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Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

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ABOUT US

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What is it?

Lab studies suggest *Sutherlandia* has anticancer properties, but this has not been shown in humans.

Sutherlandia frutescens is a shrub native to South Africa and along the coast of West Africa. It is used in traditional medicine to treat diabetes, chicken pox, external wounds, and cancer.

Lab studies suggest *Sutherlandia* can fight off viruses, bacteria, and fungi. It also appears to have anticancer properties. A few case reports suggest it may help decrease fatigue in cancer patients.

Sutherlandia has been proposed as an AIDS treatment in Africa. However in a trial of adults with HIV, patients taking *Sutherlandia* did not experience benefits, and had longer infection times. Additional studies are needed.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- Infections

Lab studies suggest antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal effects. However in a study of HIV patients, 2 cases of tuberculosis occurred in the Sutherlandia group, even though they were on preventive therapy for tuberculosis.

- Stomach and blood ailments

There is no scientific evidence to support this claim.

- Cancer

Sutherlandia showed anticancer effects in lab studies, but this has not been studied in humans.

- AIDS

Lab studies suggest antiviral properties. However in a study of HIV patients, those who took Sutherlandia did not experience benefits over placebo, but infection times were longer in a few patients.

What are the side effects?

Common: Diarrhea, dry mouth, dizziness.

Rare: Drinking or swallowing high doses of Sutherlandia may cause sweating and vomiting.

What else do I need to know?

Do Not Take if:

- You are taking isoniazid: In a safety trial of adults with HIV, a possible interaction between *S. frutescens* and isoniazid occurred, as 2 participants developed tuberculosis despite taking isoniazid.
- You are taking antiretrovirals (eg, atazanavir): Studies in human subjects suggest Sutherlandia may reduce the bioavailability of atazanavir. Also, many antiretrovirals are metabolized by CYP3A4.
- You are taking CYP3A4 substrate drugs: Lab studies suggest Sutherlandia may interact with these drugs and increase the risk of side effects. Clinical relevance has yet to be determined.
- You are taking P-gP substrate drugs: Lab studies suggest Sutherlandia may increase the risk of side effects of these drugs. Clinical relevance has yet to be determined.

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 to search our virtual library.

Sutherlandia frutescens - Last updated on July 12, 2022

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