

A practical guide to living
with and after cancer

CANCER AND COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES

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About this booklet

This booklet is about complementary therapies. There are many different types of therapy. This booklet focuses on the most common ones used by some people with cancer. We hope it gives you a balanced view of what's available and what's involved if you decide to try one.

We've included some photographs of common complementary therapies so you can see what's involved. We've also added some quotes from people who have tried complementary therapies. We hope you find these helpful. But remember, everyone's experience is different, so it's useful to get some information before starting a complementary therapy.

You might be advised not to have complementary therapies. This is because it isn't safe to have them if you have a certain type of cancer or if you're having certain treatments. Your doctor will be able to give you more information about this.



We have highlighted safety issues for you to remember in green boxes throughout this booklet.

This booklet does not take the place of advice from your doctor, who knows your full medical history. It's very important to tell your cancer doctor if you're thinking of having, or are having, any complementary or alternative therapy.

Always let your complementary or alternative therapist know that you have cancer.

If you'd like to discuss this information, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, Monday–Friday, 9am–8pm. If you're hard of hearing, you can use textphone 0808 808 0121, or Text Relay. For non-English speakers, interpreters are available. Alternatively, visit **macmillan.org.uk**

Turn to pages 77–87 for some useful addresses and websites, and page 88 to write down any questions for your doctor, nurse or therapist.

If you find this booklet helpful, you could pass it on to your family and friends. They may also want information to help them support you.

Conventional treatments, complementary therapies and alternative therapies

We use these terms throughout this booklet, so it's helpful to explain what they mean.

Conventional medical treatments

These are the medical treatments doctors use to treat people with cancer. Surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, hormonal and targeted therapies are all conventional medical treatments.

Many cancers are cured with these treatments. Even when treatments are unable to cure cancer, they often help people live for longer and/or reduce their symptoms.

Conventional medical treatments for cancer are scientifically tested and researched. This means we know how safe and effective they are and what their possible side effects are. This is called **evidence-based medicine**.

Complementary and alternative therapies

These are sometimes used by people with cancer. They are often grouped together, but there are important differences between them depending on how and why they're used. A therapy can be complementary if it's used in one way and alternative if used in another.

Complementary therapies (see pages 9–53)

These are generally used alongside, or in addition to, conventional medical treatments. Complementary therapists don't claim that they can treat or cure cancer. People generally use complementary therapies to boost their physical or emotional health. Sometimes they may be used to relieve symptoms or the side effects of conventional medical treatments.

Sometimes, complementary therapy is combined with conventional medicine. This is called **integrated** or **integrative medicine**.

Some complementary therapies have been tested in the same way as conventional medical treatments. This is to see how effective and safe they are, and to see if they have side effects.

Alternative therapies (see pages 54–63)

Alternative therapies are used instead of conventional medical treatments.

Some alternative therapies claim to treat or even to cure cancer. But no alternative therapies have been proven to cure cancer or slow its growth.

Alternative therapies don't go through the same evidence-based testing as conventional medical treatments. Some may even be harmful.

Using an alternative therapy instead of conventional cancer treatment could reduce the chances of curing someone's cancer or of living for longer with it.


A modern treatment room with a blue mosaic wall, a white treatment table, and a wooden vanity with shelves. The room is brightly lit with a blue floor and a white chair. The vanity has a wooden countertop and a mirror. The shelves are filled with various items, including a stack of white towels, a mirror, and some bottles. The wall is covered in a blue and white mosaic pattern. The floor is a solid blue color. A white treatment table is in the foreground, and a white chair is next to it. The vanity is on the right side of the room, and the shelves are above it. The lighting is warm and focused on the vanity area.

**'It was a set time to think,
for time out, just to sit and
perhaps just chat a little bit
and then just reflect. That was
probably the biggest benefit.'**

Nadia

Complementary therapies and cancer

There are many reasons why people choose to use complementary therapies. Some people find they help them cope with the stresses of cancer and its treatments. Many therapies are relaxing, and may lift your spirits when you aren't feeling your best.



'It was important for me to feel I was actively doing something to make myself as prepared as I could be for the treatment.'

John

Doctors and nurses have researched some complementary therapies in trials. Some results showed that certain therapies helped to relieve particular cancer symptoms or treatment side effects. Other results showed no effect on symptoms or side effects. But the therapies researched were found to be safe and most people who tried them found them very supportive.

Complementary therapists usually work with the person as a whole. They don't just work with the part of the body where the cancer is. This is called a **holistic approach**. Health and social care professionals, such as doctors, nurses and physiotherapists, also aim to take a holistic approach.



Some people say the relationship they develop with their complementary therapist is an added benefit. Having someone who listens to you may help you cope with difficult feelings.

'After I was diagnosed with cancer, I found it an enormous relief to be able to talk to someone about my feelings. I was also given access to complementary therapies, which really relaxed me and helped me to sleep at a time when I was feeling particularly stressed.'

Maureen

Finding support for yourself in this way can help you feel more in control. Some people may also see complementary therapies as a positive thing to do for their general well-being.

Some complementary therapies are done in a group. This may be a good opportunity to meet other people with similar experiences in a positive setting.

Complementary therapies may help you:

- feel better and improve your quality of life
- feel less stressed, tense and anxious
- sleep better
- with some of your cancer symptoms
- with some of the side effects of your cancer treatment
- feel more in control.

Choosing a complementary therapy

When choosing a complementary therapy, it can help to think about:

- what you would like to do
- how it may benefit you
- any safety issues
- how much it costs.

You can read more about the possible benefits of different therapies in the following chapters of this booklet. Pages 77–83 also give details of other organisations where you can find out more about individual complementary therapies.

If you'd like to know what other people have found helpful, you can contact a local cancer support group. Or if you have internet access, you can join an online community. Support groups and online communities make it possible for people affected by cancer to give and get support. People can share their experiences of all aspects of their treatment, including complementary therapies. You can join our online community at [macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community) and find a support group near you at [macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups)

You can also read interviews with people who have tried complementary therapies at [healthtalkonline.org](https://www.healthtalkonline.org)

Your preferences

To decide what feels right for you, it may help to think about what you want from the complementary therapy.

You may want to:

- feel more relaxed
- get help with troublesome symptoms or side effects
- get help with difficult emotions
- feel generally better
- make a positive lifestyle change.

'Complementary therapies to me mean a bit of indulgence, massage, 'me time.'

Pat

More than one in three of us will get cancer. For most of us it will be the toughest fight we ever face. And the feelings of isolation and loneliness that so many people experience make it even harder. But you don't have to go through it alone. The Macmillan team is with you every step of the way.

We are the nurses and therapists helping you through treatment. The experts on the end of the phone. The advisers telling you which benefits you're entitled to. The volunteers giving you a hand with the everyday things. The campaigners improving cancer care. The community there for you online, any time. The supporters who make it all possible.

Together, we are all Macmillan Cancer Support.

For cancer support every step of the way, call Macmillan on 0808 808 00 00 (Mon–Fri, 9am–8pm) or visit macmillan.org.uk

Hard of hearing? Use textphone 0808 808 0121, or Text Relay.
Non-English speaker? Interpreters available.
Braille and large print versions on request.

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There are some other things to think about:

- What's available in your area?
- Are treatments free or, if you have to pay, how much can you afford?
- Do you want a one-off treatment or something to do regularly?

'Near to where I live is a lovely cancer support centre. Not only do they offer a range of complementary therapies, 12 of which are free, they also offer counselling. They do yoga and go walking. You can even just drop in for lunch and a chat.'

Ann

Safety

Doctors don't usually have a problem with their patients using complementary therapies. But some therapies may not be suitable if you have a particular cancer or are having certain treatments.

Before using a complementary therapy, talk to your cancer doctor or nurse. Find out if it could have any harmful effects for you. It's very important to check whether it could interact with your cancer treatment, make it less effective or increase side effects.



As you read this booklet, look for safety issues that we've highlighted in green boxes like this one. Remember, this information does not take the place of advice from your doctor.

If you're already having complementary therapy before you start conventional treatment, make sure you tell your cancer doctor or nurse, especially if you're taking herbs, pills or medicines.

If you're having a complementary therapy, it's very important to tell the complementary therapist you have cancer.

Cost

Some complementary therapies are provided free by the NHS and some larger cancer charities. Ask your doctor or nurse if there are complementary therapies at your hospital, hospice or GP surgery. Some cancer support groups offer therapies free of charge or at a reduced cost.

Therapies that aren't provided by the NHS or a support group can be expensive. The costs can add up over a long period of time. Check the costs beforehand and make sure you're being fairly charged. Some private therapists may offer a reduced cost based on your ability to pay. The organisations listed on pages 77–87 should be able to give you an idea of the usual costs of certain complementary therapies.

