

# Dietary Supplements and Myeloma: What You Need to Know



**SOME DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS** may help with symptoms or side effects, but they can also cause health risks – especially when combined with myeloma treatments. Talk to your care team before taking any supplements.

## What are dietary supplements?

Supplements are products made to support health and fill nutritional gaps. They come in many forms, including pills, gummies, powders, drinks, and bars.

Some people with myeloma may consider using supplements to help fight the disease or manage side effects. However, certain supplements can interact with myeloma treatments, potentially reducing their effectiveness or increasing side effects.

## Common types of supplements

- Vitamins
- Herbs
- Enzymes
- Minerals
- Amino acids
- Probiotics



## Supplements are not the same as prescription medicines

The U.S. FDA does **not** regulate supplements the way it does medicines:

- ⊗ Supplements are not required to be proven safe or show evidence that they work
- ⊗ Supplement labels are not required to list potential harmful effects

## Some myeloma patients take supplements to help manage specific symptoms or side effects

Keep in mind that supplements affect everyone differently, and what helps one person may not help another.

| Symptom                        | Supplement  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Bone health support            | Vitamin D   |
| Nausea                         | Peppermint or ginger  |
| Regular bowel movement support | Fiber   |
| Sleep support                  | Magnesium   |
| Pain, sleep, or appetite       | Cannabis - gummies, drops, creams, or edibles<br><i>(Do not smoke cannabis because it can increase the risk of lung infections)</i> |
| Fatigue                        | Ginseng   |
| Immune system support          | Zinc and curcumin   |
| Neuropathy symptoms            | Omega-3 fish oil, vitamin B, or cocoa butter  |



## Use caution if taking these supplements:

Some supplements can interact with myeloma treatments or other medicines you may be taking.

- **Vitamin C, grapeseed extract, or turmeric** can make certain cancer treatments less effective
- **Iron** should only be taken if your doctor confirms you need it
- **Green tea** interferes with the chemotherapy drug Velcade®
- **Garlic** supplements can increase the risk of bleeding
- **St. John's Wort** can interact with granisetron, a medicine used to prevent or treat nausea from chemotherapy or radiation. Taking them together can increase the risk of a serious, life-threatening condition called serotonin syndrome

This is not a comprehensive list of all supplements and interactions. Check in regularly with your care team if you are taking these or other supplements.

## Beware of “miracle cancer cures”

Supplements are promoted on TV or the internet as “alternative” cancer cures, but most of these claims are false. For example:

- **Vitamin B17** (apricot kernel therapy or laetrile) was once promoted as a powerful cancer treatment, but:
  - ⊗ It does not treat or cure cancer
  - ⊗ It can cause life-threatening cyanide poisoning
- **Sea moss/cucumber** has been promoted as having anti-cancer properties, but:
  - ⊗ There is no evidence to support this claim



## Know the risk of supplements

Even supplements that come from plants or are labeled “organic” or “natural” can interact with myeloma treatments or cause other health problems.

### Risks of supplements include:

- Damage to liver and kidneys
- Affecting how a treatment works or stopping it from working
- Altering lab test results
- Serious problems during surgery

**Always ask your doctor about the risks and benefits before taking any supplement.**

## Talk with your myeloma care team before taking any supplements

It's important to check with your care team before taking anything new.

- Bring the supplement bottle or packaging to your appointment so your care team can check the ingredients and dose
- Tell your care team about any dietary supplements you've currently taken or have taken in the past, including products without a prescription
- Your care team can help determine which supplements, if any, may be helpful for you



## Have more questions about supplements?

The MMRF Patient Navigation Center is available to answer your questions and provide additional support. Give us a call at 1-888-841-6673, Monday-Friday, 9AM-7PM ET, or visit us online at [themmr.org/support/patient-navigation-center/](https://themmr.org/support/patient-navigation-center/)