



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Zeolite

This information describes the common uses of Zeolite, 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?

Zeolites have not been shown to treat cancer or other conditions in humans.

Zeolites are minerals that contain mainly aluminum and silicon compounds. They are used as drying agents, in detergents, and in water and air purifiers. Zeolites are also marketed as dietary supplements to treat cancer, diarrhea, autism, herpes, and hangover, and to balance pH and remove heavy metals in the body. However, there are no published human data to support these uses. Further, the FDA has issued several warning letters to distributors for

misleading claims about zeolite products. Erionite, a type of fibrous zeolite, can cause certain types of lung cancer when inhaled.

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

### **Anticancer therapy**

In vitro and animal studies suggest anticancer properties, but there are no clinical data to validate the use of zeolites for cancer prevention or treatment.

### **To treat diarrhea**

Although a drug containing zeolite seems to have been developed in Cuba to treat diarrhea, no published data are available.

### **To treat autism, herpes, hangover; to balance pH and remove heavy metals in the body**

No clinical data have been published to validate zeolites for these uses. In addition, the FDA has sent warning letters to various distributors of zeolite for misleading claims.

### **Immune function controller**

Data from animal studies show that zeolites can both stimulate and suppress the immune system.

# What are the side effects?

- Fibrosis (increase in fibrous tissue)
- Pneumoconiosis (respiratory disease)
- Mesothelioma (exposure to erionite, a type of airborne fibrous zeolite, is associated with high incidence of mesothelioma)

# What else do I need to know?

## Patient Warnings:

- Erionite, a type of natural fibrous zeolite, can cause cancer when inhaled. There is no evidence that other forms of zeolite cause cancer.
- Vulkansandkuren, a zeolite product marketed in Europe, was found to contain high levels of heavy metals including arsenic, lead, mercury, cadmium, nickel, copper, and chromium.
- Do not apply liquid zeolite directly into eyes or ears.

## Do Not Take if:

- You are taking any medications: Zeolites can bind with other substances and may neutralize stomach acid, causing your medications not to be properly absorbed or to be less effective.

- You are a transplant patient and/or taking drugs to suppress the immune system: Zeolites may cause rejection.
- You are using chemotherapy drugs: Zeolites have antioxidant effects and may interfere with the actions of chemo drugs.
- You are using antibiotics or drugs that contain iron: Zeolites may decrease their effectiveness.

### Special Point:

A company filed a US patent application for a type of man-made zeolite for use as a cancer drug. Data submitted were based on lab, plant, and animal studies. According to the patent, the substance must be injected directly into the tumor. Zeolites have not been studied as a cancer drug in human clinical trials and zeolite supplements have not been approved as safe or effective.

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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