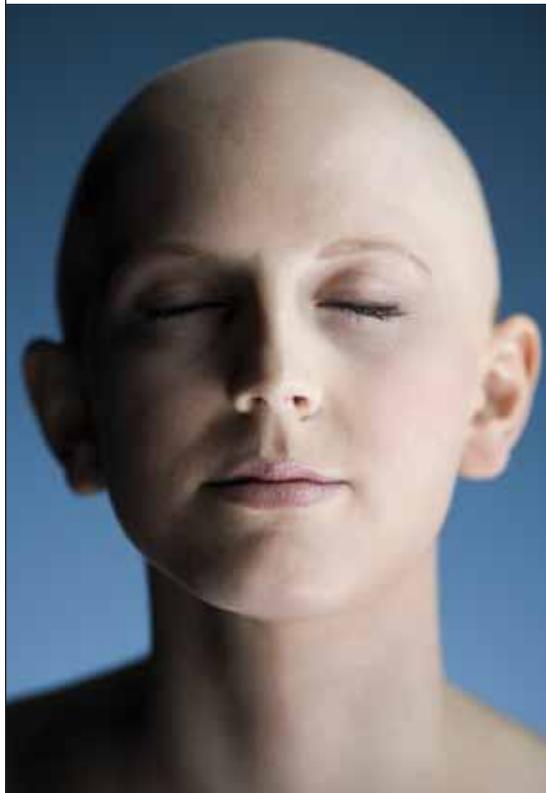




Canadian Cancer Society
Société canadienne du cancer

Complementary Therapies

A guide for people with cancer



Let's Make Cancer History
1 888 939-3333 | cancer.ca

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Introduction

Choosing whether or not to use a complementary therapy is a personal decision. The answer is not the same for everyone. If you're thinking about trying a complementary therapy during or after your conventional cancer care, be sure to make a safe and informed choice.

Making a safe and informed choice means:

- understanding the differences between conventional, complementary, integrative and alternative therapies
- finding out as much as you can about the complementary therapy you are thinking about, including the possible benefits and risks
- talking to your healthcare team about the complementary therapy and how it may interact with the care you are receiving

Complementary medicine includes many different types of therapies. The information in this booklet will help you to better understand complementary therapies. It will help answer your questions and give you the information you need to talk about the subject with your doctor and your family.

We can't describe every therapy in this booklet, but you will find some information on the more common therapies used by people living with cancer. There is some evidence that these therapies have helped.

Before using any complementary therapy, be sure to talk to your doctor or other members of your healthcare team about all the possible risks and benefits. Together, you can decide what's best for you.

What are complementary therapies?

Complementary therapies are used for many health problems and diseases. In this booklet, we focus only on cancer. To understand complementary therapies for cancer, you need to understand the wide range of cancer care they are part of.

Conventional cancer treatments

Conventional cancer treatments are those accepted and widely used today to treat people in the Canadian healthcare system. Healthcare professionals such as doctors, nurses and radiation therapists provide these treatments. Studies have shown they improve outcome and quality of life for people with cancer. Conventional cancer treatments, such as surgery, chemotherapy and radiation, focus on interfering with the cancer's ability to grow and spread.

Conventional treatments are approved by Health Canada after being tested to see whether they are safe and helpful.

Complementary therapies

A complementary therapy is any practice, therapy or product that is not considered conventional medicine for cancer care. Complementary therapies can be used for easing symptoms and improving your overall health and feeling of well-being.

Most Canadian medical schools now provide some training in these therapies. However, they are not typically used as part of standard patient care in most doctor's offices, hospitals or cancer centres.

Complementary therapies are used *together with* conventional cancer treatments. The purpose of a complementary therapy is not to treat the cancer itself. They help a person cope with cancer, its treatment or side effects, and to feel better. They take a *holistic* approach by focusing on the whole person.

For example, acupuncture to help manage nausea caused by chemotherapy is considered a complementary therapy.

