

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](#)

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

ABOUT US

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

[Leadership](#)

[History](#)

[Inclusion & belonging](#)

[Annual report](#)

[Give to MSK](#)

FOR THE MEDIA

What is it?

Sophora flavescens has shown anticancer effects in lab studies, but has not been studied for cancer prevention or treatment in humans.

Sophora flavescens or Ku Shen, which in Chinese means “bitter root,” is an herb used in Traditional medicine to treat a wide variety of symptoms, with purported effects on the liver, intestinal tract, and skin. Lab and animal studies have shown that some compounds can kill cancer cells and help fight certain viruses. However, human data are lacking.

Sophora flavescens may act like an estrogen in the body. Patients with hormone-sensitive cancer should avoid this product.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- Cancer treatment

Lab studies show anticancer activities through different mechanisms, but this use has not been proven by clinical trials.

- Antiviral

Limited evidence suggests that a compound from *Sophora flavescens* may be useful for hepatitis B and coxsackie B viruses, but more data are necessary to support this use.

- Skin disorders

Sophora flavescens is used to treat skin disorders in Traditional Medicine, but this use has not been proven in clinical trials.

What else do I need to know?

Do Not Take if:

- You are taking paclitaxel: In animal studies, *Sophora flavescens* flavonoids increased the effects of Taxol against certain tumors. Clinical relevance has yet to be determined.
- You are taking ampicillin/gentamicin: In the lab, one of the compounds in *Sophora flavescens* increased the activity of these antibiotics against oral bacteria. Clinical relevance has yet to be determined.
- You have a hormone-sensitive cancer: *Sophora flavescens* has estrogenic effects and may stimulate the proliferation of hormone-sensitive cancer cells.

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 to search our virtual library.

Sophora flavescens - Last updated on April 21, 2023

© 2025 Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center