Getting information

Before making any decisions, make sure you have all the information you need about the complementary therapy you're interested in. Talk about it with your cancer doctor or nurse.

Ask to have a consultation with a complementary therapist first to find out what they think their therapy can do for you. There are some tips on choosing a therapist and suggestions of what to ask them on the next page.

You may find it helpful to take a relative or friend with you for support. It can also help to write down the questions that matter most to you beforehand. There's space for you to write any questions you'd like to ask on page 88. Take your time to decide if you want to go ahead with the therapy.

The Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00** can give you information on complementary and alternative therapies, and how to find a suitable therapist. They can also help you find a support group offering complementary therapy services in your area.

You can also get information from library books and online. Be careful when choosing what to read or believe on the internet. Some websites make claims that aren't backed up by evidence and others may be selling products for profit. There's a list of websites that are reliable sources of information at the end of this booklet on pages 77–87.

Choosing a complementary therapist

It's important to use a registered practitioner. There are several organisations that regulate complementary therapists but registration is not compulsory in the UK. Therapists volunteer to join the register. Those who are members of these organisations have met a required national standard of practice. They may have a quality mark displayed on a certificate of qualification, or in their place of work.

Regulatory organisations will be able to provide you with a list of registered therapists. You can find contact details for these at the back of this booklet. There are also details of organisations for specific therapies.

When choosing a therapist, you should:

- always use a qualified therapist who belongs to a professional body – ask the organisation about the level of qualification their practitioners have
- check if the organisation has a code of practice and ethics, and a disciplinary and complaints procedure (reputable organisations will have these in place)
- ask the practitioner how many years of training they've had and how long they've been practising
- ask what training they have done around complementary therapies and cancer
- ask if they have indemnity insurance (in case of harm from complementary therapy side effects)

- be careful not to be misled by false promises – no trustworthy therapist would ever claim to be able to cure cancer
- remember that some health professionals, such as doctors nurses and physiotherapists, are trained in complementary therapies – so it's worth checking what services your hospital provides first.



Types of complementary therapy

There are many types of complementary therapy. Some are based on traditional medical systems outside of western medicine, such as Traditional Chinese Medicine or Indian Ayurvedic Medicine.

Therapies can be grouped in different ways and some may fit into more than one group. To make it simple, we have divided them into six groups:

- mind-body therapies (see pages 20–29)
- massage therapies (see pages 31–32)
- energy-based therapies (see pages 33–36)
- physical therapies (see pages 37–41)
- therapies using herbs and plants (see pages 43–49)
- therapies using supplements or diet (see pages 51–53).

Mind-body therapies

This section discusses some of the most popular and widely available mind-body complementary therapies used by people with cancer in the UK. These are:

- relaxation
- visualisation (mental imagery)
- meditation
- hypnotherapy
- art therapy
- music therapy.

Mind-body therapies are based on the belief that what we think and feel can affect our well-being. Like all other complementary or alternative therapies, they have no effect on the cancer. But they are often given as part of support for people with cancer.

Mind-body therapies are available in many conventional cancer treatment centres. They may help you feel less anxious, improve your mood and help you sleep. They can also be used to ease symptoms, such as pain, or to reduce side effects caused by cancer treatment.

Most mind-body techniques need to be practised regularly for you to get the best results. Many people find that attending group classes helps them stay motivated to practise the techniques.

Some NHS services and support groups offer mind-body therapies. You can ask if they are provided at your hospital or if they can be accessed through your GP.

Call us on 0808 808 00 00 for details of support groups in your area.

Relaxation

Simple breathing and relaxation exercises can help reduce anxiety and stress. As well as calming your mind, they may also reduce muscle tension. This may have a positive effect on the parts of the nervous system that control blood pressure and the digestive system. Relaxation is sometimes used together with meditation and visualisation.

Almost everyone can use relaxation techniques. You can learn them as part of a group or at home using a CD.

There's a list of organisations that provide relaxation CDs on page 79.

Visualisation (mental imagery)

This technique involves creating images in your mind while you are in a state of relaxation or meditation. For example, you might imagine that:

- you're lying in a field full of beautiful flowers
- you're healthy and strong
- the sun's rays are shining on you, warming you and giving you strength.

The theory is that by imagining a peaceful scene, you will feel more relaxed. Various studies are looking at whether visualisation can be of any benefit to people with cancer. Some studies have found that women having treatment for breast cancer have improved their mood using visualisation. Other research has shown that, for some people, it can reduce the symptoms of cancer or the side effects of treatment.

Meditation

Meditation uses concentration or reflection to deeply relax and calm the mind. This can help reduce feelings of fear, pain, anxiety and depression.

Regular meditation practice can help people feel more in control of themselves and their lives. Many studies have shown that regular meditation lowers blood pressure and reduces the pulse rate, as well as reducing anxiety and stress levels.

You can use CDs to meditate at home (see photograph opposite) or you may find it helpful to meditate in a group until you are familiar with the technique.

You can ask your GP or hospital doctor if they offer meditation or check with a complementary therapy organisation (see pages 77–78).



Meditation may not be suitable for people who have mental health problems. If you have or have had a mental illness, it's important to get advice from your doctor before considering meditation.





Hypnotherapy

Many people use hypnotherapy to help them make positive lifestyle changes, such as giving up smoking, or to encourage positive emotions, such as calmness and relaxation.

Some studies have shown that hypnotherapy has helped reduce some side effects of cancer treatment, such as nausea and vomiting. Some other studies have shown it can help with pain. But there isn't enough reliable evidence for doctors to recommend it as the main treatment for these problems.

A hypnotherapist will work with you to create a more helpful state of mind, during which you will still be aware of your surroundings (see photograph opposite). The therapist will make suggestions, which are believed to have a helpful effect on the way you deal with certain situations. You are always in control and are able to stop any session by simply opening your eyes.

There are details of organisations who can help you find a hypnotherapist on page 80–81.

Art therapy

Art therapy is used to help people to express themselves. The art therapist may have training in psychotherapy and will encourage you to communicate your feelings through painting, drawing or sculpting. The aim is to express your feelings rather than produce a work of art.

The therapy can be given one-to-one with the therapist or in groups.

Being creative can sometimes help you become more aware of, and let go of, difficult feelings. These feelings can then be discussed, if appropriate, in counselling or group sessions.

You don't need to be able to draw or paint to take part. You will be encouraged to be spontaneous and doodle.

Art therapy is not widely available for cancer patients on the NHS. We have details of how to find an art therapist near you on page 79.



Music therapy

This therapy uses music to improve quality of life by helping people communicate. You don't need to be able to play an instrument or read music.

Music therapy can be carried out individually or as part of a group.

During the session, you work with a range of easy-to-use instruments to help show your feelings (see photograph opposite). The aim is to help people who may find it difficult to talk about their feelings to express themselves.

Music therapy has also been shown to help relieve symptoms such as pain. Some studies found that people using music therapy were able to use lower doses of painkillers to control their pain.

Music therapy is not widely available for cancer patients on the NHS. We have details of how to find a music therapist near you on page 79.





Massage therapy

Massage is often offered as part of cancer care in cancer centres, hospices, community health services and some GP surgeries (see photograph opposite).

Massage is a form of structured or therapeutic touch. It can be used to:

- relax your mind and body
- relieve tension
- improve the flow of fluid (lymph) in the lymphatic system
- enhance your mood.

Some studies of people with cancer suggested that massage therapy reduced symptoms such as pain, nausea, anxiety, depression and fatigue.

There are different types of massage therapy. Some are soft and gentle, while others are more active and may be uncomfortable. Your therapist will be able to adjust the pressure for your comfort. Cancer doctors and complementary therapists will usually advise you to try gentle massage and avoid vigorous, deep tissue massage.

Some people worry that massage could cause cancer cells to spread to other parts of their body. Research has not found any evidence of this, but massage therapists will avoid any areas affected by cancer, such as tumour sites or lymph nodes. Talk to your cancer doctor or nurse if you're worried.

Massage therapists working with people with cancer must be properly trained and qualified. They should have some knowledge of cancer and its treatments. They can sometimes teach relatives or friends how to do basic massages, so that they can support you at home.



During your therapy it's important to avoid massage:

- directly over a tumour or lymph nodes (glands) affected by cancer (lymph nodes are part of the immune system and help to filter germs and disease)
- to areas that are bruised or sensitive
- to areas being treated with radiotherapy during and for a few weeks after it finishes
- around intravenous catheters (such as central lines) and pain relief patches
- to areas affected by blood clots, poor circulation or varicose veins.

It's also important to be particularly gentle if:

- cancer has spread to your bones
- you have a low platelet count (platelets are cells that help the blood to clot).

If you tend to bleed or bruise easily or have cancer in your bones, speak to your cancer doctor before having massage therapy.