Integrative cancer care

Integrative cancer care is a comprehensive approach to treating people. It offers the best of both complementary and conventional medicines. At cancer centres with integrative cancer care, complementary therapies are offered along with conventional cancer treatments by a team of health professionals from both fields.

An example of integrative cancer care is when a cancer centre offers massage therapy as a standard way to help patients manage stress and create a sense of well-being.

Alternative therapies

Alternative therapies are those used in place of conventional treatments. They are considered scientifically unproven therapies. You may have heard the words *complementary* and *alternative* used to mean the same thing, but they mean something very different. While complementary therapies are used *together with* conventional treatment, alternative therapies are used *instead of* conventional treatment.

For example, a complementary therapy can be choosing care from a naturopath doctor or using herbal medicine together with conventional cancer treatment. An alternative therapy is deciding not to use conventional care and *only* using these therapies for cancer.

This is a personal decision. But relying on alternative treatments alone for cancer may have serious health effects. If you decide to postpone or refuse conventional treatment in favour of an alternative treatment, stay in touch with your oncologist (cancer doctor). It's important for your doctor to keep track of how you're doing as you may decide to have conventional treatment later on.

You have the right to choose

Patients have the right to choose what treatment is right for them. This includes refusing all conventional, complementary and alternative options.

The Canadian Cancer Society believes that people with cancer must make treatment decisions with the best available information, including knowledge of what the treatment can do and what the side effects may be. Treatments that offer the best hope of success are backed up by good scientific evidence.



Why people use complementary therapies

Complementary therapies tend to focus on a person's health and healing rather than their disease. They aim to improve overall well-being and support the link between the mind, body and spirit in the healing process. Many complementary therapies build on our body's own ability to heal.

People with cancer often use complementary therapies to take part in a process of healing that goes beyond their cancer treatments. Choosing complementary therapies could give you a sense of control over your health and help you live a balanced life.

You may also want to:

- be more involved in your care
- restore a sense of hope
- strengthen your body's ability to heal
- ease the symptoms of cancer and the side effects of treatment, such as fatigue, nausea and pain
- help cope with the stress of cancer and its treatment
- make sure that you are exploring all options
- support your cancer care with less invasive therapies

There is also growing proof that positive lifestyle choices (for example, eating well and being active) are things you can do yourself to support your own healing and quality of life.



When considering complementary therapies

There are many things to think about as you decide whether to use complementary therapies. When you are trying to decide, first ask yourself some basic questions: *Why do I want to use this complementary therapy? What are my goals and expectations? Are they realistic?*

It's important to make an informed choice that feels right for you. To decide whether a complementary therapy is the right choice for you:

- Look for information about the specific therapy.
- Evaluate the therapy you are thinking about using.
- Talk to your doctor or another member of your healthcare team.
- Talk to a qualified complementary therapy practitioner.
- Think about the financial costs to you and your family.

Finding information

Do some research before you begin any complementary therapy. Unless you are receiving integrative cancer care, finding information will likely be up to you. Once you've done your research, then you can talk to your doctor in more detail about whether the therapy is right for you.

The Internet

Finding information on the Internet can be a quick way to learn about all sorts of health issues. The Internet offers millions of pages of information about therapies for cancer, but it isn't perfect. There are no regulations as to what can be posted on a site. It's often hard to know whether the information is accurate, complete or relevant to your situation.

If you don't have access to a computer or the Internet at home, many public libraries have computers you can use.

To help make sure that the information you get from the Internet is trustworthy, look for:

- Websites run by the government, hospitals and healthcare centres, academic and research facilities, or other credible not-for-profit groups. Look for the HONcode logo that shows they've been approved by the Health on the Net Foundation.
- Information that is up to date. Check the date when the information was posted or updated, and the dates of any scientific studies or reports.
- Information that is easy to read and explained clearly. The site should guide you easily through the information. There should be an option to send in questions and links to other sites that may be helpful.
- Information that is relevant to cancer and written for Canadians.

