for infection

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

Glutamine that you get from food is safe. Talk with your healthcare provider before taking glutamine supplements because they have higher amounts of glutamine.

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 glutamine may include:

- Swelling
- Headache
- Fever
- Nausea (feeling like you're going to throw up)
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Infections

What else do I need to know?

Do not confuse glutamine with another chemical known as glutamate, which is important for normal brain function. Taking too much glutamate can cause seizures and kill brain cells.

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.

Glutamine - Last updated on September 8, 2023

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