



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Bupleurum

This information describes the common uses of Bupleurum, 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?

Although bupleurum is used along with other herbs in traditional formulas to treat many conditions, studies in humans are lacking.

Bupleurum is an important herb used in traditional Chinese and Japanese medicine. It is frequently prescribed in combination with other herbs to treat colds, fever, digestive disorders, chronic liver diseases, and depression symptoms. Herbal formulas such as [Xiao Chai Hu Tang \(Sho-saiko-to\)](#) and [Xiao Yao San](#) contain bupleurum as a major ingredient.

Compounds called saikosaponins in bupleurum have been identified as responsible for the plant's medicinal activities. However, most studies on bupleurum have only been performed in the lab and human data are lacking. In addition, excess doses have been linked to a few cases of adverse effects.

# What are the potential uses and benefits?

**NOTE:** The following uses and descriptions of effectiveness apply to bupleurum only. Please see our monograph on [Sho-saiko-to](#) for information regarding the effectiveness of bupleurum in combination with other herbs.

- **To treat liver diseases, including hepatitis and cirrhosis of the liver**  
Although bupleurum is used in traditional Chinese medicine to treat liver diseases, human data are lacking.
- **To treat the common cold**  
Bupleurum may have antiviral activity, but clinical trials have not been conducted.
- **As a fever reducer**  
Although bupleurum is used in traditional Chinese medicine to reduce fever, there are no clinical data to back this claim.
- **To treat infections**  
Bupleurum may have antibacterial and antiviral activity, but human studies are lacking.
- **To reduce inflammation**  
Laboratory studies show that components of bupleurum interfere with the processes that cause inflammation. Human studies are needed.
- **To reduce depression symptoms**  
The evidence on *Bupleurum chinense* for depression is considered low quality.

## What are the side effects?

There have been a few case reports of liver damage with excess doses of bupleurum.

# What else do I need to know?

## Do Not Take if:

- You are taking drugs that are **substrates of CYP2C9**: Lab studies suggest bupleurum extracts may increase the risk of side effects of these drugs. Clinical relevance has yet to be determined. Patients should check with their treating physician.
- You are taking drugs that are **substrates of CYP2E1, 2D6, and 3A4**: Animal studies suggest that bupleurum can induce CYP2E1, CYP2D6 and CYP3A4 enzymes, but that herb-drug interactions are more likely at higher doses. Patients should check with their treating physician.

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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