Claiming to cure cancer

Beware of sites that have many patient stories about cures or claim to have the cure for cancer, especially if the cure is for sale. A credible site will not make this claim. Look for references if the website claims to have done studies.

Resource centres and libraries

Many hospitals and treatment centres have libraries or resource centres that can help you find information that fits your needs. Ask whether there is a library or resource centre at your hospital or treatment centre.

A public library is a good place to find information on conventional cancer treatments and complementary therapies. In addition to books, magazines and journals, many libraries also have audio books, videos and DVDs you can borrow.

A librarian can help you if what you need isn't available at your local library.

If you need help searching

The listing of websites at the back of this booklet will give you a good starting point for reliable and thorough websites.

Information specialists at our *Cancer Information Service* can also help you find the information you need. To contact us:

- Call us toll-free at 1 888 939-3333 Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- E-mail us at info@cis.cancer.ca.
- Visit our website at cancer.ca.

Our services are free and confidential.

Evaluating the information

Conventional treatments are tested and proven to be helpful in studies of large numbers of people. It's important that complementary therapies be assessed the same way as conventional treatments, through careful scientific studies.

Evaluating information about therapies and scientific studies may be new to you. The following suggestions should help.

When looking at a study, think about the nature and the source of the information. Make sure:

- It comes from a reliable and trustworthy source. If a study is written by the maker or provider of the therapy, it may be biased.
- It has been evaluated using scientific studies and reviewed by experts in the field. Avoid claims that seem doubtful, but are made to look like scientific research by quoting "experts", citing statistics and using scientific language without listing the references to published scientific articles.
- It's written up or backed up in credible scientific journals (for example, those listed on the public online database PubMed). The scientific references should be listed and easy to find.
- The information doesn't rely on people's stories or testimonials.

- It includes information about the potential risks or side effects of the therapy.
- The study relates to your type of cancer.
- The study is done in humans and not only in animals.

Look at what the therapy claims to do. A claim to ease side effects or symptoms should be carefully examined. A claim to cure cancer with complementary or alternative therapies is always suspicious.

Talking to your doctor

Your doctor needs to know about any complementary therapies you are using or thinking about using. Many people don't say anything because they're afraid their doctors will disapprove. Others believe they are using something natural and non-toxic and therefore don't need to tell their doctors.

Talking to your doctor will help make sure that any complementary therapy you are using - or plan to use - is safe and will not get in the way of your conventional treatment.

Be prepared that your doctor might question the complementary therapy, or not really be interested in talking about it. Many doctors who are trained in conventional medicine have received very little training or information on complementary medicine. They might not be comfortable advising you on these therapies.

Tips for talking to your doctor

Since your doctor may not ask, here are some tips you might find helpful to start the conversation:

- Tell your doctor that you would like to talk about a complementary therapy and ask if you could arrange some time to do so.
- Avoid bringing stacks of paper to your appointment. Instead, focus on the therapies you are most interested in trying.
- Explain why you are interested in using a specific therapy.

- Bring in a list of specific questions you have about using the therapy. For example:
 - > When would it be safe for me to use this therapy with my conventional cancer treatment?
 - > What is a safe dose of this therapy?
 - > Are there any known risks or benefits related to using this therapy?
 - > Will you help me track both the benefits and side effects of the therapy?
 - > Do you have any suggestions about other complementary therapies that could be helpful for my type of cancer?

If your doctor can't answer your questions, ask for a referral to another healthcare professional, such as a pharmacist, dietitian or a nurse.



Making the right decision about complementary therapies

It's important to make the right decision for you. Once you have gathered all your information, there are still many things to think about. You will want to take into account the safety of the therapy, the costs, the time it takes and how it will work alongside your conventional cancer care.

Questions to ask yourself

Is it safe?

Ask yourself whether you feel you have enough information on the safety of the therapy you are thinking about. Because the evidence on many complementary therapies is limited, you may need to think about what level of evidence is good enough for you. If you don't feel you understand the safety of the therapy well enough, it's worth looking for more information.

