

Tips for talking to your provider about CAM



Talking to your health care providers about your use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is important. Before each visit, think about what you would like to discuss and use the suggestions below to have more effective conversations with your providers about your CAM use.

Preparing for your visit:

- To maximize the time you have with your health care providers, prepare 1-2 questions before each visit regarding concerns you may have about CAM therapies.
- Sometimes it may be up to you to “start the conversation.” Some easy ways to bring up CAM use with your health care providers would be to say, “I’m looking for your thoughts on how I can include complementary and alternative therapies in my treatment plan” or “I’ve been thinking about ways to make myself feel better, so I’ve started a yoga routine and take a multivitamin daily.”
- You may want to bring along a limited amount of information from trusted sources if you feel it will help you to communicate your CAM interests with your health care providers.

During your visit:

- At each visit, remember to discuss the CAM therapies you are using.
- Inform your health care providers of any additional symptoms you may be experiencing as a result of your treatment, such as cancer-related fatigue.
- It may be helpful to restate your commitment to standard treatments if you think your health care providers are concerned about your use of complementary therapies.
- Ask your health care providers to direct you to additional resources about CAM therapies or providers.
- Don’t be afraid to ask for clarifications if something is unclear or you need additional information.
- If you can’t speak with your doctor about your CAM use, you can also talk to the nurse practitioner (NP), physician assistant (PA), nurse, or other medical staff at your doctor’s office.

After your visit:

- Future appointments may require more time to discuss your concerns with your health care providers — ask the receptionist or appointment coordinator about scheduling longer appointments.
- Remember, obtaining a second opinion is always an option. Second opinions can help strengthen your relationship with your existing doctor, clarify diagnoses, provide different options for treatment, and may even lead you to a doctor who is better suited to address your needs.