

Understanding cancer CAM



What is the difference between complementary and alternative medicine, complementary medicine, alternative medicine, and integrative medicine?

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is any medical system, practice, or product that is not thought of as standard medical care in Western countries.

Complementary medicine is used *along with* standard medical care.

Alternative medicine is used *in place of* standard medical care.

Integrative medicine is an approach that *combines treatments from standard medical care and CAM* for which there is some high-quality evidence of safety and effectiveness.

Other terms may be used to refer to CAM therapies such as “natural,” “holistic,” “home remedies,” or “Eastern medicine.”

Why do people use CAM therapies?

People use CAM therapies for a variety of reasons including:

- To help cope with the side effects of cancer treatments, such as nausea, pain, and fatigue
- To comfort themselves and ease the worries of cancer treatment and related stress
- To feel that they are doing something more to help with their own care
- To try to treat or cure their cancer

Should I be concerned about using nutritional supplements with my standard treatments?

Whenever starting a new routine, whether an exercise program or use of a multivitamin, you should always consult your doctor first. It is important to clearly communicate all medications you take, including dietary supplements, vitamins, and herbals to prevent potential drug interactions. Some supplements may interfere with the effectiveness of chemotherapy, radiation, or prescription medications.



What are some examples of CAM therapies?

Please note the following is not a complete list of CAM therapies. For more information on cancer CAM therapies, visit <http://cam.cancer.gov>. CAM therapies can also be organized into different categories such as mind-body therapies or exercise therapies. See the Glossary for a list of the different categories of CAM.

Acupuncture	Immunoaugmentative therapy	Probiotics
Antineoplastons	Intercessory prayer	Pulsed electromagnetic fields
Antioxidants	Intravenous Vitamin C	Qigong
Aromatherapy	Kelley/Gonzalez regimen	Reflexology
Art therapy	Laetrile	Reiki
Biofeedback	Low-dose naltrexone	Relaxation therapy
Chiropractic	Macrobiotic diet	Selenium
Coenzyme Q10	Magnet therapy	Soy
Cognitive-behavioral therapy	Meditation	Spiritual healing
Dietary Supplements	Melatonin	Support groups
Exercise	Milk Thistle	T'ai chi
Gerson therapy	Mistletoe	Tea
Herbs and herbal extracts	Multivitamin	Therapeutic massage
Hydrazine sulfate	Music therapy	Vegetarian Diet
Hypnosis	Omega-3 fatty acids	Vitamins
Imagery	Osteopathy	Yoga