What resources do I have available to me?

It's important to remember that complementary therapies aren't usually covered by provincial or other health plans. Researching which complementary therapy to use can also take a lot of time. Think about how much time and money you want to give to using a complementary therapy. You may want to ask family and friends to help out with research or support you in your choices.

How involved do I want to be?

Like any cancer treatment, complementary therapies can require a great deal of time and energy to use, as well as a change in lifestyle. Think about how much you would like to be involved in managing your complementary therapy.

How do my choices of therapies work together?

Many people use more than one type of complementary therapy. It's important to think about how these therapies work together and whether there are any side effects among these choices.

How will I know if it's helping me?

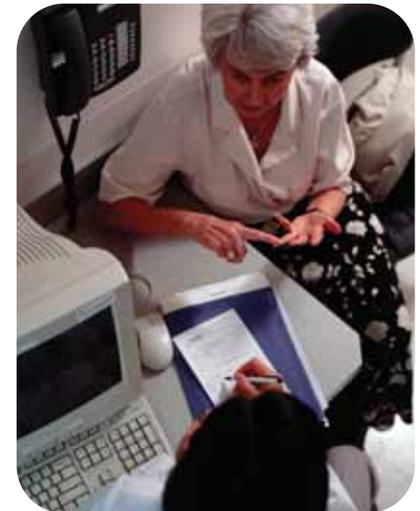
How you assess if a therapy is helping you will depend on the things that are important to you. Watch out for any physical side effects from your complementary therapies. Remember that benefits and risks can also be financial, social, emotional or spiritual. You may also want to think about how long you're willing to commit to trying a therapy before it begins to help you.

Choosing a practitioner

Although you may be able to treat yourself with some complementary therapies, others are provided by complementary healthcare practitioners. It's important to find a qualified practitioner that you trust.

To find a complementary healthcare practitioner you can:

- Talk to your doctor or another member of your healthcare team.
- Check the resources at your local cancer centre.
- Go to professional groups. Most complementary healthcare practitioners belong to local, provincial, territorial or national associations, and you will be able to find one that has the right training, skills and credentials.
- Ask your family and friends. Ask who they see, what's involved in the treatment, what the practitioner is like, how they have addressed their concerns, and so on.



Tips for choosing a complementary healthcare practitioner

When choosing a practitioner, make sure they know you have cancer. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Remember to

- Ask about the practitioner's training and qualifications. Have they treated other people with cancer? How many and what types of cancer?
- Find out if the clinic, facility or practitioner providing the therapy is linked with a recognized cancer centre, cancer agency, hospital or university.
- Ask if the practitioner is willing to work with your cancer doctor either by sharing patient files or in other ways.
- Make sure the practitioner gives you information in a way that you can easily understand. They should tell you what is involved and the risks and benefits of each therapy.
- Take the detailed description of the therapy and talk about it with your doctor.

Watch out for

- Practitioners or practices that make claims of being able to “cure” cancer or treat your cancer completely without risk.
- Salespeople in health food stores that are not trained practitioners. It's best to talk to your healthcare providers about the risks and benefits of any therapies a salesperson suggests.

You need to understand your complementary healthcare practitioner's view of conventional medicine. This will help you feel comfortable about keeping open lines of communication between everyone taking part in your healthcare.

Trust your instincts. If you're not comfortable with the person or with the information they are giving you, try someone else. As with all your healthcare providers, having a good relationship is very important.

Regulation of natural health products in Canada

Many complementary therapies make use of natural health products (NHPs). Natural health products include:

- vitamins and minerals
- herbs
- homeopathic medicines
- traditional medicines such as traditional Chinese medicines
- probiotics (healthy bacteria)
- other products like amino acids and essential fatty acids

Health Canada has rules that govern NHPs, but they do not cover NHPs bought in other countries or over the Internet. Products that are not regulated by Health Canada may not be safe because:

- The wrong ingredient may be used in a formula or the amount of ingredient may vary from batch to batch.
- They may have come in contact with harmful chemicals or other drugs.
- They may not be stored, packaged or labelled properly.

