



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Slippery Elm

This information describes the common uses of Slippery Elm, 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?

Slippery elm may help relieve minor cough or sore throat, but there is no evidence it can treat infections, cancer, or other serious medical conditions.

Slippery elm is a tree native to North America. Its bark is used to treat gastrointestinal disorders, sore throat, cough, and skin ulcers. A formula containing slippery elm improved bowel habits and symptoms in patients with constipation-predominant irritable bowel syndrome.

Slippery elm is one of the components in [Essiac](#), an herbal

formula used as an alternative cancer treatment.

## **What are the potential uses and benefits?**

- **To treat coughs and bronchitis**

The mucilage content in slippery elm is thought to relieve coughs and throat irritation, but human data are lacking.

- **To treat cancer**

Evidence is lacking to support this claim.

- **To treat diarrhea**

Evidence is lacking to support this claim.

- **To treat irritable bowel syndrome**

In a small study, a formula containing slippery elm improved bowel habits and symptoms in patients with IBS.

- **Topically, to treat skin sores**

The mucilage content in slippery elm is thought to have a soothing effect when applied topically, but human data are lacking.

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.

---

Slippery Elm - Last updated on June 30, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center