You can contact the GCMT (see page 81) to find a trained massage therapist.

Energy-based therapies

This section discusses the following energy-based therapies:

- shiatsu and acupressure
- reflexology
- therapeutic touch.

Energy-based therapies are based on the theory that everyone has a special type of energy that can be worked on for health benefits.

There is no medical evidence that energy-based therapies have any effect on the cancer. Some may be used to try to treat symptoms, but there is no medical evidence that they help. Their most common effects are that some people find them relaxing and calming.

Some energy-based therapies rely on little, if any, physical contact for their effects. Others involve touch or body movements.

Energy-based therapies are available in some hospitals. If you are looking for these therapies somewhere other than in hospital, it's important to check that the therapist or practitioner is trained, registered and insured.

Shiatsu and acupressure

Shiatsu is a Japanese form of massage. It's based on the theory that health depends on the balanced flow of energy through certain channels in the body. Therapists believe placing pressure on these channels helps restore energy balance. They may also gently stretch or hold areas of the body to reduce stiffness and soreness.

Although some people feel shiatsu eases pain and other symptoms, there's very little medical evidence to support this. But many people still find it a relaxing or uplifting experience.



As with other types of massage, it's important to take the precautions mentioned on page 32.

Reflexology

Reflexology is a form of foot or hand massage related to acupressure. Reflexologists believe different areas on the feet or hands represent, and are connected to, different parts of the body (see photograph opposite).

They apply gentle pressure to specific points on the feet or hands. The aim is to help you feel more relaxed.

Reflexology has been used to try to improve symptoms related to cancer or treatment, such as feeling sick (nausea), tension, pain and fatigue. So far, medical evidence hasn't proven that it's effective when used in this way. But, some evidence shows that reflexology can help people feel more relaxed and many people use it to help ease stress and anxiety.



Therapeutic touch

In therapeutic touch, the practitioner uses touch or works just above the surface of the body. They believe this affects an energy field surrounding each person and they can act as a channel through which healing energy flows into the patient. There's no medical evidence to show it helps with symptoms or side effects.

Some people feel that therapeutic touch gives them valuable support. When it's used in a religious or spiritual way, it's called spiritual or faith healing.

Reiki is another type of therapeutic touch developed in Japan. You sit or lie down and the practitioner gently places their hands on or just above your body. They use a sequence of positions that cover most of the body. You don't need to remove any clothing. Each position is held for about 2–5 minutes or until the practitioner feels the flow of energy has slowed or stopped.

You can get more information about therapeutic touch from one of the organisations on page 82.

Physical therapies

This section explains complementary therapies that work directly on your body, whether by a therapist or by yourself. This includes acupuncture and mind/body physical therapies.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture that has its origins in Traditional Chinese Medicine is based on there being a system of energy channels in the body.

Traditional therapists believe that needles inserted into the skin release the flow of energy and restore a healthy balance to the body. Traditional therapists are not registered health professionals. This section is about western medical acupuncture.

Western medical acupuncture

This is based on current medical knowledge and evidence-based medicine. It's sometimes available within the NHS.

During an acupuncture session, the therapist inserts fine sterile needles just below the skin into certain "trigger points" (see photograph on the next page). The trigger points are specific places thought to affect the nerves in the skin and muscle. This can send messages to the brain. Stimulating the nerves in this way may release natural chemicals in the body such as endorphins. Endorphins are hormones that give you a feeling of well-being.

An acupuncturist may be a member of a team working in a pain clinic or part of a palliative care (symptom control) team. Some doctors, nurses and physiotherapists are trained in western medical acupuncture.



Some studies show acupuncture has helped reduce sickness in people who have had surgery or chemotherapy. There is also some evidence that acupuncture may help reduce pain in people with cancer, but more research is needed.

There's some evidence that acupuncture may help in treating other problems such as breathlessness and a dry mouth. Acupuncture is also sometimes used to treat menopausal symptoms, but it's not yet clear how effective it is for this.

In general, when carried out by a trained professional, acupuncture is safe and side effects or complications are rare.



It's not advisable to have acupuncture if you are having treatment, such as chemotherapy, that could affect your blood count. This may result in a lower than normal number of white blood cells, which increases your risk of infection. You should also avoid acupuncture if you have a lower than normal number of platelets (blood cells that help blood to clot). This can increase your risk of bleeding.

If you have, or are at risk of, lymphoedema, you should avoid having acupuncture in the limb that's affected or at risk. Lymphoedema is swelling to part of the body caused by damage to the lymphatic system. Check with your doctor if you're thinking about having acupuncture.

Mind/body physical therapies

Some types of physical activity, such as yoga, tai chi and qi gong, are designed to work both the body and the mind. In general, they use gentle, controlled, low-impact movements combined with breathing exercises. They can be done by people of all ages and of varying levels of fitness.

Yoga

There are different types of yoga. They all involve positioning your body in different ways, breathing exercises and some form of meditation or relaxation (see photograph below).

Some types of yoga use very gentle stretching, movement and meditation. Others may involve more vigorous physical movement and dietary changes.





Yoga is generally safe, but people with some types of cancer may need to adapt some of the positions so they're easier to do.

Some people who have cancer find that yoga helps them cope with their illness and feel better generally. A recent study found that people who followed a four-week yoga course after they completed their cancer treatment had fewer problems sleeping and felt less fatigued.

Some small studies have shown that yoga may also be useful in relieving menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes and joint pains, but more research is needed. Some hospitals offer yoga classes.

There is more information on how to find a yoga class near you on page 83.

Tai chi and qi gong

Tai chi and qi gong (sometimes spelt 'chi kung') come from Chinese medical traditions. They include parts of mind-body therapies, energy-based therapies and physical therapies.

Both tai chi and qi gong focus on building strength, balance and flexibility through slow, fluid movements. They also use mental imagery (see pages 21–22) and deep breathing.

Together, the physical and mental exercises can help to improve general health and create a feeling of well-being.

You can get more information about tai chi or qi gong from the complementary therapy organisations on pages 77–78.



Herb and plant extracts

This section covers:

- aromatherapy
- flower remedies
- homeopathy
- herbal remedies.

These therapies use herbs and plants. They are widely available in supermarkets, chemists, health food shops, on the internet and from nutritionists, herbalists and homeopaths. They are mainly taken by mouth but can also come as oils and creams.

Flower, plant or herb therapies have no effect on cancer. There is no medical evidence to show that flower, plant or herb therapies help or treat cancer symptoms or side effects of treatment. But some people feel that they help.

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is the use of natural oils extracted from plants. The oils are thought to be beneficial to your body and mind. They may be used during massage but can also be used in baths and creams, and through diffusers.

You don't always have to remove clothing to have massage or aromatherapy. Having your hand, forearm or head and neck massaged can be very relaxing. Different oils are thought to have different effects.

There is no medical evidence to show that aromatherapy helps with the symptoms of cancer or side effects of treatment. But many people find it a relaxing and enjoyable experience.



It's important to tell the aromatherapist about any medicines you are taking and give them all your medical details. They use very low-strength oils for people with cancer. But some oils can have physical effects on the body and, for example, may affect blood pressure. Also some oils can have oestrogen-like effects. You should avoid these oils if you have an oestrogen-dependent cancer, which includes some types of breast cancer.

If you are having any type of cancer treatment, always check with your cancer doctor first before you have aromatherapy. Usually it's fine to have aromatherapy and massage during radiotherapy as long as it's not used on the area being treated (see page 32).

For more detailed information about aromatherapy and to find a trained therapist, contact the Aromatherapy Council (details are on page 79).

Flower remedies

Flower remedies use the essence of flowers diluted many times. You take the remedy as a liquid. They are considered to be safe and some people feel they help reduce anxiety and help them feel better. But no medical evidence has shown this to be true.

Different types of flower remedies are available. You can buy them from health food shops and some chemists.



Flower remedies are often diluted in alcohol, so people who don't drink alcohol may choose not to use them.

Homeopathy

Homeopathy is used for a number of illnesses. It may be taken with conventional treatment to try to improve the quality of life for people with cancer. There's no reliable medical evidence that homeopathy is effective.

Homeopathy is based on the idea that 'like cures like'. The theory is that some homeopathic medicines cause similar symptoms to the illness being treated, and this triggers the body's natural reaction. So therapists use tiny amounts that cause symptoms similar to those you are already having.

Homeopathic remedies are mostly made of plant and mineral extracts. They come as tablets, liquids or creams, in a very diluted form.

Homeopaths use their remedies to try to relieve symptoms caused by cancer or side effects of cancer treatments. They're also used to help general well-being.

Some GPs and hospital doctors are trained in homeopathy, and it's sometimes available through the NHS. If you're interested in this type of therapy, you can discuss it with your GP or your cancer doctor.