Some people assume that because a health product is labelled “natural”, it is safe. NHPs, like drugs, may have side effects that can be serious. The Canadian regulations help make sure that NHPs are well prepared, safe to use, helpful and come with instructions on how they should be used.

When buying an NHP, look for either an NPN (Natural Product Number) or DIN-HM (Drug Identification Number-Homeopathic Medicine). These numbers tell you the NHP is licensed by Health Canada. The label should also tell you what the product is for, the right dosage, the ingredients and any known negative reactions.

Health Canada also maintains a list of licensed natural health products and any notices of recall or reports of negative effects on its website.

If you choose to use NHPs:

- Understand why you are using a product, how long you'll be using it, and what the evidence is behind it.
- Report negative effects, including allergic reactions to products (rashes, hives, asthma symptoms, and so on) to Canada Vigilance, Health Canada's tracking program for negative drug reactions. Your healthcare provider can help you with this.
- Tell both your doctor and your complementary health practitioner about any new symptoms or changes to your health.

NHPs and cancer treatment

There is a wide range of different products considered to be NHPs. They can all interact with conventional cancer treatments in different ways.

The use of NHPs while you're being treated with conventional treatments is generally not recommended because of the risk for drug interactions. For this reason, many surgeons recommend that patients stop taking NHPs 2 to 3 weeks before surgery.

The effect of taking NHPs during your cancer treatment can't always be predicted. They could:

- lower the effectiveness of conventional treatment
- interact with your cancer treatment, causing toxic side effects
- affect test results used to track your disease

Remember to talk to your doctor and your complementary therapy practitioner to see if there is a safe way to use NHPs during conventional treatment.

Vitamin and mineral supplements

Taking a regular-strength multivitamin and mineral supplement for your age group every day is usually okay, but check with your doctor just to be sure.

Complementary therapies that may help people with cancer

In this section of the booklet, you'll find basic information on some of the more common complementary therapies that people with cancer use.

These therapies can be grouped in different ways. For example, acupuncture is part of a larger medical system known as traditional Chinese medicine while hypnosis is a type of mind-body therapy. To keep things simple, we have listed them alphabetically, rather than by what system they are part of.

These therapies do not treat cancer

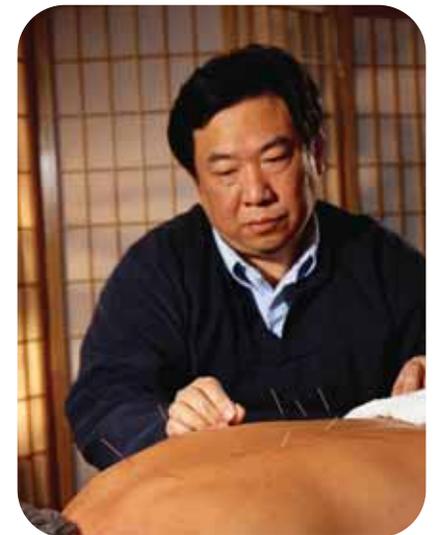
At this time, scientific evidence has not proven that any of these therapies is an effective treatment for cancer. They are included because there is some proof that they may be helpful as complementary therapies to conventional cancer treatment.

All of the information below is general – everyone's situation is different. Be sure to talk to your doctor before trying any complementary therapy.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is part of traditional Chinese medicine and has been used in China for more than 2000 years. It is one of the oldest medical procedures in the world that is still being practised.

Acupuncture is based on the belief that *qi* (pronounced *chee*), or vital energy, flows through your body along a network of channels called *meridians*. Qi is said to affect your spiritual, emotional, mental and physical health.



Studies have found that acupuncture may help treat nausea and vomiting caused by chemotherapy. You may also find it useful for easing some types of cancer-related pain, hot flashes, fatigue and anxiety.

