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Although kudzu is used in traditional medicine, the evidence on whether it has benefit for any condition is unclear.

Kudzu is an herb used in Chinese medicine to treat alcoholism, heart disease, menopausal symptoms, diabetes, fever, the common cold, and neck or eye pain. It is sometimes used in combination with other herbs. Lab studies suggest that kudzu has anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective properties. Compounds called isoflavones are thought to be responsible for its potential effects.

Studies of kudzu in humans are limited and have mostly focused on whether it can reduce alcohol intake or menopausal symptoms. However, all of these studies enrolled small numbers of patients, and systematic reviews have determined that the evidence of benefit for any condition is unclear.

Because animal and human studies suggest some estrogenic effects, individuals with hormone-sensitive cancers and those taking tamoxifen should avoid kudzu.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- Menopausal symptoms
Small clinical studies suggest that kudzu is a phytoestrogen that may help reduce menopausal symptoms, but a systematic review did not find benefit.
- Alcohol abuse
Kudzu may reduce alcohol intake and withdrawal, but these studies enrolled only a small number of patients, and a systematic review did not find benefit.
- Diabetes
Kudzu is used in traditional medicine to treat diabetes, but evidence is lacking.
- Fever or common cold
Kudzu is used in traditional medicine for these purposes, but human studies are lacking.
- Neck or eye pain
Kudzu is used in traditional medicine for these purposes. Although animal studies suggest kudzu may reduce inflammation and pain in combination with other herbs, human studies are lacking.

What are the side effects?

Short-term effects on blood and liver tests occurred in a small study of postmenopausal women. A few other small studies reported no significant side effects.

Case reports

Kidney problems: In a middle-aged woman who consumed kudzu root juice to promote health and well-being for 10 days, and without evidence of any other causes. Symptoms of appetite loss, nausea, vomiting, and upper abdomen discomfort improved within several days after juice discontinuation and treatment.

Liver injury: In a 55-year-old man previously in good health who was hospitalized with mild fever, brown urine, and elevated liver enzymes. [Mistletoe](#) and kudzu extracts which he took to promote general health were suspected, although it is uncertain whether either, both, or an interaction between the two caused these adverse effects.

What else do I need to know?

Do Not Take if:

- You have hypersensitivity to kudzu.

- You have hormone-sensitive cancer: Kudzu has estrogenic activity.
- You are taking tamoxifen: Isoflavones in kudzu may interfere with the effects of tamoxifen which is used for estrogen-dependent breast cancer.
- You are taking methotrexate: In animal studies, taking kudzu at the same time reduced elimination of the drug methotrexate, causing increased levels of the drug. Clinical relevance has yet to be determined.
- You are taking antidiabetic medication: Animal studies suggest a key component in kudzu may increase the activity of these medications. Clinical relevance has yet to be determined.

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.

Kudzu - Last updated on February 4, 2022

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