



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Budwig Diet

This information describes the common uses of Budwig Diet, 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?

The Budwig Diet has not been proven to treat or prevent cancer.

The Budwig Diet is an unproven anticancer treatment developed by the German biochemist Dr. Johanna Budwig in the 1950s. The diet consists of multiple daily servings of [flaxseed](#) oil and cottage cheese, as well as vegetables, fruits and juices. Processed foods, meats, most dairy products and sugar are prohibited. Budwig believed that the combination of cottage cheese and flaxseed oil, a food high in polyunsaturated fatty acids, would improve cellular functioning. Clinical studies have not been conducted to determine the effects of the Budwig diet.

While a diet consisting of large amounts of vegetables and fruits can be beneficial, diets restricted in meat and dairy products may reduce the intake of essential nutrients leading to nutritional deficiencies. Some variations of the diet encourage daily sunbathing to energize the fatty acids, and a coffee or oil enema. However, coffee enemas can result in electrolyte imbalance, infections, inflammation of the rectum and colon, and burns. High levels of sun exposure can result in an increased risk of sunburn and skin cancer.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- Cancer treatment and prevention
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.

What are the side effects?

- Nutrient deficiencies
- Sunbathing: Increases the risk of sunburn and skin cancer
- Flaxseed supplementation: Gastrointestinal discomfort such as gas, bloating, constipation, stomach ache and frequent bowel movements

What else do I need to know?

Do Not Take if:

- You have **bleeding disorders**: Animal studies have shown that flaxseed oil can increase the risk of bleeding.
- You are **pregnant**: Animal studies indicate that flaxseed may increase the risk of breast cancer in offspring.

Special Point:

- Eating a well-balanced diet rich in vegetables and fruit can be beneficial for health. Restricted diets such as the Budwig Diet can cause severe nutritional deficiencies.
- Delaying or avoiding standard medical treatments can have serious consequences.

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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