The most common acupuncture method uses very thin, disposable, stainless steel needles inserted through your skin at certain points on your body. The needles are left in place for a time, often for several minutes. Sterile needles are especially important when you have cancer because chemotherapy and radiation therapy can weaken your immune system.

It's important to always have acupuncture done by a qualified practitioner. In Canada, the standards and training for acupuncture therapists vary by province and territory.

Acupuncture is generally thought to be safe. It may not be a good idea if you have low white blood cell or platelet counts or if you have lymphedema (swelling caused by an abnormal buildup of lymph fluid). Talk to your doctor before starting acupuncture treatments.

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is the practice of using essential oils, mostly from plants, to change your mood or to improve your health. Essential oils are usually very fragrant and highly concentrated. Their use goes back thousands of years by various cultures for bathing, cosmetic and medicinal purposes.

Aromatherapy is thought to work through scent receptors in your nose, which send messages to your brain and affect heart rate, blood pressure and breathing. Essential oils are



usually rubbed into your skin or absorbed from bath water. They can be inhaled through the air if the oil is put into steaming water, diffusers or humidifiers.

There are many different essential oils available. There is evidence they may help:

- lower stress, tension and anxiety
- promote a sense of calm or well-being
- lessen pain
- ease nausea
- promote sleep

For example, inhaled peppermint, ginger and cardamom oil may be used to ease nausea caused by chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

A few side effects have been reported with essential oils such as skin reactions and breathing problems, but generally they're safe. You should test the oil on a very small patch of skin to check for skin reactions before using it. Essential oils should not be swallowed because they can be poisonous.

Talk to your doctor before starting any aromatherapy treatment. Some oils should not be used for certain symptoms or health problems. It's also a good idea to check for local aromatherapy associations in your province or territory.

Art therapy

Also called *expressive arts therapy* or *creative arts therapy*

Art therapy is based on the idea that being creative can be healing and can help you express fear, anxiety or hidden emotions to lower stress. You and your caregivers may find art therapy a useful complementary therapy for dealing with emotions about cancer.

Many hospitals and cancer treatment centres now include art therapy as part of your care.

An art therapist will encourage you to express feelings or emotions such as fear, anger or isolation through painting, drawing, sculpting or other types of artwork. You will then talk about your feelings and emotions as they relate to your art.

Art therapy is thought to be safe when led by trained art therapists. The Canadian Art Therapy Association and a number of provincial associations set standards of practice for art therapists.

Biofeedback

Biofeedback is a type of mind-body therapy used to improve quality of life. It uses simple machines to teach you how to control certain body functions such as heart rate, blood pressure, temperature, sweating and muscle tension.

Using biofeedback can help your muscle strengthening exercises be more effective. Research has shown that biofeedback can also be helpful if you are trying to regain urinary and bowel function (*continence*) after cancer surgery and for easing some types of chronic pain.

Biofeedback is thought to be safe and non-invasive. However, a trained, qualified professional should teach you to use the machines, interpret changes and watch you closely while using this therapy.

Energy medicine

Also called *biofield therapy*

Energy medicine focuses on the energy fields that are said to flow within and around your body. They are based on the belief that changing these energy fields with gentle pressure or placing hands in or through your energy fields can affect healing and wellness.

Common forms of energy medicine include healing touch, Reiki and therapeutic touch. These therapies have mainly been used to ease symptoms of cancer or side effects of treatment such as anxiety, fatigue, pain, or nausea and vomiting.

Energy medicine is generally considered safe and few side effects have been reported. However, many practitioners of these therapies are not regulated in Canada.

Guided imagery

Also called *visualization*

Guided imagery is a type of mind-body therapy. You close your eyes and imagine scenes, sounds, smells or other sensations to help your body relax or to improve your health and well-being.

There are many different types of guided imagery. For people with cancer, a common method is to imagine your body fighting and beating the cancer.



