

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

×



Memorial Sloan Kettering  
Cancer Center

[Make an Appointment](#)

[Back](#)

[Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center & Treatment](#)

[Search About Us](#)  
[Learn About Cancer & Treatment](#)

ABOUT US

[Our mission, vision & core values](#)

[Leadership](#)

[History](#)

[Inclusion & belonging](#)

[Annual report](#)

[Give to MSK](#)

## FOR THE MEDIA

### What is it?

*Scutellaria baicalensis* is used in traditional medicine to treat many medical conditions, but studies in humans are limited.

*S. baicalensis*, also known as Huang Qin or Chinese skullcap, is a root extract used in traditional medicine. It is often used in combination with other herbs.

Most studies have been done in the lab rather than in humans, and suggest anti-inflammatory and antioxidant activity. Some cancer cell lines undergo cell death when exposed to extracts of this herb, but some compounds in this herb may actually have opposite effects. Larger studies in humans that test safety and effectiveness are needed to determine under what circumstances *S. baicalensis* may be beneficial.

### What are the potential uses and benefits?

- To treat cancer

Extracts from this herb cause cell death in some cancer cell lines, but human data are lacking. *S. baicalensis* has not been studied in clinical trials as a single agent, but has been studied in combination with other herbs in formulations such as [PC-SPES](#) and [sho-saiko-to](#).

- To treat arthritis

An herbal supplement containing *S. baicalensis* appeared to reduce symptoms of osteoarthritis. However, it is not known if the herb would exert similar effects by itself, and some supplements containing it have been associated with liver toxicity.

- To treat hepatitis

The herbal formulation sho-saiko-to, which contains Huang Qin, has been studied for its possible liver-protectant effects.

## What are the side effects?

- Liver damage
- Lung inflammation due to bacterial or viral infection
- Elevated high-sensitivity C-reactive protein and high triglycerides

### Case Reports

Acute liver injury: In patients with arthritis, following consumption of a formula containing baicalin derived from *S. baicalensis* or Chinese skullcap.

## What else do I need to know?

### Do Not Take if:

- You are taking warfarin or other blood thinners : Lab studies suggest Chinese skullcap has similar effects and therefore, may increase bruising and bleeding risks. Clinical relevance has yet to be determined.
- You are taking statins: In healthy volunteers, Chinese skullcap decreased blood levels of drugs used to lower cholesterol.
- You are taking CYP450 substrate drugs: Lab studies suggest Chinese skullcap may increase the risk of side effects with these drugs. Clinical relevance has yet to be determined.

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.

© 2026 Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center