

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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Pau d'arco has antibacterial and anticancer activities in laboratory studies, but these effects have not been shown in humans.

Pau d'arco is derived from the inner bark of several species of Tabebuia trees native to South America. Also known as taheebo or lapacho, it is used as a tea in traditional medicine for a wide range of ailments. In laboratory studies, compounds extracted from pau d'arco showed antibacterial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, antidepressant, and anticancer properties. However, data from human studies are limited. The safety and effectiveness of these compounds for treating cancer remain unclear.

## What are the potential uses and benefits?

- To treat cancer  
Small studies showed that a lapacho-based preparation may help prevent oral mucositis in patients with head and neck cancer undergoing radiotherapy. But lapachol, a compound present in Pau d'arco did not show clinical improvement in patients with chronic myelocytic leukemia.
- To treat infections  
Laboratory studies showed that pau d'arco has antibacterial and antifungal activities. It has not been tested in humans.

## What are the side effects?

- Nausea, vomiting, urine discoloration.
- Animal studies reported anemia, and reproductive and chromosomal abnormalities.

## What else do I need to know?

Do Not Take if:

- You are taking anticoagulants/antiplatelet drugs: Pau d'arco may increase the risk of bleeding with these drugs. Clinical relevance is not known.

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.

Pau D'arco - Last updated on April 13, 2023

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