Guided imagery may help you reduce some of the side effects of cancer treatment including nausea and vomiting, and lower anxiety and pain during medical procedures. Studies have also shown that guided imagery can ease tension, stress and fatigue.

Imagery techniques are thought to be safe when done by a trained mental health practitioner.

Hypnosis

Hypnosis is a state of relaxed and focused attention in which you are helped by positive suggestions from a therapist (*hypnotherapist*). Hypnosis is a medically accepted type of mind-body therapy and there are many different kinds.

During hypnosis, a hypnotherapist leads you into a deeply relaxed state, in which you feel separate, but still aware, of what's going on around you. Your therapist will then use suggestion to help you in different ways, such as to gain control over certain symptoms or change some behaviours.

Several studies have shown that hypnosis can help with anxiety, depression and mood in people with cancer. Hypnosis and relaxation may also be helpful in reducing chemotherapy-related nausea and vomiting and easing pain.

Most side effects of hypnosis don't last very long. Side effects may include fatigue, anxiety, confusion, fainting and dizziness. Serious reactions may include seizures, lasting psychological problems and bringing back memories of earlier trauma. It's important to have hypnosis done by a trained professional.

In Canada, the Association of Registered Clinical Hypnotherapists (ARCH) and the Canadian Federation of Clinical Hypnosis provide information on hypnosis and qualified practitioners.

Massage therapy

Also called *therapeutic massage*

Massage is the treatment of the muscles and soft tissues in your body. Massage therapy has been used to help ease muscle soreness as well as stiffness, pain (such as headaches and low back pain), anxiety and stress. It can also improve your circulation and promote relaxation and a sense of well-being.

A growing number of healthcare professionals recognize massage as a helpful complementary therapy. Generally, gentle massage can be adapted to meet the needs of people with cancer.

There is some evidence that massage can help people with cancer, both physically and emotionally. Research has shown that massage



can help you lower stress, anxiety, nausea, pain, fatigue and problems sleeping (*insomnia*).

There are many types of massage, such as reflexology, deep tissue massage and lymphatic massage, and they may be used alone or at the same time. Talk to your doctor about what type of massage is safe to use with your type of cancer. Deep tissue massage may not be safe if you have osteoporosis, a bleeding disorder, cancer that has spread to the bone (*bone metastasis*), or had bone problems during your cancer treatment.

It's important to have massage done by a registered massage therapist (RMT) who has experience working with people with cancer. Massage therapists are registered in some provinces and territories.

Meditation

Meditation is used to relax your body and calm your mind. It involves focusing your attention and letting go of thoughts that normally occupy your mind. You can use focused breathing, repeat certain words or phrases (a *mantra*) or focus on an object.

There are many different types and styles of meditation. Meditation may be done while sitting or lying down. There are also moving forms of meditation such as tai chi, qigong, walking meditation and aikido (a Japanese martial art). Meditation can be self-directed or guided by trained professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists or other health professionals.

Meditation may help you lower anxiety, stress, blood pressure, chronic pain and insomnia. It may help improve your quality of life and help you feel more in control.

Problems rarely occur with meditation, but some people have become disoriented or anxious. Talk to your doctor before starting any type of meditation that involves moving your joints and muscles, such as qigong or martial arts.

Music therapy

Music therapy is a creative outlet that promotes healing and enhances quality of life. It can help encourage emotional expression, promote social contact and ease your symptoms.

During music therapy, you listen to music or use musical instruments under the guidance of a music therapist.

There is evidence that music therapy can help you lower pain and relieve nausea and vomiting caused by chemotherapy. It may also help you ease stress and give you an overall sense of well-being. Some studies have found that music therapy can lower your heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rate.

Research shows music therapy can lower anxiety, mood problems and pain, and generally increase quality of life for people in palliative care. Palliative care means giving emotional support and relief from pain and other symptoms for people who are critically ill.

Music therapy is considered safe when led by an Accredited Music Therapist, or MTA. You can find a local MTA through the Canadian Association for Music Therapy.

