

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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FOR THE MEDIA

Slippery elm may help relieve minor cough or sore throat, but there is no evidence it can treat infections, cancer, or other serious medical conditions.

Slippery elm is a tree native to North America. Its bark is used to treat gastrointestinal disorders, sore throat, cough, and skin ulcers. A formula containing slippery elm improved bowel habits and symptoms in patients with constipation-predominant irritable bowel syndrome.

Slippery elm is one of the components in [Essiac](#) , an herbal formula used as an alternative cancer treatment.

## What are the potential uses and benefits?

- To treat coughs and bronchitis

The mucilage content in slippery elm is thought to relieve coughs and throat irritation, but human data are lacking.

- To treat cancer  
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.
- To treat diarrhea  
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.
- To treat irritable bowel syndrome  
In a small study, a formula containing slippery elm improved bowel habits and symptoms in patients with IBS.
- Topically, to treat skin sores  
The mucilage content in slippery elm is thought to have a soothing effect when applied topically, but human data are lacking.

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.

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