

MISTLETOE THERAPY - PATIENT GUIDE

Mistletoe Therapy for Cancer

A practical guide to European mistletoe preparations, treatment routes, supportive goals, research and safety at Sunridge Medical.



European preparations	Sunridge may use preparations including Helixor and Iscador, selected for the individual patient.
In-house treatment	Selected patients receive supervised IV mistletoe or subcutaneous treatment guidance from the care team.
Individualized planning	Cancer type, current therapy, laboratory findings, immune history and goals guide the plan.

This guide is educational. A Sunridge physician must determine whether mistletoe is appropriate and how it fits with the rest of a patient's oncology care.

MISTLETOE BASICS

What is mistletoe therapy?

Mistletoe therapy uses preparations made from *Viscum album*, the European mistletoe plant. Injectable extracts have a long history of use in European integrative oncology. The National Cancer Institute describes mistletoe as one of the most widely studied complementary therapies used by people with cancer.

Mistletoe products are not interchangeable. Their composition can vary according to the host tree, harvest, preparation method and manufacturer. Active compounds studied in the laboratory include mistletoe lectins, viscotoxins and polysaccharides.

Iscador	A widely used European preparation available in host-tree-specific formulations. Selection and dose escalation are individualized.
Helixor	A German mistletoe preparation used in subcutaneous and intravenous clinical settings. Helixor M was evaluated in a U.S. phase I IV study.
Host-tree formulations	Products may be prepared from mistletoe growing on apple, pine, oak, elm or other trees. The formulation is part of the clinical decision.

HOW TREATMENT IS GIVEN

Subcutaneous and intravenous routes

Subcutaneous injection The most commonly studied route. Small injections are usually given under the skin with a gradual, individualized dosing schedule. Patients may be taught how to follow an at-home plan when appropriate.	Intravenous infusion Selected patients may receive IV mistletoe in a supervised treatment setting. Sunridge uses preparation-specific dosing, nursing observation and clinical reassessment.
--	--

At Sunridge, mistletoe is not treated as an isolated protocol. The physician reviews the cancer diagnosis, treatment history, medications, laboratory findings, immune history, treatment tolerance and goals before recommending a preparation, route or schedule.

SUPPORTIVE GOALS

Why patients consider mistletoe

Quality of life Controlled studies and systematic reviews have reported improvements in quality-of-life measures in some cancer populations, although study quality varies.	Treatment tolerance Mistletoe has often been studied as an add-on during chemotherapy, radiation or surgery, with interest in fatigue, nausea, pain and other treatment-related symptoms.
Immune signaling Laboratory research describes effects on natural killer cells, cytokines and other pathways. Laboratory findings do not automatically predict clinical benefit.	Supportive integration Mistletoe may be one part of a broader plan that also considers nutrition, laboratory monitoring, conventional oncology and other physician-directed therapies.

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

What current evidence can and cannot tell us

2020 quality-of-life meta-analysis	A review of 30 controlled datasets reported a medium-sized improvement in global quality of life. The studies were heterogeneous, and many had risk-of-bias concerns.
2023 IV Helixor M phase I study	Twenty-one people with heavily pretreated advanced solid tumors received IV Helixor M. The study focused on safety and dosing; it reported five patients with stable disease, early quality-of-life improvement and no objective responses.
National Cancer Institute review	NCI summarizes clinical studies across several cancer types and notes both reported benefits and important study limitations. Mistletoe is not FDA-approved as a cancer treatment in the United States.

The evidence is most useful when interpreted in relation to a specific patient, preparation, route, cancer treatment and goal. Mistletoe should not be described as a guaranteed cure or as a replacement for necessary oncology care.

SAFETY AND NEXT STEPS

What patients should know before treatment

Expected reactions can include redness, warmth, swelling or itching at an injection site, along with fatigue, fever, chills, headache or nausea. Serious allergic reactions are uncommon but have been reported. Route, preparation and dose influence the safety profile.

Tell the medical team about autoimmune disease, immune-suppressing medication, checkpoint-inhibitor therapy, transplant history, allergies and every current cancer treatment. Do not start or change mistletoe treatment without qualified medical supervision.

Questions to ask during your consultation

- What supportive goal are we trying to address?
- Which preparation and host-tree formulation would be considered?
- Would subcutaneous or IV treatment be more appropriate?
- How will dosing be adjusted and reactions monitored?
- How does mistletoe fit with chemotherapy, radiation, immunotherapy or targeted therapy?
- Which laboratory tests or records are needed before treatment?

SELECTED SOURCES

1. National Cancer Institute. Mistletoe Extracts (PDQ), Patient and Health Professional versions. <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/cam/patient/mistletoe-pdq>
2. Paller CJ, et al. Phase I Trial of Intravenous Mistletoe Extract in Advanced Cancer. Cancer Research Communications. 2023;3(2):338-346. doi:10.1158/2767-9764.CRC-23-0002.
3. Loeff M, Walach H. Quality of life in cancer patients treated with mistletoe: a systematic review and meta-analysis. BMC Complement Med Ther. 2020;20:227. PMID:32690087.
4. Loeff M, Paepke D, Walach H. Quality of Life in Breast Cancer Patients Treated With Mistletoe Extracts: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. Integr Cancer Ther. 2023;22. PMID:37888846.
5. Kienle GS. Mistletoe Therapy and Cancer - an Overview. 2014. Supplied as background research; statements were checked against current sources before inclusion.

Speak with the Sunridge Patient Care Team

1-800-923-7878

14200 N Northsight Blvd, Suite 160, Scottsdale, Arizona 85260

SunridgeMedical.com