

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

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Cancer Center

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FOR THE MEDIA

What is it?

Tribulus has not been shown to treat or prevent cancer in humans.

Tribulus is an herb that grows in the subtropical regions of eastern and western Asia, southern Europe, and Africa. It is used in traditional medicine for chest pain, heart problems, dizziness, skin and eye disorders, to expel kidney stones, and as a diuretic and tonic. Tribulus is also marketed as a dietary supplement to improve sexual function and for body building due to the belief that it acts like testosterone in the body.

Laboratory and animal studies show that tribulus has medicinal effects against high blood pressure, diabetes, inflammation, infection, and cancer.

The use of tribulus has been linked to adverse effects in both animals and humans. Due to its potential hormonal activities, prostate cancer patients should consult their physicians before using tribulus.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- To treat cancer
Tribulus showed anticancer activities in lab studies. It has not been tested in humans as a cancer treatment.
- To lower blood pressure
Tribulus extract can relax blood vessels and may help to lower blood pressure.
- To enhance sexual function
Tribulus increases sperm production in animal models, but human studies of its effects on testosterone levels gave mixed results. The current evidence of its effects on erectile dysfunction are also not definitive. However, small studies suggest that it may help female sexual dysfunction. Large-scale studies are needed to confirm this.
- To improve muscle strength and muscle mass
A clinical study did not find any significant changes in muscle strength or mass with use of tribulus.
- To treat infections
Tribulus has antifungal activities in lab studies. Human data are lacking.
- To reduce pain
Tribulus extract reduced inflammation in lab studies, but human studies have not been done.
- To treat kidney stones
Tribulus can promote urination and stop calcium compounds that cause kidney stones from forming. However, these effects have not been studied in humans.

What are the side effects?

- Gastrointestinal irritation
- Case reports of severe liver, kidney, and neurological toxicities and Priapism

What else do I need to know?

Do Not Take if:

- You are taking diuretics: Tribulus may increase the effects of diuretic drugs. Clinical relevance is not known.
- You are taking antihypertensive drugs: Tribulus may have an additional blood pressure lowering effect. Clinical relevance is not known.
- You are taking antidiabetics: Tribulus may have additive blood sugar lowering effects. Clinical relevance is not known.
- You are taking clopidogrel: Tribulus may increase the risk of blood clots. Stent thrombosis has been

reported in patients following concurrent use of clopidogrel and an herbal formula containing tribulus.

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.

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