



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Lemongrass

This information describes the common uses of Lemongrass, 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.

How It Works

Lemongrass has antioxidant, anticancer, and antimicrobial properties, but it has not been studied in cancer patients.

There are over 140 species of lemongrass that are prevalent in many parts of Africa and Asia. It is widely used as a flavoring agent in Asian cuisine, in perfumery, and as an insect repellent. Lemongrass has also been traditionally used in folk medicine to treat anxiety, gastrointestinal problems, and to induce sleep. These effects have mostly been shown in animal studies. Lab studies showed that lemongrass can lower blood pressure, and has anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and anticancer properties. More research is needed to confirm such effects in humans.

Purported Uses

- **To treat or prevent cancer**

Although lab and animal studies showed that compounds in lemongrass can inhibit tumor growth or cause cancer cell death, human data are lacking.

- **To reduce inflammation**

Lab and animal studies showed favorable results, but human data are lacking.

- **To prevent infections**

Lab studies show that lemongrass has activity against various microorganisms. A clinical trial of AIDS patients with oral thrush indicated that lemongrass is an effective antifungal treatment. It may also be helpful in addition to mainstream therapies for chronic gum disease.

- **To reduce anxiety**

Clinical studies show that lemongrass tea does not lower anxiety or produce calming effects. More studies are needed to confirm this effect.

- **To improve sleep**

Animal studies have shown that lemongrass injections can produce sedative effects. However, drinking lemongrass tea does not have the same effect in humans.

- **To lower blood pressure**

Lab studies suggest that lemongrass can lower blood pressure by relaxing blood vessels. Human studies are needed.

Do Not Take If

- You are taking drugs that are **glutathione-S-transferase substrates**: Although no interactions have been reported, ingesting quantities of lemongrass over standard culinary use may increase the risk of side effects of these drugs.
- You are taking drugs that are **cytochrome P450 substrates**: Although no interactions have been reported, ingesting quantities of lemongrass over standard culinary use may increase the risk of side effects of these drugs.

Side Effects

Oral: Dizziness, drowsiness, dry mouth, excess urination, and increased appetite. In high doses, essential oil of lemongrass can damage liver and stomach mucous membranes.

Excessive intake of lemongrass tea may also affect kidney function.

Topical: Skin rash with the use of lemongrass essential oils

Case report

Delayed skin rash from both topical and oral use: In a 52-year-old massage therapist who also practiced aromatherapy with essential oils including lemongrass. Her rash also came back after she drank lemongrass tea.

Special Point

Citral and myrcene, compounds present in lemongrass, caused birth defects in rats. Therefore, it may be advisable to avoid it during pregnancy.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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