Homeopathy is safe to use alongside conventional cancer treatments because the remedies are extremely diluted. There's no evidence that it causes harm.

Mistletoe (Iscador®, Eurixor®)

Mistletoe comes from a group of therapies called anthroposophical medicine. These therapies aim to combine conventional medicine with complementary therapies, including homeopathy and physical therapies.

Mistletoe can be taken by mouth or as injections. It may be given by homeopaths and is sometimes described as a herbal or homeopathic remedy.

There's no reliable medical evidence that mistletoe is effective in treating cancer. It's claimed that mistletoe may have various effects, which include:

- stimulating the immune system
- improving the quality of life of people with cancer
- reducing side effects of chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

In general, mistletoe therapy appears to be safe and any side effects are usually mild.



If mistletoe is taken in large doses, it may cause more serious side effects. When given as an injection, mistletoe may cause mild swelling, redness, itching and pain around the injection site. Rarely it can cause allergic reactions, which may be serious in some people.

Because mistletoe extracts may stimulate the immune system, they could reduce the effectiveness of some medicines. This includes immunosuppressants, which people take after a donor stem cell or bone marrow transplant. It's important to check with your cancer doctor before using mistletoe extracts.

Herbal remedies

Herbal remedies use plants or mixtures of plant extracts to treat illness and promote health. Practitioners of Chinese medicine also use herbs as part of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Herbs may be boiled in water and drunk as a tea, mixed in an alcohol solution, or be made into tablets, creams or ointments.

Some herb and plant extracts have been researched in clinical trials, and have been shown to help with certain symptoms or side effects. Others have been shown to have no effect.

Commonly used herbs include:

- ginger – used to relieve feelings of sickness (nausea)
- St John's Wort – used to treat a low mood and mild to moderate depression.

Although plants and herbs are natural, this doesn't automatically mean they are safe. Natural substances can have powerful effects and cause side effects. Some conventional treatments are made from plant extracts. So, if you choose to take herbal remedies, it's important to use them safely. You need to be aware of any side effects they may cause.

If you take or are interested in trying herbal remedies, talk to your cancer doctor. They need to know all the medicines you're taking, whether they're prescribed or not, to help them give you the best possible care.

Taking herbs during cancer treatment

Although we know about some interactions between herbs and cancer treatments, a herbal supplement may have dozens of compounds. All of its active ingredients may not be known. So it's often not possible to know the effects of herbs and possible interactions with other medicines or treatments.

Many doctors advise that herbal remedies should be avoided during, and for a few weeks before and after, treatment with chemotherapy or radiotherapy. Some herbs can interfere with cancer treatments by making them less effective or by increasing side effects. For example:

- St John's Wort can reduce the effectiveness of the chemotherapy drug irinotecan.
- Drinking green tea may make the cancer medicine bortezomib (Velcade®) less effective.

- Green tea can also increase the side effects caused by the chemotherapy drug irinotecan and by the hormonal therapy tamoxifen.
- Garlic and evening primrose oil may affect blood clotting and should be avoided before surgery.



Some herbs and dietary supplements can interfere with cancer treatments by making them more toxic or less effective. It's important to check with your cancer doctor if you're planning to use herbal remedies or take supplements during, and for a few weeks before and after, cancer treatment.

The Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (www.mskcc.org) is a reliable website that can give you safety information about individual herbs. If you're seeing a herbalist, check that they are registered with an accredited body (see page 80).



Diet and food supplements

Many people make changes to their diet after a cancer diagnosis as a way of staying as healthy as possible. They may also do this to help their body cope with the effects of cancer and its treatments. Giving up smoking, increasing physical activity and following a healthy diet are the most important changes people can make for their health.

For most people, making these types of changes will make the biggest difference to their health. They can be more helpful than making any one particular change.

People often ask about 'superfoods' or foods that boost the immune system. But there isn't any medical evidence that suggests these work.

There still isn't enough clear information to make exact recommendations about what someone with cancer should eat. In general, cancer experts recommend following a healthy, balanced diet. Your healthcare team (this includes your GP, doctors and nurses) are the best people to advise you what, if any, lifestyle changes you can make that may help.

We have more information in our booklet *Healthy eating and cancer*. Our website also has a useful video with tips for healthy eating, at [macmillan.org.uk/dietandlifestyle](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/dietandlifestyle)

Nutritional therapists

Nutritional therapists don't aim to cure cancer through diet but try to improve your health. They use methods such as detoxing, high-dose vitamins or avoiding certain food groups.

There's no medical evidence that nutritional therapy can reduce the chance of cancer coming back and no reliable research has shown that it can improve health.

Nutritional therapists assess your general health and recommend a diet that's thought to be specific to your needs. Nutritional therapists are different from dietitians. Dietitians use current medical evidence to give specific advice to people with eating or weight problems as well as advice on healthy eating in general. Your doctor or nurse can refer you to an NHS dietitian.

Dietary supplements

We need nutrients such as vitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids for our bodies to work properly. The best way to get these is by eating a healthy diet. However, some people with cancer aren't able to get all the nutrients they need from their diet. This may be because of problems with eating or because their bodies aren't able to absorb the nutrients.

If you're concerned about your diet or nutrition, ask your doctor or nurse to refer you to a dietitian. They can give you advice on what to eat and may prescribe nutritional supplements for you. If you aren't able to eat a healthy balanced diet, your doctor may prescribe a daily multivitamin and multi-mineral supplement. This will give you the recommended daily allowance (RDA) of the nutrients you need.



If you're thinking of taking dietary supplements, it's important to talk to your cancer doctor first.

Some people think that if something is good for you in small amounts, taking larger amounts is even better. But this isn't always the case. Nutrients, which are essential for our health in small amounts, can be harmful and cause unpleasant side effects when taken in large amounts. And some may interact with, or lessen the effectiveness of, cancer treatments.



Despite a lot of research into cancer and dietary supplements, there isn't enough evidence to suggest that taking them can help treat cancer or stop it from coming back. But, research has found that taking certain supplements could increase the risk of some cancers developing.

Antioxidants

Antioxidants such as vitamins A, C and E, coenzyme Q10 and selenium are some of the most commonly taken dietary supplements.



Antioxidants can help to prevent cell damage. Because of this, some doctors have concerns that taking antioxidant supplements during cancer treatment may make cancer treatment less effective. Your cancer doctor may recommend that you don't take antioxidant supplements during your treatment, unless it's as part of a clinical trial.

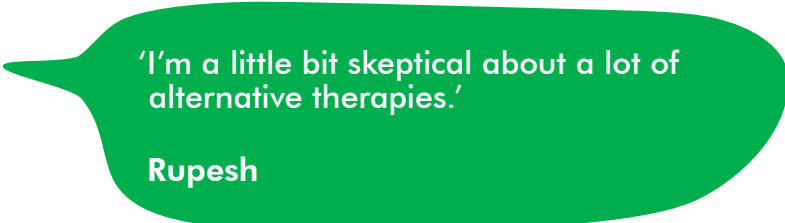
If you'd like to discuss dietary supplements and get more information, call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Alternative therapies

Alternative therapies are different from complementary therapies. Alternative therapies are used instead of conventional treatments. They may claim to actively treat or even cure cancer. But there's no scientific proof to back up these claims.

No alternative therapies have ever been proven to cure cancer or slow its growth.

There have been cases where false claims about alternative therapies have led some people to refuse conventional treatments that could have helped them. No reputable alternative therapist will claim to be able to cure cancer.



'I'm a little bit skeptical about a lot of alternative therapies.'

Rupesh

Alternative therapies are sometimes very cleverly marketed. This means that when you read about them or are told about them, they sound very effective. Therapists may use scientific language to make their claims sound more convincing. But, many are based on unproven or disproven theories of how cancer begins or stays in the body.

Claims may be based on the therapy's results when it is tested on cancer cells in a laboratory. But this can differ greatly from how the therapy will affect a person with cancer. Claims that an alternative therapy has an anti-cancer action in the laboratory do not mean it will have any effect on someone with cancer.

Very few suppliers of alternative medicines have carried out scientifically controlled clinical trials for their products. Many alternative therapies rely on individual's stories or testimonials as evidence that they work. This is called **anecdotal evidence** and is the least reliable type of evidence. This is because it's usually not possible to check whether the effect described is due to the treatment or something else. It's also not possible to check that the person's story is true or that the person even existed or had cancer.

Why do some people consider alternative therapies?

There are various reasons why some people may choose to try an alternative therapy. Sometimes, it's because they feel that conventional medical treatment can't help them or could be harmful.

The idea of having cancer treatments, which may cause unpleasant side effects, can be frightening for some people. However, many people with early cancer can be cured by conventional medical treatments.

