

Taking the Complement

Your Guide to Alternative Therapies for Wellbeing

Complementary or alternative therapies are names used for a wide range of healthcare practices that may be used alone or along with standard medical treatment for improved health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Although people often use the terms complementary and alternative therapies interchangeably, there is a difference:

- **Complementary therapies:** the therapy is a non-standard treatment or medicine that you use together with conventional medical treatment or medicine.
- **Alternative therapies:** the therapy is a non-standard treatment or medicine that you use instead of conventional medical treatment or medicine.

Complementary and alternative therapies can encompass diet and exercise changes, hypnosis, chiropractic adjustment, and poking needles into a person's skin (acupuncture), among other treatments. Some of these therapies work as well as conventional medical treatments and they often have fewer side effects.

Naturopathic medicine is premised on the healing power of nature and is a broad branch of alternative medicine. Naturopathic doctors are trained in both conventional and alternative medicines. They seek to understand the cause of a condition by exploring its mental, physical and spiritual manifestations in a given patient. Naturopathy typically involves a variety of treatment techniques, including nutrition, behavioural changes, herbal medicine, homeopathy and acupuncture.

Another benefit is in the more holistic 'whole person' approach of many of its practitioners, which considers your mental and emotional health, life-style, background and habits, in addition to your physical health. This provides a more complete health picture and a more effective way to treat many ailments. In many cases, this personal approach makes people feel better, giving them a sense of empowerment by taking a more active role in their own health and wellbeing.

Science has shown that your emotional



state can affect your health and in fact 70% of all illness is now directly attributed to stress. It is worth keeping in mind that while complementary or alternative therapies have their use *managing* an illness, the greatest effect they may have on people is inducing relaxation; therefore *prevention* is surely better than cure.

The field of alternative therapies is vast. It's an evolving area and more research in all of these therapies is needed. That said, integrating a handful of these into your routine may have solid benefits to your health. After all, there's a reason why some of these have been around for thousands of years.

The bottom line is this: we believe in doing what works for you, as long as you've consulted with a doctor or practitioner you can rely on. You may need a combination of Western medicine and complementary therapies to heal.

Principles and Benefits of Alternative Therapies

Alternative Therapies

Basic Principle

Key Benefits

Yoga



- Build strength, awareness and harmony in both the mind and body
- Move through poses accompanied with deep breathing techniques

- Increased flexibility, muscle strength, tone
- Improved respiration, energy and vitality
- Maintaining a balanced metabolism
- Weight reduction
- Improved cardio and circulatory health
- Improved athletic performance
- Protection from injury

Tai chi



- Graceful form of exercise
- Involves a series of movements performed in a slow, focused manner and accompanied by deep breathing

- Decreased stress, anxiety and depression
- Improved mood, aerobic capacity, flexibility, balance and agility
- Increased energy and stamina
- Improved muscle strength and definition

Pilates



- Inspired by calisthenics, yoga and ballet

- Improved flexibility, strength, balance and body awareness
- Improved postural muscle strength
- Reduced pain and prevents injuries

Acupressure



- Practitioners use their hands, elbows or feet to apply pressure to specific points along the body's 'meridians'
- Meridians are channels that carry life energy (qi or ch'i) throughout the body
- Illness can occur when one of these meridians is blocked or out of balance

- Restored energy flow
- Relief from blockages, range of illnesses, back pain, labour pain, headaches
- Relief from anxiety and depression

Acupuncture



- Ancient traditional Chinese medicine
- Sharp needles inserted into specific points on body
- Can add heat and electrical stimulation to needles
- Needle stimulation unblocks and restores flow to meridians in the body maintaining health and restoring energy flow

- Treat chronic pain syndromes
- Relief from neck and back pain, premenstrual syndrome, tension, stress, headaches
- Relief from osteoarthritis pain
- Management of insomnia

Aromatherapy



- Use of natural essential oils from roots, leaves, seeds or blossoms of plants to promote healing
- Oils can be inhaled by diffuser or massaged into skin

- Treatment of anxiety, depression, insomnia
- Relief from pain and nausea

Cupping



- Cups are used to create suction (either through heat or through automated pumps) on the surface of the skin, blood flow is directed to the area under suction
- Stimulates circulation and relieves tension in tissue and fascia

- Promotion of healing and release tense muscle areas and injured areas
- Relaxation

Reflexology



- Application of pressure to specific areas on the feet, hands or ears

- Treatments for conditions including anxiety, cancer, diabetes, kidney function and asthma
- Improved digestion
- Reduced infertility

Reiki



- A form of energy healing
- A practitioner seeks to transfer life energy to the client by placing their hands lightly on the client's body or a slight distance away from the body

- Promotion of relaxation and healing, reduced pain, and generally improvement of the client's wellbeing by reducing anxiety, depression and improving self-esteem

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