



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Evening Primrose Oil

This information describes the common uses of Evening Primrose Oil, 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?

Evening primrose is a plant that was used by Native Americans to heal wounds, bruises, and to soothe swollen skin. They would eat the leaves to help with sore throats and stomach issues.

Evening primrose oil supplements come as softgels, capsules, and liquids. It's also added to creams and ointments that you can put on your skin.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

Evening primrose oil is used to:

- Treat dermatitis (a type of eczema that makes your skin red, itchy, and swollen)
- Relieve pain caused by arthritis
- Treat breast pain
- Treat menstrual symptoms (symptoms caused by your monthly period) such as bloating and headaches

- Treat symptoms caused by menopause (permanent end of menstrual cycles) such as hot flashes
- Treat nerve damage caused by diabetes

Evening primrose oil also has other uses but they haven't been studied by doctors to see if they work.

Talk with your healthcare provider before taking evening primrose oil supplements. They can 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 evening primrose oil may include:

- Stomach pain
- Nausea (feeling like you're going to throw up)
- Headaches

What else do I need to know?

- Talk with your healthcare provider if you're taking blood thinners such as warfarin (Coumadin®, Jantoven®). Evening primrose oil may increase your risk of bleeding.
- Talk with your healthcare provider if you're taking medication to lower your blood pressure. Evening primrose oil can increase your blood pressure.
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you're taking the HIV medication lopinavir (Kaletra®). Evening primrose oil may affect how it works.
- Talk with your healthcare provider if you're pregnant or breastfeeding. It may increase the risk of complications.

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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