If you've been told by your doctors that the cancer can't be cured, you may find it very hard to accept. Some people in this situation may look into alternative therapies. However, if a cancer can't be cured by conventional medical treatment, it's equally true that it won't be cured with alternative treatment. In this situation, some alternative therapies may do no harm, but some could be very harmful.

Even when a cancer is advanced, conventional treatments can help to control it and prolong people's lives, often for many years.



Second opinion

If your doctor tells you that further treatment won't help to control the cancer, you may understandably find it very hard to accept. In this situation, some people find it helps to have a second medical opinion.

The second doctor may be able to offer you another type of conventional treatment. Or, they may confirm what you've already been told. This may help you to accept that everything that may help has been tried. If you still want to have treatment, you could ask if there are any cancer research trials that might be appropriate for you.

Our booklets *Coping with advanced cancer* and *Understanding cancer research trials (clinical trials)* have more information.

Get advice and support before starting an alternative therapy

If you're considering using alternative therapies, talk to your doctor for advice and support. Doctors are generally supportive of people using any complementary therapies that may help them cope better with their illness. But they usually advise against using alternative therapies.

If you decide to use an alternative therapy, it's important to check it's safe. Always check the credentials of the therapist.

Alternative therapies can be expensive and some can cause serious side effects. They can also make you feel unwell and be harmful to your health.

Types of alternative therapy

There are many types of alternative therapy. We have covered alternative therapies most well-known by people with cancer, but haven't included them all. If you want to find out more about an alternative therapy not mentioned here, you may find information about it from one of the organisations listed on pages 77–78. You can also call the Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00** if you want to talk through any aspect of alternative therapy.

In this section you can read about:

- Amygdalin (Laetrile[®], Vitamin B17)
- Essiac[®] (Vitaltea[®], Flor-essence[®])
- metabolic therapy
- diets that claim to treat cancer
- megavitamin therapy.

Amygdalin (Laetrile[®], Vitamin B17)

Amygdalin is a compound found in bitter almonds, and in peach and apricot stones. When amygdalin is processed by the body, it can be changed to cyanide, a type of poison.

A man-made form of it is called Laetrile. It is also sometimes called vitamin B17, although it isn't actually a vitamin.

Laetrile has been sold since the 1970s. Many websites that sell it claim it can slow or stop the growth of cancer. They sometimes also claim that Laetrile is able to poison cancer cells without damaging normal cells and tissues. But there's no medical evidence to support this. A review of studies looking at the outcomes for people with cancer taking Laetrile found no evidence that it can control or cure cancer.



Laetrile can have serious side effects. Some people have had cyanide poisoning while taking it, and a few people have died as a result. The sale of Laetrile has been banned by the European Commission and by the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) in the USA. Unlike conventional medicines, the manufacture of Laetrile isn't controlled. So if you buy Laetrile, there isn't any way of knowing what it contains or if it's contaminated with other substances.

If you're thinking of taking Laetrile, it is best to discuss this with your cancer doctor.

Essiac® (Vitaltea®, Flor-essence®)

Essiac contains burdock root, sheep sorrel, slippery elm and rhubarb. It is taken as a drink. It's usually sold as a nutritional supplement. Some websites claim Essiac can slow down the growth of cancer, or even cure it. But there's no medical evidence that taking Essiac helps treat cancer or improve your quality of life.

Essiac interferes with an enzyme in the body that regulates hormones and vitamin D. It also has an effect on how the body deals with toxins. This may mean taking Essiac with other treatments could make them less effective or increase side effects.



It's important not to take Essiac during cancer treatment or with any other medicines without first checking with your cancer doctor.

Metabolic therapy

Metabolic therapists think of cancer as the result of an imbalance caused by a build-up of toxic substances in the body. They claim they can treat the cause of the disease by removing toxins and strengthening the immune system. Metabolic treatments vary from one practitioner to another, and may include:

- a diet of raw fruit and vegetables that has no processed foods or salt
- vitamins and minerals
- enzymes or chemicals
- coffee enemas.

These are said to flush toxins out of the body, allowing it to heal. But there's no medical evidence to support claims they help treat cancer.

A recent study compared the results of using a metabolic therapy with chemotherapy. The metabolic therapy included enzymes, nutritional supplements, detoxification and organic foods. The study found that the patients who had the chemotherapy survived three times longer and had better quality of life than those who chose metabolic therapy.

Gerson therapy

This is one of the most well-known metabolic therapies. The diet is based on organic fruit and vegetables, taken mainly as a juice prepared with a juice extractor. Nutritional supplements are also given, and coffee enemas are used to flush out toxins.

Some alternative therapists claim the Gerson diet is effective in treating cancer, but there is no medical evidence to support this.

If you have any questions about alternative diets or are thinking of following one, get advice from your doctor, specialist nurse or dietitian.



Possible side effects of Gerson therapy include nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, a high temperature and headaches. The high levels of hormones and extracts used can sometimes make people feel unwell. Risks of using coffee enemas include infections and they can cause serious damage to the large bowel.

Diets that claim to treat cancer

There are a number of diets, in addition to the Gerson diet, that claim to treat cancer. Some claim to rid the body of toxins. Many of these diets are vegetarian or vegan. They involve eating food that is raw, sugar-free and low in salt. Sometimes vegetable or fruit juices, and high doses of vitamins, minerals or enzymes are used. Other diets are based on claims that some foods 'feed' cancer or affect the pH (acidity) of the body.



If you choose to follow a diet that cuts out particular types of food, it's important to make sure you aren't missing out on important nutrients. For example, if you follow a dairy-free diet, it's important to replace the calcium that you would otherwise get from dairy products with other calcium-rich foods.

There's no medical evidence that these diets can cure cancer or help people with advanced cancer live longer.

It's understandable that some people are attracted to diets that seem to offer hope.

Some people get pleasure and satisfaction from preparing special diets. But, following diets isn't right for everyone. Some people find them boring, expensive, time-consuming, or even unpleasant to eat. Some might feel guilty if they don't follow the diet properly. People can also feel angry and let down if the diet doesn't help their cancer in the way they had hoped.

Diets that are high in fibre and low in calories and protein are not appropriate for people who have problems maintaining their weight because of cancer or its treatment. Instead, people who are underweight need protein and calories from any source.

Megavitamin therapy

This type of alternative therapy involves taking very large doses of vitamins as a way of preventing and treating cancer. However, there's no evidence that taking large doses of vitamins is helpful in treating cancer. Some vitamins can be harmful in high doses.

High-dose vitamin C is one of the most common types of megavitamin therapy. Scientific studies have found no benefit for people with cancer taking high-dose vitamin C by mouth (orally). More recently, studies are looking at whether high-dose vitamin C would work better if given into the bloodstream (intravenously). A number of clinical trials (mainly in the USA) are researching this. Some studies are also testing the effects of high-dose intravenous vitamin C when given alongside conventional cancer treatments. But so far, there's no reliable evidence that intravenous high-dose vitamin C helps treat cancer.



High-dose vitamin C can make many cancer treatment drugs, such as cisplatin, doxorubicin, imatinib and vincristine, less effective. It may also interfere with how radiotherapy works. So it's important to tell your cancer doctor before having high doses of vitamin C, particularly if you're planning on using it during, or within a few weeks of, cancer treatment. High-dose vitamin C may also interact with some complementary and alternative therapies. There have been cases of severe cyanide poisoning in people taking Laetrile (see page 59) at the same time as high-dose vitamin C.

High-dose vitamin C is not suitable for people who have kidney problems, a condition that causes iron overload (haemochromatosis) or who have G6PDH deficiency. Talk to your doctor if you have any of these problems and are thinking of taking high-dose vitamin C.



Do feelings affect cancer?

Many people who are considering using complementary therapies wonder if there is a link between cancer and psychological factors, such as emotions and stress.

Here, we go through some of the questions people have asked and the research that's been done around feelings and cancer.

Are people with particular personality types more likely to get cancer?

Some people believe that people with certain personality types are more likely to get cancer. Others think that personality may affect how long someone with cancer will live for, or whether they may die from cancer.

One large study has shown no medical evidence that people with certain personality types are more likely to get cancer. The same study showed that personality had no effect on the outcome of those who already have cancer.

Can stress cause cancer?

Some people believe that their cancer was caused by stress. The stress may have been caused by a traumatic event, or being exposed to stressful situations over a long period of time. It's very difficult to research whether stress can cause cancer. This is because everyone reacts differently to stress.

Stress may increase our risk of cancer because at difficult times in life, some people may start unhealthy behaviours. This can include smoking or drinking too much alcohol. Studies currently show that stress can result in slight changes to the body's immune system. But there's no evidence this causes cancer or affects its growth.

Can attitude affect cancer?

Some people feel that a positive attitude helps when coping with cancer and its treatments. But a positive attitude means different things to different people – it doesn't mean you have to be cheerful all the time.

