



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Dehydroepiandrosterone

This information describes the common uses of Dehydroepiandrosterone, 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?

Dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) has not been shown effective in treating cancer.

DHEA is the most abundant hormone secreted by the adrenal glands. Clinical trials have shown that DHEA is effective in treating certain forms of depression and anxiety, lupus, sexual dysfunction, and Addison's disease. High blood levels of DHEA have been associated with increased risk of breast, ovarian cancers; DHEA

supplementation also resulted in flare-up of prostate cancer.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- **Addison's disease**

Studies have shown that DHEA is effective in treating Addison's disease.

- **Alzheimer's disease**

DHEA was not found to be beneficial for patients with Alzheimer's disease.

- **Cancer treatment**

Although studies have been done to determine DHEA's benefits for cancer patients, results are not conclusive.

- **Depression**

DHEA has been shown to reduce symptoms of manic depression.

- **Memory loss**

DHEA is not effective in treating memory loss.

- **Schizophrenia**

Studies have shown that DHEA benefits patients with schizophrenia.

- **Sexual performance**

DHEA has been shown to be effective for erectile dysfunction.

- **Systemic lupus erythematosus**

A few studies have shown that DHEA reduces the number of flare-ups but there was no reduction in overall disease activity.

What are the side effects?

- Increased acne
- Mania secondary to supplementation with high doses of DHEA

What else do I need to know?

Do Not Take if:

- You are taking tamoxifen: Because combination of DHEA and tamoxifen can lead to tamoxifen resistance.

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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