

Feel Better During Breast Cancer Treatment

Learn how integrative and complementary therapies can help



In this booklet:

We will talk about integrative and complementary therapies that can help you feel better during treatment.

Some examples of these therapies are massage, acupuncture and meditation.

It is very important that you talk to your doctor before using any of these therapies. Your doctor can make sure they are a good fit with your current medical treatments, like surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, hormone therapy or targeted therapy.

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“My doctor knows there is more to treating cancer than just getting rid of it. I want ways to deal with the discomforts.”

Lillian, 68



What are integrative and complementary therapies?

These are therapies you can use along with or after your medical treatment that can help you feel better.

You may be using some of these therapies already. Here are a few examples:

- massage
- acupuncture
- herbs and vitamins
- prayer and meditation
- support groups
- exercise (like yoga, walking and tai chi)
- pet therapy
- chiropractic

How can these therapies help me?

They may help you:

- Lessen pain, nausea, fatigue and other problems.
- Learn how to handle stress, worry and feelings of sadness.
- Improve how well your body fights illness.
- Relax.
- Feel better faster.
- Feel more hopeful.
- Feel more in control.



“Acupuncture helps with my pain. It makes a big difference.”

Janet, 46

“Meditation relaxes me and helps me cope with my stress.”

Anna, 51



Are these therapies safe?

Integrative and complementary therapies can be helpful if they are used properly. Others may be harmful or cause problems with your medical treatment. For example, some herbs may interfere with surgery and cause bleeding. This is why it is important to talk with your doctor about which ones may be right for you.

Here are some things to think about:

- Just because something says it is “natural” does not mean it is safe.
- Use brands you can trust.
- Some therapies may make chemotherapy drugs and other treatments not work as well.
- Don’t believe everything you read or hear. Some claims about a therapy may not be true.

Talking with your doctor.

Talking with your doctor can help. Tell your doctor what therapy you are using or would like to try.

Tips:

Be open and share your thoughts. Talk with your doctor about your thoughts, questions and concerns.

Make a list. Write down the things you want to talk about.

Share the details. If you use herbs or vitamins, write down the names, what company makes them and how much you're taking. You could also bring them with you to show your doctor.

Keep a diary of what you are feeling. Take note of any problems (or relief from problems) that you may have.



“Yoga brought grace and dignity into my life. It helped me look at things in a new way.”

Barbara, 54



These questions can help you talk with your doctor:

- How can this therapy help?
- What problems could it cause?
- Is it safe? Is there research that shows it is safe?
- Will it work well with my medical treatment?
- Is this therapy covered by my health plan?
- How do I find someone who has a license to practice this therapy?

Learn more.

If you think you might want to try one of these therapies, it's important to learn all you can about it.

Here are a few tips:

- Talk with other people about what therapy has worked for them.
- Make sure the person who helps you with the therapy is certified and has proper training in their field. You can ask someone at your cancer center or doctor's office for referrals.
- Be sure the information you find on the Internet comes from a trusted source. Some information can be false and misleading. Refer to resources listed on the next page.



Resources

- **Susan G. Komen for the Cure®**
To speak with someone on our breast care helpline about breast cancer and these therapies.
Call toll-free 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)
Visit www.komen.org
- **National Institutes of Health, National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine**
Call toll-free 1-888-644-6226
Visit <http://nccam.nih.gov>
- **Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center – The Integrative Medicine Service**
Call 1-212-639-4700
Visit www.mskcc.org/integrativemedicine
- **The University of Texas – MD Anderson Cancer Center Complementary/Integrative Medicine Education Resources**
Call toll-free 1-877-632-6789
Visit www.mdanderson.org/cimer
- **Dana-Farber Cancer Institute – Zakim Center for Integrated Therapies**
Call toll-free 1-866-408-DFCI (3324)
Visit www.dana-farber.org/can/complementary-and-alternative-medicine/



1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)
www.komen.org

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