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Complementary Medicine Therapies

What you need to know



Getting started

Complementary therapies have become very popular in the United States, with more than 70 percent of the public using at least one form of them. By integrating one or some of these methods, patients can regain control of their own health.

No matter what type of complementary medicine you may choose to explore, it is important to learn about the therapy, its safety and effectiveness, the expertise and qualifications of the provider, and discuss these strategies with your doctor. Although some practices can be very beneficial, others can be harmful for some patients.

Resources

The Center for Integrative Medicine at Cleveland Clinic can help patients interested in learning more about integrating evidence-based complementary therapies into their current medical regimen. The Center is dedicated to practices that address lifestyle, emotions and spiritual as well as physical needs.

Services offered include consultations, acupuncture, massotherapy, yoga, Tai Chi, nutritional counseling, Reiki, mind/body coaching and a weight management program.

To make an appointment or for more information call: **216.986.HEAL**. For more information, visit us online at clevelandclinic.org.





What is Complementary Medicine?

Traditional medicine can treat many diseases, but important components of health care are often missing. For many, modern medicine does little to relieve symptoms such as anxiety/stress, pain, nausea, insomnia or fatigue.

Patients typically get little assistance with dietary and other lifestyle changes need to provide relief from and, in some cases, to actually reverse the effects of chronic diseases. This need has more and more people turning to complementary medicine.

Complementary and Alternative (also called CAM) therapies include any approach that is considered to be outside the mainstream of traditional healthcare. Many therapies are “holistic,” which means the whole person is considered for health and healing. This includes therapies that have physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects.

Complementary is different from alternative medicine. While complementary medicine is used with traditional medicine techniques, alternative medicine is used in place of traditional approaches. While some alternative therapies have helped patients feel better, others can be harmful. It is important to note that medical and surgical treatments are studied carefully and tested extensively prior to being used in large numbers of patients. Alternative techniques do not go through the same type of scrutiny, therefore there are questions about the legitimacy and safety of some of these techniques.

Examples of Complementary Medicine

Nutritional counseling: A registered dietitian is available to educate about the role diet plays in prevention and even treatment of most chronic health conditions. Counseling focuses on whole foods and plant-based diets.

Reiki: Reiki is a method of energy-based healing that involves the laying of hands to promote a deep sense of relaxation and healing. A Reiki master helps patients access their abilities to promote their own body, mind, and spiritual healing.

Acupuncture: Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese needle-based medical practice that is recognized by the World Health Organization and the NIH as an effective treatment for a wide variety of conditions ranging from toothaches to nausea/vomiting, menstrual cramps, allergies, and asthma.

Mind/body coaching: Patients are taught such techniques as guided imagery, meditation, progressive relaxation, and paced breathing – all practices shown to reduce stress, balance the immune response, manage acute and chronic pain, reduce chemotherapy side effects, promote sleep, reduce fear and anxiety, and increase a sense of calm, peace of mind, and positive energy.

Mindful cognitive therapy: This training adapts meditation practices to help patients enhance the natural healing capacity of their mind and body.

Massotherapy: Patients who experience pain, stress, anxiety, depression and other conditions can often be helped with massage therapy.

Yoga: Patients can take part in the health benefits from the stretching, breathing, and meditative exercises of yoga.

Tai Chi: Tai chi is gentle, slow motion exercise. Tai Chi has been shown to lower blood pressure, decrease joint and back pain, increase flexibility and balance, and boost energy and immunity.

Qigong: Qigong, also called “acupuncture without needles,” is an ancient energy-balancing program that may be helpful in long-term injury recovery and chronic illness management.

Benefits of Complementary Medicine

Research increasingly shows that our lifestyles, what we think and how we feel affect our health. For example, hostility, depression and loneliness have been found to contribute to heart disease. Stress can exacerbate infections, fibromyalgia and asthma.

High-fat diets can lead to coronary disease and cancer in our society. And obesity has been proven as a major factor in the development of type 2 diabetes, hypertension and cancer.

Traditional medicine helps diminish the results of our lifestyles, but complementary medicine can reduce symptoms and lead to better management.

Complementary medicine benefits include:

- Supporting the body's natural ability to heal itself
- Reducing stress and promoting a state of relaxation
- Decreasing pain
- Reducing sleep problems
- Preventing many chronic diseases
- Enhancing immune system function
- Decreasing infections
- Lowering blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels
- Improving bowel function
- Lessening anxiety or depression related to being ill

Here's to Your Good Health

You can enjoy tremendous health benefits when you make small but significant changes in the way you eat. A great first step is to take advantage of the Healthy Appetite program, designed by Cleveland Clinic and Heinen's. For nutrition tips and meal ideas, please visit www.heinens.com/healthyappetite. Here's to your good health!