



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Boswellia

This information describes the common uses of Boswellia, 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?

Boswellia is an herbal extract made from the bark of the boswellia tree. It is also known as frankincense. The resin (sticky substance found in trees and plants) is used to make an extract.

Boswellia resin is used in Ayurvedic (traditional Indian) medicine. You can take boswellia in different ways, including taking it orally (by mouth) in a capsule, pill, or tablet, or using it as an oil that you can put on your body.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

Boswellia is used to:

- Treat arthritis
- Help with asthma
- Treat colitis (inflammation of your colon)
- Help with inflammation (swelling and redness)
- Help reduce fluid cerebral edema (brain swelling) after radiotherapy, in patients with brain tumors
- Help reduce skin damage due to radiotherapy, in breast cancer patients

It's generally safe to use boswellia. However, talk with your healthcare providers before taking supplements. Herbal supplements can have higher amounts of boswellia compared to Ayurvedic formulas.

Supplements can also interact with some medications and affect how they work. For more information, read the “What else do I need to know?” section below.

What are the side effects?

Side effects of using boswellia may include:

- Allergic skin reactions

What else do I need to know?

- Talk to your doctor if you're taking blood thinners such as warfarin (Coumadin®). Boswellia may increase your risk of bleeding if you take it with blood thinners.

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.

Boswellia - Last updated on March 22, 2024

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