

Complementary therapies

There are many types of complementary therapy. The main groups are:

- mind-body therapies, such as relaxation and yoga
- massage and other touch-based therapies, such as shiatzu and reflexology
- acupuncture
- therapies using herbs and plants, such as aromatherapy
- therapies using supplements or diet.

Complementary therapies do not claim to treat or cure cancer. People use complementary therapies with, or as well as, cancer treatments. Doctors do not usually mind their patients using complementary therapies. But some therapies may not be suitable to use alongside certain cancer treatments.

People may use complementary therapies to improve their physical or emotional health. Or they may use them to reduce cancer symptoms or the side effects of cancer treatments. Some people see using complementary therapies as a positive way of looking after themselves. The therapy may help them cope with the stress of cancer and its treatments. Many therapies are relaxing and may improve your mood when you are not feeling your best.

Some complementary therapies are free through the NHS and some cancer charities. You can do some complementary therapies as part of a group. This can be a good way to meet other people with similar experiences.

Things to think about

- Before using a complementary therapy, talk to your healthcare team. Find out if it could have any harmful effects for you. If you are already using a complementary therapy, make sure you tell your cancer doctor before you start cancer treatment. This is especially important if you are taking herbs, pills or medicines.
- When choosing a complementary therapy, it can help to think about how it might benefit you. You could also think about how much it costs.
- Make sure you have all the information you need about the complementary therapy you are interested in. Talk about it with your cancer doctor or specialist nurse.
- Be careful when reading about complementary therapies on the internet. Some websites make claims that are not supported by evidence. Others may be selling products to make money.
- Be careful not to be misled by false promises. No trustworthy therapist would claim to be able to treat, prevent or cure cancer with complementary therapies.
- When you choose a complementary therapist, it is best to find someone who is on a statutory or accredited register.
- Ask to meet with a complementary therapist. They can explain how the therapy could help you. We have tips on our website about choosing a therapist and suggestions of what to ask them.
- Tell the complementary therapist that you have cancer. This could affect the treatment or advice they give you. Some therapists may not treat someone with cancer if they have not had training to help them work safely with you.

Local resources:

Resource	Contact details

National resources:

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British Holistic Medical Association (BHMA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> www.bhma.org
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> www.cnhc.org.uk Tel 0203 668 0406
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federation of Holistic Therapists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> www.fht.org.uk Tel 0238 062 4350

Further information

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/complementary-therapies

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on be.macmillan.org.uk

- **Cancer and complementary therapies**

More information and support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, or visit macmillan.org.uk

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

We produce information in a range of formats and languages. To order these visit macmillan.org.uk/otherformats or call our support line.