

## DMSO

Dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) is a compound with a wide range of effects. Most physicians are unaware of its value, in spite of over 3000 studies on over 500,000 patients (as of 1991!). DMSO binds with water and changes the structure of the water within the cell, which results in the healing of cellular damage. This also increases the permeability of the cell membrane, causing a flushing of toxins from the inside of the cell. It also acts as a free radical scavenger, is a diuretic (increased urine output), and is a muscle relaxant. It decreases pain and helps clear sinus congestion. DMSO also improves immune function, decreases allergic reactions, increases immunity to infections, prohibits cancer growth, and decreases the potency of toxins. DMSO crosses the blood-brain barrier, and is an excellent agent to help transport other substances throughout the body. DMSO acts as a vasodilator and an anti-inflammatory, and helps to prevent clot formation.

Given the basic mechanisms by which DMSO works, it is no surprise that it is useful in a broad range of problems. Conditions for which DMSO is used include cataracts, injuries of all types, scleroderma, lupus, myasthenia gravis, cancer, infections, helps soften scar tissue, burns, heart attacks, herpes, gum disease, corns, calluses, bunions, heel spurs, gout, pink eye, interstitial cystitis, radiation injury or protection, mental retardation, learning disabilities, pain conditions, diabetes, neuropathy, varicose veins, skin ulcers and wounds, glaucoma, macular degeneration, asthma, breast pain and mastitis, dementia, and soft tissue calcifications.

Perhaps the most exciting effect of DMSO is on stroke and brain injury. It increases oxygen supply to the brain, increases the release of energy by the cells, reverses cerebral edema (swelling of the brain), and decreases intracranial hypertension. Jack de la Torre, M.D., of the University of Miami School of Medicine, and Stanley W. Jacob, M.D., of the University of Oregon Medical School, have both demonstrated that IV administration of DMSO can prevent paralysis and reverse damage from stroke if given within the first 4 hours, and even better if within the first 90 minutes. It can still be of great use after this time frame, but sooner is definitely better. This use alone makes it one of the most valuable therapeutic agents available.

DMSO has very few side effects. The most common is the odor associated with DMSO, although that has improved with newer products. Irritation of the skin can occur if applied topically. This usually subsides after 2-3 days. Also, some people experience an increase in pain for the first couple of days of use, and it then improves pain. If given in large dose IV, it can rarely cause hemolysis (breakdown of red blood cells). Therefore, lab work is done to monitor this during therapy.

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