



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Arginine

This information describes the common uses of Arginine, how it works, and its possible side effects.

Tell your healthcare providers about any dietary supplements you're taking, such as herbs, vitamins, minerals, and natural or home remedies. This will help them manage your care and keep you safe.

## What is it?

Arginine is a chemical that your body makes. It helps your body build protein. Arginine is also found in foods, such as red meat, poultry (such as chicken and turkey), fish, dairy products, soy, and whole grains.

Arginine supplements come as tablets, capsules, and powders.

## What are the potential uses and benefits?

Arginine is used to:

- Treat angina (a type of chest pain that comes from reduced blood flow to the heart).
- Treat atherosclerosis (ath-uh-roh-skluh-roh-sis) (when your arteries get hard because of a buildup of fats and cholesterol).
- Lower high blood pressure.
- Heal wounds.
- Boost your immune system.
- Treat erectile dysfunction (ED, not being able to have or keep an erection).
- Treat migraines.

Arginine has other uses, but doctors have not studied them to see if they work.

Arginine that you get from food is safe. Talk with your healthcare provider before taking arginine supplements. They are stronger than the arginine you get from food. Some herbal supplements can affect how some medications work. For more information, read the “What else do I need to know?” section below.

## **What are the side effects?**

Side effects of using arginine supplements may include:

- Abdominal (belly) pain.
- Bloating.
- Nausea (feeling like you're going to throw up).
- Diarrhea (loose or watery bowel movements).

## **What else do I need to know?**

- Talk with your healthcare provider if you're taking medications to lower your blood pressure. Arginine supplements can also lower blood pressure so taking both at the same time may not be safe.
- Talk with your healthcare provider if you're taking protein powders. Some protein powders or products claiming to improve sports performance may contain arginine.

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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