Cancer can make people feel helpless and too tired to be positive and 'fight' the cancer. This doesn't mean that their attitude lowers their chance of a good outcome from treatment.

It's important to talk to your doctor or nurse if you feel anxious or depressed. There's help available for your emotional, as well as your physical, well-being. Trying to be positive shouldn't become a burden. Very few people are optimistic all the time, and it's natural and understandable to feel down sometimes.

Can changing my attitude and level of stress help?

Anything that helps you cope in your own way is valuable. Many of the ideas behind complementary therapies suggest that a change of attitude can affect the outlook. But it would be difficult for medical evidence to show whether a change of attitude alone can help with cancer, symptoms or side effects. But many people find complementary therapies helpful, and they can contribute to a sense of well-being and better quality of life.



Psychological and self-help therapies

There are several ways to get self-help and psychological support. These approaches may be used to help people cope with stress, anxiety and difficult feelings.

You may find that it helps to talk openly and honestly with your family and friends. The healthcare professionals caring for you, who know your situation, can also be a good source of support. You can ask your doctor to put you in touch with the psychological support services at your hospital.

Our booklet *Talking about your cancer* gives information on the benefits of talking about your illness. Your relatives, friends and carers may find our booklet *Lost for words: how to talk to someone with cancer* useful when they're supporting you. You can order these by calling **0808 808 00 00**.

Counselling

Many people get support by talking to close family members or friends. But you may find certain feelings very hard to share with them. It can sometimes be useful to talk to someone from outside your circle of family and friends, who has been trained to listen. Counsellors and psychologists can help you explore your feelings and talk through confusing or upsetting emotions.

Talking one-to-one with a trained counsellor or psychologist can help you find ways of coping with difficult feelings. Some GPs have counsellors within their practice, or they can refer you to a counsellor. Our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00** can give you details of how to find counsellors in your local area.

'Talking to a trained counsellor week after week helped me put into words all the emotions I was going through. It enabled me to deal with my fears and my frustrations, but more importantly, it provided me with a sense of empowerment.'

Aurélie

Mindfulness meditation

Mindfulness meditation is an approach that can help you change the way you think about different experiences. This can help to reduce stress and anxiety. It helps you to pay attention to the present moment using techniques such as meditation, breathing and yoga. You are encouraged to become aware of your thoughts and feelings, without making judgements about them.

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) are both mindfulness techniques. They use meditation, yoga and breathing techniques along with some Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) techniques. The aim is to help you change your thought patterns. Cognitive (thinking) therapy focuses on the 'here and now' difficulties. It looks for ways to change your current state of mind so that your thoughts are more positive.

There are a few centres in the UK that offer mindfulness classes on the NHS. They may also be available through your hospital.

Group therapy

You may be offered the chance to take part in group therapy. This is when a trained therapist (counsellor or other professional) encourages a group of people to share their feelings and experiences with each other.

This is different from a self-help group (see next page). The therapist leading the group will be aware of the individual participants' problems and will be able to guide the discussion so that everyone benefits.



Self-help groups

Organised groups, where people with cancer and their families meet others in a similar situation, can be helpful. This is often the first chance that people have to discuss their experiences with other people living with cancer. These groups can be a source of information and support, and can provide an opportunity for people to talk about their feelings.

Some groups are run by health professionals, doctors and nurses, counsellors or psychotherapists in a hospital. More commonly, people with cancer run the groups. They often offer different techniques and coping strategies, together with relaxation or visualisation. They can also be a good source of practical information and emotional support.

If you're interested in joining a group but are unsure about whether it would help, make some enquiries about it first. Or you could go to a meeting to see what it's like before joining. You may feel more comfortable if you take a relative or friend along with you. But if you feel it's not for you, you don't have to go again. You may find it more helpful and supportive to find someone you can speak with individually on a regular basis.

Share your experience

Having cancer is a life-changing experience. When treatment finishes, many people find it helps to talk about it and share their thoughts, feelings and advice with other people. Just hearing about how you've coped, what side effects you had and how you managed them is helpful to someone in a similar situation.

We can help you share your story. Call us on **0808 808 00 00** or visit our website **[macmillan.org.uk/cancervoices](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancervoices)** for more information.

About our information

We provide expert, up-to-date information about cancer. And all our information is free for everyone.

Order what you need

You may want to order more leaflets or booklets like this one. Visit **be.macmillan.org.uk** or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

We have booklets on different cancer types, treatments and side effects. We also have information about work, financial issues, diet, life after cancer and information for carers, family and friends.

All of our information is also available online at **macmillan.org.uk/cancerinformation**

There you'll also find videos featuring real-life stories from people affected by cancer, and information from health and social care professionals.

Other formats

We also provide information in different languages and formats, including:

- audiobooks
- Braille
- British Sign Language
- Easy Read booklets
- large print
- translations.

Find out more at **macmillan.org.uk/otherformats**

If you'd like us to produce information in a different format for you, email us at **cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk** or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Help us improve our information

We know that the people who use our information are the real experts. That's why we always involve them in our work. If you've been affected by cancer, you can help us improve our information.

We give you the chance to comment on a variety of information including booklets, leaflets and fact sheets.

If you'd like to hear more about becoming a reviewer, email reviewing@macmillan.org.uk

You can get involved from home whenever you like, and we don't ask for any special skills – just an interest in our cancer information.



Other ways we can help you

At Macmillan, we know how a cancer diagnosis can affect everything, and we're here to support you. No one should face cancer alone.

Talk to us

If you or someone you know is affected by cancer, talking about how you feel and sharing your concerns can really help.

Macmillan Support Line

Our free, confidential phone line is open Monday–Friday, 9am–8pm. Our cancer support specialists can:

- help with any medical questions you have about your cancer or treatment
- help you access benefits and give you financial advice
- be there to listen if you need someone to talk to
- tell you about services that can help you in your area.

Call us on **0808 808 00 00** or email us via our website, **macmillan.org.uk/talktous**

Information centres

Our information and support centres are based in hospitals, libraries and mobile centres. There, you can speak with someone face to face.

Visit one to get the information you need, or if you'd like a private chat, most centres have a room where you can speak with someone alone and in confidence.

Find your nearest centre at **macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres** or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Talk to others

No one knows more about the impact cancer can have on your life than those who have been through it themselves. That's why we help to bring people together in their communities and online.

Support groups

Whether you are someone living with cancer or a carer, we can help you find support in your local area, so you can speak face to face with people who understand. Find out about support groups in your area by calling us or by visiting [macmillan.org.uk/selfhelpandsupport](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/selfhelpandsupport)

Online community

Thousands of people use our online community to make friends, blog about their experiences and join groups to meet other people going through the same things. You can access it any time of day or night. Share your experiences, ask questions, or just read through people's posts at [macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community)

The Macmillan healthcare team

Our nurses, doctors and other health and social care professionals give expert care and support to individuals and their families. Call us or ask your GP, consultant, district nurse or hospital ward sister if there are any Macmillan professionals near you.

'Everyone is so supportive on the online community, they know exactly what you're going through. It can be fun too. It's not all just chats about cancer.'

Mal

Help with money worries

Having cancer can bring extra costs such as hospital parking, travel fares and higher heating bills. If you've been affected in this way, we can help.

Financial advice

Our financial guidance team can give you advice on mortgages, pensions, insurance, borrowing and savings.

Help accessing benefits

Our benefits advisers can offer advice and information on benefits, tax credits, grants and loans. They can help you work out what financial help you could be entitled to. They can also help you complete your forms and apply for benefits.

Macmillan Grants

Macmillan offers one-off payments to people with cancer. A grant can be for anything from heating bills or extra clothing to a much-needed break.

Call us on **0808 808 00 00** to speak to a financial guide or benefits adviser, or to find out more about Macmillan Grants. We can also tell you about benefits advisers in your area.

Visit **[macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport)** to find out more about how we can help you with your finances.

Help with work and cancer

Whether you're an employee, a carer, an employer or are self-employed, we can provide support and information to help you manage cancer at work.

Visit **[macmillan.org.uk/work](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/work)**

Other useful organisations

There are lots of other organisations that can give you information or support.

General complementary therapy organisations

British Complementary Medicine Association (BCMA)

PO Box 5122,
Bournemouth BH8 OWG
Tel 0845 345 5977
Email office@bcma.co.uk
www.bcma.co.uk
Holds a register of qualified complementary and alternative therapists who are all members of the BCMA and adhere to its code of ethics.

British Holistic Medical Association (BHMA)

West Barn, Chewton
Keynsham, Bristol BS31 2SR
www.bhma.org
An organisation of mainstream healthcare professionals, complementary and alternative therapists who promote a holistic approach to healthcare.

Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC)

83 Victoria Street,
London SW1H 0HW
Tel 0203 178 2199
Email info@cnhc.org.uk
www.cnhc.org.uk
An organisation for complementary healthcare practitioners. You can search for accredited practitioners in your area who meet agreed levels of competence and practice.

Federation of Holistic Therapists (FHT)

18 Shakespeare Business
Centre, Hathaway Close,
Eastleigh SO50 4SR
Tel 023 8062 4350
Email info@fht.org.uk
www.fht.org.uk
A professional association for complementary, holistic, beauty and sports therapists in the UK and Ireland. Search for details of therapists in your area.

Institute for Complementary and Natural Medicine (ICNM)

Can-Mezzanine,
32–36 Loman Street,
London SE1 0EH

Tel 0207 922 7980

Email info@icnm.org.uk

www.icnm.org.uk

Provides information about complementary medicine to the public. Provides a search facility to find registered practitioners and therapists.

The Research Council for Complementary Medicine (RCCM)

Faculty of Health and Social Care, London South Bank University, 103 Borough Road, London SE1 0AA

Email info@rccm.org.uk

www.rccm.org.uk

RCCM is part of University College London Hospitals NHS foundation trust and accepts all NHS referrals. It runs a complementary cancer care clinic, which offers a programme of treatments to complement conventional cancer therapies such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy and surgery.

Acupuncture

British Acupuncture Council

63 Jeddo Road,
London W12 9HQ

Tel 020 8735 0400

www.acupuncture.org.uk

The leading self-regulatory body for traditional acupuncture in the UK. Maintains a register of traditional acupuncturists.

British Medical Acupuncture Society (BMAS)

Royal London Hospital for Integrated Medicine,
60 Great Ormond Street,
London WC1N 3HR

Tel 020 7713 9437

Email bmaslondon@aol.com
www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk

A society of registered doctors and healthcare professionals who practise acupuncture alongside conventional treatments. The website has a search facility to help you find a practitioner of medical acupuncture near you.

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy Council (AC) **www.aromatherapy** **council.org.uk**

Sets the criteria for aromatherapy training standards. You can search the AC register on the website to find aromatherapists near you.

Art and music therapy

British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT)

24–27 White Lion Street,
London N1 9PD

Tel 020 7686 4216

Email info@baat.org

www.baat.org

Provides a directory of private art therapists and details of art therapy training courses.

British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT)

24–27 White Lion Street,
London N1 9PD

Tel 020 7837 6100

Email info@bamt.org

www.bamt.org

The professional body for music therapists and a source of information and support for the general public.

Audiobooks

Pain Relief Foundation

Clinical Sciences Centre,
University Hospital Aintree,
Lower Lane, Liverpool L9 7AL

Tel 0151 529 5820

Email secretary@
painrelieffoundation.org.uk

www.painrelief
foundation.org.uk

Produces a variety of books, CDs, audiotapes and relaxation kits designed to help you cope with pain in your own home.

Talking Life

36 Birkenhead Road,
Hoylake, Wirral CH47 3BW

Tel 0151 632 1206

Email info@talkinglife.co.uk

www.talkinglife.co.uk

Specialist producers of self-help and health audio resources.

Produces different versions of a stress and relaxation kit, which includes books, CDs or audiotapes.

Herbal medicine

The Bach Centre

Mount Vernon, Bakers Lane,
Brightwell-cum-Sotwell
OX10 0PZ

Tel 01491 834 678

www.bachcentre.com

Provides information on Bach flower remedies and therapists. Asks people to check the website for answers before contacting them.

British Herbal Medicine Association (BHMA)

PO Box 583, Exeter EX1 9GX

Tel 0845 680 1134

Email secretary@bhma.info

www.bhma.info

Provides information (but not advice) about herbal medicine to healthcare professionals, the herbal industry and the public.

National Institute of Medical Herbalists

Clover House, James Court,
South Street, Exeter EX1 1EE

Tel 01392 426 022

Email info@nimh.org.uk

www.nimh.org.uk

Provides information about herbal medicine and holds a database of registered herbalists in the UK.

Homeopathy

British Homeopathic Association

Hahnemann House,
29 Park Street West,
Luton LU1 3BE

Tel 01582 408 675

Email

info@britishhomeopathic.org

www.britishhomeopathic.org

Promotes homeopathy practised by doctors and other healthcare professionals. Gives information about the benefits of homeopathy. You can search for practitioners on the website.

Hypnotherapy

British Hypnotherapy Association

30 Cotsford Avenue,
New Malden KT3 5EU

Tel 020 8942 3988

Email bha@bethere.co.uk

www.hypnotherapy-association.org

You can request a copy of the *Hypnotherapy Handbook*, which has details of registered practitioners.

British Society of Clinical and Academic Hypnosis

Hollybank House,
Lees Road, Mossley,
Ashton-under-Lyne OL5 0PL

Tel 0844 884 3116

www.bscah.com

An organisation of healthcare professionals trained in hypnosis. Aims to promote the safe and responsible use of hypnosis in medicine, dentistry and psychology. Information about finding a hypnotherapist is available on the website.

Massage

GCMT – The Council for Soft Tissue Therapies

27 Old Gloucester Street,
London WC1N 3XX

Tel 0870 850 4452

Email info@gcmt.org.uk

www.gcmt.org.uk

A group of organisations working together to develop a set of practice and training standards. Has details of massage therapy organisations that are members on their website.

Reflexology

Association of Reflexologists

5 Fore Street,
Taunton TA1 1HX

Tel 01823 351 010

www.aor.org.uk

You can search for reflexologists in your area, order resources and find out more about the therapy on the website.

British Reflexology Association

Monks Orchard,
Whitbourne,
Worcester WR6 5RB

Tel 01886 821 207

Email bra@britreflex.co.uk

www.britreflex.co.uk

A representative body for people practising reflexology as a profession and for students training in reflexology. Gives details of local practitioners.

Reiki

Reiki Council

c/o 4 Westminster Court,
81 Albermarle Road,
Beckenham BR3 5HP

Email info@reikicouncil.org.uk

www.reikicouncil.org.uk

The leading advisory body providing information and advice to Reiki practitioners in the UK.

Shiatsu

The Shiatsu Society

PO Box 4580,
Rugby CV21 9EL

Tel 0845 130 4560

www.shiatusociety.org

Gives details about training in Shiatsu and a list of registered practitioners.

Spiritual Healing

The Healing Trust

21 York Road,
Northampton NN1 5QG

Tel 01604 603 247

Email

office@thehealingtrust.org.uk

www.thehealingtrust.org.uk

The largest and oldest membership organisation

of spiritual healers in the UK, which aims to raise standards and awareness of healing. Has over 50 healing centres throughout the UK.

Traditional Chinese Medicine

The Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture UK

314 Premier House,
112 Station Road,
London HA8 7BJ

Tel 020 8951 3030

Email info@atcm.co.uk

www.atcm.co.uk

A regulatory body for the practice of acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, and Chinese therapeutic massage in the UK. All full members hold a recognised professional qualification and adhere to specific codes of conduct.

Register of Chinese Herbal Medicine

Office 6, 27 Castle Meadow,
Norwich NR1 3DS

Tel 01603 623 994

Email herbmed@rchm.co.uk

www.rchm.co.uk

The UK professional body for practitioners of Chinese herbs (often combined with acupuncture). All members are bound by a code of ethics and practice.

Yoga

British Wheel of Yoga

25 Jermyn Street, Sleaford
NG34 7RU

Tel 01529 306 851

Email office@bwy.org.uk

www.bwy.org.uk

The governing body for yoga practitioners in the UK. Provides a register of BWY teachers.

General cancer support organisations

American Cancer Society

www.cancer.org

A voluntary organisation dedicated to eliminating cancer. Aims to do this through research and education.

Cancer Black Care

79 Acton Lane,
London NW10 8UT

Tel 020 8961 4151

Email

info@cancerblackcare.org.uk

www.cancerblackcare.

org.uk

Offers information and support for people with cancer from ethnic communities, their friends, carers and families.

Cancer Focus

Northern Ireland

40–44 Eglantine Avenue,
Belfast BT9 6DX

Tel 0800 783 3339

Email

hello@cancerfocusni.org

www.cancerfocusni.org

Offers a variety of services to people affected by cancer, including a free helpline, counselling and links to local support groups.

Cancer Research UK **www.cancerhelp.org.uk**

Contains patient information on all types of cancer and has a clinical trials database.

Cancer Support Scotland

Calman Cancer Support Centre, 75 Shelley Road, Glasgow G12 0ZE

Tel 0800 652 4531

Email info@
cancersupportscotland.org

**www.cancersupport
scotland.org**

Runs cancer support groups throughout Scotland. Also offers free complementary therapies and counselling to anyone affected by cancer.

