

CHOOSING A COMPLEMENTARY THERAPY

When choosing a complementary therapy it can help to think about what you want to get out of it. Some therapies aim to relax you or make you feel generally better. Whilst others may help you cope with the symptoms of cancer or the side effects of treatment.

Always tell your doctor if you are thinking about using complementary therapies. Although many complementary therapies are safe to use alongside conventional treatment, some may not be suitable. Your doctor can help you choose a complementary therapy that is safe for you.

You may be able to get some complementary therapies free on the NHS or from some large cancer charities. Private therapists can be expensive so make sure you find out the cost beforehand.

If you want to know about the therapies other people with cancer have found helpful you can contact a local cancer support group or join an online community. The Macmillan Support Line can also give you information on complementary and alternative therapies, and how to find a suitable therapist.

Things to consider when choosing complementary therapies

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 by choosing a therapy in the [Find a therapy section](#). There are a number of other organisations that can give you information on 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 and find a support group near you at macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups

You can also read interviews with people who have tried complementary therapies at healthtalk.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.

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?

'COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES TO ME MEAN A BIT OF INDULGENCE. MASSAGE, 'ME' TIME.'

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.

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. Some organisations 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. We have some [tips on choosing a therapist](#) and suggestions of what to ask them.

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. Take your time to decide if you want to go ahead with the therapy.

The Macmillan Support Line 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. We have a [list of websites that are reliable sources of information](#).

Thanks

We rely on a number of sources to gather evidence for our information. If you'd like further information on the

sources we use, please feel free to [contact us](mailto:bookletfeedback@macmillan.org.uk) on: bookletfeedback@macmillan.org.uk

All our information is reviewed by cancer or other relevant professionals to ensure that it's accurate and reflects the best evidence available. We thank all those people who have provided expert review for the information on this page.

Our information is also reviewed by people affected by cancer to ensure it is as relevant and accessible as possible. Thank you to all those people who reviewed what you're reading and have helped our information to develop.

You could help us too when you join our Cancer Voices Network – [find out more](#) at:
<http://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancervoices>

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**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**

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