Tai chi

Tai chi (pronounced *tie chee*) is an ancient Chinese martial art. It combines slow body movements, meditation and breathing exercises to improve your health and well-being.

When doing tai chi you move your body deliberately and gently, while breathing deeply and meditating. Many practitioners believe that tai chi helps energy, or qi, flow throughout the body.

Like most moderate exercise, tai chi can improve your stamina, muscle tone, agility and flexibility. The breathing exercises may help lower your stress. Early research has also shown that tai chi improves quality of life in breast cancer survivors.

Tai chi is thought to be safe and can be practised by people of all ages as the movements are gentle and put little stress on the body. If you suffer from muscle or bone problems, talk to your doctor before starting tai chi.

Yoga

Yoga is a form of exercise that uses a series of stretches and poses, breathing exercises and meditation. There are many different types of yoga. Iyengar and Hatha are two popular types.

Some studies have found that yoga is helpful for people with cancer who have problems with sleep. Other research has shown that yoga can be used to control blood pressure, heart rate, breathing, metabolism and body temperature. This can improve your physical fitness and well-being, lower your stress and help you feel more relaxed.

Talk to your doctor before starting any type of therapy that means moving your joints and muscles. Side effects from yoga are rare, but some yoga postures are hard to do. Overstretching joints and ligaments can also cause injuries. Yoga may not be a good idea if you have bone metastases and are at risk of fractures.

The Canadian Yoga Association sets standards for training students and teachers of yoga. Look for a yoga teacher with some training in working with people with cancer.



Putting it all together

It's important to find a path that feels right for you – the right therapy, the right level of commitment and the right practitioner.

Remember that your needs may change over time. Every once in a while, you might want to look at how the therapies you have chosen are working for you. Your doctor may be able to help you with this.

The evidence for complementary therapies is changing all the time and it's important to stay up to date on the latest information. The resources at the back of this booklet can help you.

Other resources about complementary therapies

Now that you have some basic information about complementary therapies, you may want to find out more detailed information about a particular type of therapy or therapies not covered in this booklet.

Canadian Cancer Society

We can help you understand cancer

Trained information specialists at our *Cancer Information Service* take the time to answer your questions over the telephone and search for the information you need about complementary therapies for cancer and treatment-related issues.

To contact the Canadian Cancer Society:

- Call us toll-free at **1 888 939-3333** Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- E-mail us at **info@cis.cancer.ca**.
- Visit our website at **cancer.ca**.
- Contact your local Canadian Cancer Society office.

Our services are free and confidential.



Suggested websites

BC Cancer Agency: Complementary and Alternative Cancer Therapies

www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/UnconventionalTherapies

General information on complementary and alternative therapies.

Health Canada: Natural Health Products

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/prodnatur/index-eng.php

search for > Natural Health Products Directorate

> Licensed Natural Health Products Database

Information on Canadian natural health products and regulations.

CAMline

www.camline.ca

Up-to-date, evidence-based reviews of natural health products and complementary and alternative therapies.

MedEffect Canada (Canada Vigilance Program)

www.healthcanada.gc.ca/medeffect

Information on Health Canada's tracking program for negative drug reactions.

The Integrative Medicine Service at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center

www.mskcc.org

search for > Integrative medicine

Information on herbs and other botanicals, drug interactions, side effects and over-the-counter product claims.

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine

www.nccam.nih.gov

Fact sheets on complementary and alternative therapies.

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What we do

The Canadian Cancer Society fights cancer by:

- doing everything we can to prevent cancer
- funding research to outsmart cancer
- empowering, informing and supporting Canadians living with cancer
- advocating for public policies to improve the health of Canadians
- rallying Canadians to get involved in the fight against cancer

Contact us for up-to-date information about cancer, our services or to make a donation.



Canadian Cancer Society
Société canadienne du cancer

Let's Make Cancer History

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This is general information developed by the Canadian Cancer Society.
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