The Haven

Tel (The London Haven) 020 7384 0099

Tel (The Hereford Haven) 01432 361 061

Tel (The Leeds Haven) 0113 284 7829

Email info@thehaven.org.uk
www.thehaven.org.uk

The three centres in London, Leeds and Hereford provide free support and a variety of complementary therapies that

help people deal with the physical and emotional effects of breast cancer. The *Haven at Home* DVD and audio programmes provide help for people unable to reach a centre.

Healthtalkonline and Youthhealthtalk **www.healthtalkonline.org** **www.youthhealthtalk.org** **(site for teens and young adults)**

Both websites contain information about some cancers and have video and audio clips of people talking about their experiences of cancer and its treatments.

Irish Cancer Society

43–45 Northumberland Road, Dublin 4, Ireland

Tel 1800 200 700
(Mon–Thu, 9am–7pm,
Fri, 9am–5pm)

Email helpline@irishcancer.ie
www.cancer.ie

National cancer charity offering information, support and care to people affected by cancer. Has a helpline staffed by specialist cancer nurses. You can also chat to a nurse

online and use the site's message board.

Macmillan Cancer Voices
www.macmillan.org.uk/cancervoices

Macmillan Cancer Voices is a UK-wide network that enables people who have or have had cancer, and those close to them, such as family and carers, to speak out about their experience of cancer.

Maggie's Centres

1st Floor, One Waterloo Street,
 Glasgow G2 6AY

Tel 0300 123 1801

Email enquiries@maggiescentres.org

www.maggiescentres.org

Provides information about cancer, benefits advice, and emotional or psychological support. You can access information, benefits advice and emotional or psychological support.

The Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center
www.mskcc.org

Gives research-based information on complementary and alternative therapies.

You can search for information on a number of complementary and alternative therapies.

Penny Brohn Cancer Care

Chapel Pill Lane,
 Pill, Bristol BS20 0HH

Tel 0845 123 2310
 (Mon–Fri, 9.30am–5pm)

Email

helpline@pennybrohn.org

www.

pennybrohncancercare.org

Offers a combination of physical, emotional and spiritual support, using complementary therapies and self-help techniques. All services are free. Also offer a variety of books, DVDs, CDs and audiotapes that explore methods of relaxation, meditation and imagery.

National Cancer Institute – National Institute of Health – USA
www.cancer.gov

Gives comprehensive information on cancer and its treatments.

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk

The UK's biggest health information website. Also has service information for England.

NHS Direct Wales

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

NHS health information site for Wales.

NHS Inform

www.nhsinform.co.uk

NHS health information site for Scotland.

Patient UK

www.patient.co.uk

Provides information about health and disease. Includes evidence-based information leaflets on a wide variety of health topics. Also reviews and links to many health- and illness-related websites.

Riprap

www.riprap.org.uk

Developed especially for teenagers who have a parent with cancer.

Tak Tent Cancer Support – Scotland

Flat 5, 30 Shelley Court,
Gartnavel Complex,
Glasgow G12 0YN

Tel 0141 211 0122

Email taktent4u@gmail.com

www.taktent.org

Offers information and support for people with cancer, their families and friends, and healthcare professionals. Runs a network of monthly support groups across Scotland. Also provides counselling and complementary therapies.

Tenovus

Head Office,
Gleider House,
Ty Glas Road,
Cardiff CF14 5BD

Tel 0808 808 1010

(Mon–Sun, 8am–8pm)

www.tenovus.org.uk

Aims to help everyone get equal access to cancer treatment and support. Funds research and provides support such as mobile cancer support units, a free helpline, an 'Ask the nurse' service on the website and benefits advice.

Counselling and emotional support

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

BACP House,
15 St John's Business Park,
Lutterworth LE17 4HB

Tel 01455 883 300

Email bacp@bacp.co.uk

www.bacp.co.uk

Promotes awareness of counselling and signposts people to appropriate services. You can search for a qualified counsellor at **itsgoodtotalk.org.uk**

The United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)

2nd Floor, Edward House,
2 Wakley Street,
London EC1V 7LT

Tel 020 7014 9955

Email info@ukcp.org.uk

www.psychotherapy.org.uk

Holds the national register of psychotherapists and

psychotherapeutic counsellors, listing practitioners who meet exacting standards and training requirements.

Advanced cancer and end-of-life care

Marie Curie Cancer Care

89 Albert Embankment,
London SE1 7TP

Tel 0800 716 146

(Mon–Fri, 9am–5.00pm)

Email supporter.relation@mariecurie.org.uk

www.mariecurie.org.uk

Marie Curie nurses provide free end-of-life care to people in their own homes, or in Marie Curie hospices, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.



You can search for more organisations on our website at macmillan.org.uk/organisations, or call us on 0808 808 00 00.

Disclaimer

We make every effort to ensure that the information we provide is accurate and up to date but it should not be relied upon as a substitute for specialist professional advice tailored to your situation. So far as is permitted by law, Macmillan does not accept liability in relation to the use of any information contained in this publication, or third-party information or websites included or referred to in it. Some photographs are of models.

Quotes have been sourced from people who have chosen to share their stories with us by becoming a Cancer Voice, [healthtalkonline.org](https://www.healthtalkonline.org) and the Macmillan online community ([macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community)).

Thanks

This booklet has been written, revised and edited by Macmillan Cancer Support's Cancer Information Development team. It has been approved by one of our Senior Medical Editors, Dr Sosie Kassab, Director of Complementary Cancer Services, Royal London Hospital for Integrated Medicine, and our Chief Medical Editor, Dr Tim Iveson, Macmillan Consultant Medical Oncologist.

With thanks to: Dr Saul Berkovitz, Consultant Physician; Jeannie Dyer, Clinical Lead for Complementary Therapies; Dr Jacqueline Filshie, Consultant in Anaesthesia and Pain Management; Angela Green, Clinical Lead for Complementary Therapies; Dr Caroline Hoffman, Clinical and Research Director; Dr Peter Mackereth, Clinical Lead for Complementary Health and Well-being Services; Laura Trubshaw, Complementary Therapist; and the people affected by cancer who reviewed this edition.

Thanks also to The Clapham Common Clinic and its patients for allowing us to take the photographs of acupuncture, massage and hypnotherapy shown in this booklet.

Sources

We've listed a sample of the sources used in this publication below. If you'd like further information about the sources we use, please contact us at bookletfeedback@macmillan.org.uk

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Can you do something to help?

We hope this booklet has been useful to you. It's just one of our many publications that are available free to anyone affected by cancer. They're produced by our cancer information specialists who, along with our nurses, benefits advisers, campaigners and volunteers, are part of the Macmillan team. When people are facing the toughest fight of their lives, we're there to support them every step of the way.

We want to make sure no one has to go through cancer alone, so we need more people to help us. When the time is right for you, here are some ways in which you can become a part of our team.



Share your cancer experience

Support people living with cancer by telling your story, online, in the media or face to face.

Campaign for change

We need your help to make sure everyone gets the right support. Take an action, big or small, for better cancer care.

Help someone in your community

A lift to an appointment. Help with the shopping. Or just a cup of tea and a chat. Could you lend a hand?

Raise money

Whatever you like doing you can raise money to help. Take part in one of our events or create your own.

Give money

Big or small, every penny helps. To make a one-off donation see over.

Call us to find out more

0300 1000 200

macmillan.org.uk/getinvolved

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Do you pay tax? If so, your gift will be worth 25% more to us – at no extra cost to you. All you have to do is tick the box below, and the tax office will give 25p for every pound you give.

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Macmillan Cancer Support and our trading companies would like to hold your details in order to contact you about our fundraising, campaigning and services for people affected by cancer. If you would prefer us not to use your details in this way please tick this box.

In order to carry out our work we may need to pass your details to agents or partners who act on our behalf.



If you'd rather donate online go to macmillan.org.uk/donate

Please cut out this form and return it in an envelope (no stamp required) to:
Supporter Donations, Macmillan Cancer Support, FREEPOST LON15851,
89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UQ

More than one in three of us will get cancer. For most of us it will be the toughest fight we ever face. And the feelings of isolation and loneliness that so many people experience make it even harder. But you don't have to go through it alone. The Macmillan team is with you every step of the way.

We are the nurses and therapists helping you through treatment. The experts on the end of the phone. The advisers telling you which benefits you're entitled to. The volunteers giving you a hand with the everyday things. The campaigners improving cancer care. The community there for you online, any time. The supporters who make it all possible.

Together, we are all Macmillan Cancer Support.

For cancer support every step of the way, call Macmillan on 0808 808 00 00 (Mon–Fri, 9am–8pm) or visit macmillan.org.uk

Hard of hearing? Use textphone 0808 808 0121, or Text Relay.
Non-English speaker? Interpreters available.
Braille and large print versions on request.

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