

Alternative Medicine for Cancer



How to use this workbook



If you are a patient... this workbook is designed to help you talk with your health care provider(s) about your complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) use during and after your cancer care. This workbook can be used in its entirety or as individual sheets to best meet your needs and interests.

If you are a health care provider... this workbook contains several documents which can be used to help your patients keep track of their medicines, CAM use, and complementary providers. It is intended to help you talk with your patients about their goals, beliefs, symptom management, and use of CAM therapies during and after cancer care.

This workbook contains several worksheets:

- **Why I want to use CAM** encourages you to think about why you are considering using CAM therapies and what specific symptoms you wish to relieve.
- **My monthly CAM use** helps you to keep track of your CAM use over a month to get a sense of how the CAM therapies you've tried have helped manage your cancer-related symptoms.
- **My complete medicine list** allows you to organize in one place **all** of the medicines you are taking, including prescription medicines, over-the-counter drugs, herbs, dietary supplements, and vitamins.
- **Members of my health care team** provides a place to organize the contact information for everyone involved in your care, including conventional and complementary therapy providers.

Other resources included in this workbook are:

- **Understanding cancer CAM**
- **Tips for talking with your provider about CAM use**
- **Glossary**
- **Cancer CAM resources**



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

Why I want to use CAM



Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is any medical system, practice, or product that is not thought of as standard medical care in Western countries. Before trying any CAM therapies, it is important that you speak with your health care providers. Try to answer the following questions before your next office visit. At your visit, remember to discuss your thoughts with members of your health care team.

I am interested in using CAM because:



The side effects I would like to relieve by using CAM are:





The specific CAM therapies I might like to try are:



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.

My complete medicine list



Tell your oncologist, specialists, and primary care physician about **all** of the medicines you are taking, including prescriptions and over the counter (OTC) medicines as well as vitamins, herbs, and dietary supplements. This is important because things that seem safe, such as certain supplements or pills, may interfere with your cancer treatment.

Prescription Medicines

Name of medicine	Dose and time(s) taken (ex. 200 mg daily at 10AM)	Prescribed by	Reason for medicine	Side effects and notes

Over the Counter (OTC) Medicines

Name of OTC medicine	Dose and time(s) taken (ex. 1 pill as needed)	Recommended by	Reason for OTC medicine	Side effects and notes

Herbs, Vitamins, and Dietary Supplements

Name of herb, vitamin, or supplement	Dose and time(s) taken (ex. 1000 IU at bedtime)	Recommended by	Reason for supplement	Side effects and notes

Members of my health care team



This worksheet is intended to help you keep track of **all** of your health care providers. Examples of conventional therapy providers include your primary care physician, medical oncologist, nurse practitioner, and pharmacist. Examples of complementary or integrative medicine providers include your massage therapist, nutritionist, acupuncturist, or chiropractor. Sharing the contact information among all of your health care team members may help establish coordinated care.

Conventional Therapy Health Care Providers:

Provider Name:	Provider Name:
Specialty:	Specialty:
Phone Number:	Phone Number:
Location:	Location:
Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)	Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)
Provider Name:	Provider Name:
Specialty:	Specialty:
Phone Number:	Phone Number:
Location:	Location:
Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)	Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)
Provider Name:	Provider Name:
Specialty:	Specialty:
Phone Number:	Phone Number:
Location:	Location:
Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)	Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)

Complementary/Integrative Therapy Health Care Providers:

Provider Name:	Provider Name:
Specialty:	Specialty:
Phone Number:	Phone Number:
Location:	Location:
Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)	Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)
Provider Name:	Provider Name:
Specialty:	Specialty:
Phone Number:	Phone Number:
Location:	Location:
Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)	Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)

Conventional Therapy Health Care Providers:

Provider Name:	Provider Name:
Specialty:	Specialty:
Phone Number:	Phone Number:
Location:	Location:
Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)	Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)
Provider Name:	Provider Name:
Specialty:	Specialty:
Phone Number:	Phone Number:
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Provider Name:	Provider Name:
Specialty:	Specialty:
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Location:	Location:
Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)	Referred by: (health care provider, friend, family, etc.)



Medicine-related terminology

Conventional medicine: A system in which medical doctors and other health care professionals (such as nurses, pharmacists, and therapists) treat symptoms and diseases using drugs, radiation, or surgery. Also called allopathic medicine, mainstream medicine, orthodox medicine, Western medicine, and standard treatment.

Dietary supplement: A product that is added to the diet. A dietary supplement is taken by mouth, and usually contains one or more dietary ingredients. Also called nutritional supplements.

- Examples: vitamins, minerals, herbs, amino acids, enzymes

Dose: The amount of medicine taken, or radiation given, at one time.

- Examples: 800 mg of ibuprofen, 200 cGy (centigray) of radiation

Health care team: All of the individuals involved in the management of your care. Team members include, but are not limited to, doctors, nurses, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and social workers, as well as acupuncturists, massage therapists, nutritionists, and chiropractors.

Herbal supplement: A product made from a plant that is thought to be useful in promoting health. Herbal supplements are taken by mouth and are considered a type of dietary supplement.

- Examples: ginger, milk thistle, turmeric

Over the counter (OTC) medicine: A medicine that can be bought without a prescription (doctor's order). Also called nonprescription medicine.

- Examples: aspirin, acetaminophen

Prescription: A doctor's order for medicine or another intervention.

Side effect: A problem that occurs when treatment affects healthy tissues or organs.

- Examples: fatigue, pain, nausea, vomiting, decreased blood cell counts, hair loss, mouth sores

Standard medical care: Treatment that experts agree is appropriate, accepted, and widely used. Also called best practice, standard of care, and standard therapy.

