

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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## ABOUT US

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## What is it?

Mistletoe is a plant that grows on different types of trees. For example, mistletoe can grow on apple, oak, or pine trees. The leaves, berries, and stem of the mistletoe plant are used in traditional medicine for a variety of issues.

Mistletoe extracts come in supplements as capsules, liquid extracts, teas, and powder. Mistletoe injections are used in scientific research.

## What are the potential uses and benefits?

Mistletoe is used:

- To treat hepatitis (swelling of the liver caused by the hepatitis C virus)
- To treat cancer
- To reduce side effects from cancer treatments

Mistletoe has other uses, but doctors haven't studied them to see if they work.

Talk with your healthcare provider before taking mistletoe 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 mistletoe injections include:

- Fever
- Chills
- High white blood cell counts
- Reaction at injection site (swelling, reddening of skin)
- Hypersensitivity (when your immune system overreacts to a substance)

## What else do I need to know?

- Talk with your healthcare provider if you're pregnant. Mistletoe may increase your risk of abortion.
- Do not eat raw mistletoe. It can cause vomiting, seizures, slow heart rate, and even death.

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](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

Mistletoe (European) - Last updated on June 19, 2023

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