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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 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.

Sutherlandia frutescens - Last updated on July 12, 2022

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