Vitamin: A nutrient that the body needs in small amounts to function and stay healthy. Sources of vitamins are plant and animal food products and dietary supplements.

- Examples: vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E



CAM Categories:

Alternative Medical Systems: Systems built upon complete systems of theory and practice. Often, these systems have evolved apart from and earlier than the conventional medical approach used in the United States.

- Examples: Homeopathy, Naturopathy, Ayurveda

Complex Natural Products: An assortment of plant samples (botanicals), extracts of crude natural substances, and extracts from marine organisms used for healing and treatment of disease.

- Examples: Herbs and herbal extracts

Energy Therapies: Therapies that involve the use of energy fields. Two types of energy therapies are biofield therapies and electromagnetic-based therapies.

Biofield therapy: A type of energy therapy that is intended to affect energy fields that purportedly surround and penetrate the human body. The existence of such fields has not yet been scientifically proven.

- Example: Reiki

Electromagnetic-based therapy: A type of energy therapy that involves the unconventional use of electromagnetic fields.

- Example: Magnet therapy

Exercise Therapies: Health-enhancing systems of exercise and movement.

- Example: Yoga

Manipulative and Body-Based Methods: Methods based on manipulation and/or movement of one or more parts of the body.

- Example: Massage

Mind-Body Interventions: A variety of techniques designed to enhance the mind's capacity to affect bodily functions and symptoms.

- Example: Meditation

Nutritional Therapeutics: An assortment of nutrients, non-nutrient bioactive food components, and specific foods or diets used as cancer prevention or treatment strategies.

- Example: Vegetarian Diet

Pharmacological and Biologic Treatments: Treatments that include the off-label use of certain prescription drugs, hormones, complex natural products, vaccines, and other biological interventions not yet accepted in mainstream medicine.

- Example: Melatonin

Spiritual Therapies: Therapies that focus on deep, often religious, beliefs and feelings, including a person's sense of peace, purpose, connection to others, and beliefs about the meaning of life.

- Example: Intercessory praying



Conducting internet searches about cancer CAM therapies results in a wealth of information and can often be overwhelming. The websites included on this page provide credible, reliable, and frequently updated information you can discuss with your health care providers. Remember to talk with your health care providers before beginning any new therapies or treatments.

National Cancer Institute (NCI)

Thinking About Complementary and Alternative Medicine: A Guide for People with Cancer

- A free NCI booklet for patients and caregivers that provides guidance on how to choose CAM therapies and practitioners, questions to ask your doctor, and additional CAM resources.
- To order a copy, visit: <https://pubs.cancer.gov/ncipl/detail.aspx?prodid=P042> or call 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237) and mention the book title or inventory number (P042).

Office of Cancer Complementary and Alternative Medicine (OCCAM)

- Oversees NCI's projects in CAM.
 - Provides patients with information on specific cancer CAM therapies, tips for talking to health care providers, and frequently asked CAM questions.
- Visit: <http://cam.cancer.gov>

Fact Sheets

- Provide frequently updated information on a variety of cancer topics including prevention and treatment.
- Visit: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet>

Cancer Information Service (CIS)

- Trained cancer communication professionals provide real-time answers to questions about cancer.
 - Provides help finding NCI information and printed materials on the Internet.
 - Gives referrals to clinical trials and certain cancer-related services.
- Visit: <http://www.cancer.gov/aboutnci/cis>
Chat online: https://livehelp.cancer.gov/app/chat/chat_launch
Toll-free: 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

NCI Clinical Trials

- Search cancer CAM clinical trials.
Visit: <http://www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/search/results?protocolsearchid=6791991>
- Search all clinical trials.
Visit: <http://www.clinicaltrials.gov>

NCI Publications Locator

- An online system for finding, viewing, and ordering NCI reports, publications, and other materials.
Visit: <https://pubs.cancer.gov/ncipl/home.aspx?js=1>

NCI-Designated Cancer Centers

- Universities and cancer research centers, located throughout the United States that conduct NCI-supported research and turn promising laboratory discoveries into new treatments for cancer patients.
Visit: http://cancercenters.cancer.gov/cancer_centers/index.html

Physician Data Query (PDQ®) Information Summaries

- Regularly updated information on cancer types, screening, treatment, and CAM.
Visit: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq>

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

- Promotes, conducts, and supports scientific research to improve the health of the Nation.
Visit: <http://www.nih.gov/>

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM)

- NIH center that supports CAM research and provides information to health providers and the public about CAM for all disease types.
Visit: <http://nccam.nih.gov>
Toll-free: 1-888-644-6226 / TTY: 1-866-464-3615

National Library of Medicine

- **Medline Plus** provides access to reliable health information, including articles, organizations, directories, and answers to health questions.
Visit: <http://medlineplus.gov>
- **PubMed** is a free and easy-to-use search tool for finding scientific articles.
Visit: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed>
 - Searches on PubMed can also be narrowed to CAM-specific research.
Visit: <http://nccam.nih.gov/research/camonpubmed>

Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS)

- NIH office that provides information about dietary supplements, including background information and ongoing scientific research.
Visit: <http://ods.od.nih.gov/>
- Access *My Dietary Supplements*, a free mobile application (app) to track dietary and nutritional supplement use.
Visit: <http://ods.od.nih.gov/HealthInformation/mobile/aboutmyds.aspx>

Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

- Oversees the safety of drugs and medical devices.
Visit: <http://www.fda.gov>
Toll-free: 1-888-INFO-FDA (1-888-463-6332)



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