



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Epimedium

This information describes the common uses of Epimedium, 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?

Scientific evidence to support use of Epimedium is limited. More studies are needed to confirm its safety and efficacy.

Epimedium is a Chinese herb traditionally used to treat fatigue and sexual problems. Cancer patients may experience symptoms of sexual dysfunction such as painful intercourse, loss of libido, and ability to maintain arousal. These problems can be caused by many factors: stress, emotional distress, hormone changes, as well as various cancer treatments. Initial results suggest that a special blend of Epimedium may help prevent bone loss, but more studies are needed.

Epimedium may affect hormone levels, and should be avoided in patients with hormone-sensitive cancers or those with heart disease.

# What are the potential uses and benefits?

- **Fatigue**

Epimedium is traditionally used for fatigue but it has not been studied in clinical trials.

- **Osteoporosis**

A small randomized trial shows that Epimedium may help prevent bone loss in women who have had menopause for a long time.

- **Sexual dysfunction**

Epimedium is traditionally used in herbal formulas for sexual dysfunction. More studies are needed to verify such effects.

# What are the side effects?

- Sweating or feeling hot
- Rapid irregular heartbeat
- Increase in energy
- Mood changes

# What else do I need to know?

## Do Not Take if:

- You are sensitive to Epimedium.
- You have heart disease: Epimedium caused rapid irregular heartbeat and excitability in a patient with heart disease.
- You are taking drugs that are metabolized by the cytochrome P450 3A4 enzyme, or drugs that are aromatase inhibitors, like anastrozole, exemestane, and letrozole. Clinical relevance is not known.

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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