Saw Palmetto

url: https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/saw-palmetto  
  
  
Saw Palmetto  
Common Names: saw palmetto, American dwarf palm tree, cabbage palm  
  
Latin Names: Serenoa repens, Serenoa serrulata, Sabal serrulata  
  
Background  
Saw palmetto is a shrublike palm native to the southeastern United States. Historically, it was used for a variety of conditions, including disorders of the male and female reproductive organs and coughs due to various diseases.  
Currently, saw palmetto is promoted as a dietary supplement for urinary symptoms associated with an enlarged prostate gland (also called benign prostatic hyperplasia or BPH), as well as for chronic pelvic pain, migraine, hair loss, and other conditions.  
How Much Do We Know?  
Many studies have evaluated various preparations of saw palmetto for urinary tract symptoms associated with prostate enlargement in men.  
Much less is known about the use of saw palmetto for other health purposes.  
What Have We Learned?  
Two large, high-quality studies funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), each using a different preparation of saw palmetto, found it was no more effective than a placebo (an inactive substance) for BPH symptoms. Saw palmetto products are made in a variety of ways and differ in composition. Some studies of saw palmetto products other than those used in the NIH-sponsored studies have suggested that they might be helpful for BPH symptoms, but many of these studies were of low quality. No saw palmetto product has been conclusively shown to be effective for BPH.  
There isn t enough research on saw palmetto for conditions other than BPH to allow any conclusions to be reached.  
What Do We Know About Safety?  
Saw palmetto is well tolerated by most users. It may cause mild side effects, including digestive symptoms or headache.  
Saw palmetto does not appear to affect readings of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels, even when taken in higher-than-usual amounts. PSA is a protein produced by the prostate gland. PSA levels have been used to screen for prostate cancer and are also used to monitor patients who have been diagnosed with prostate cancer.  
Saw palmetto has not been shown to interact with medications.  
Information on the safety of saw palmetto comes primarily from studies of its use for BPH in men. Little is known about the safety or side effects of saw palmetto when used for other conditions, especially in women or children.  
Saw palmetto may be unsafe for use during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.  
Keep in Mind  
Urinary tract symptoms can have several causes, including conditions such as prostate cancer that need prompt treatment. If you re having problems with urination, it s important to tell your health care provider.  
Take charge of your health talk with your health care providers about any complementary health approaches you use. Together, you can make shared, well-informed decisions.  
For More Information  
Using Dietary Supplements Wisely  
Know the Science: How Medications and Supplements Can Interact  
Know the Science: How To Make Sense of a Scientific Journal Article  
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The NCCIH Clearinghouse provides information on NCCIH and complementary and integrative health approaches, including publications and searches of Federal databases of scientific and medical literature. The Clearinghouse does not provide medical advice, treatment recommendations, or referrals to practitioners.  
  
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Website: https://ods.od.nih.gov  
  
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