

Natural therapies and cancer

Most people get some kind of cancer treatment from doctors, like surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy. This treatment tries to get rid of the cancer or make it smaller.

Some people also use natural therapies to manage the cancer and help them cope better. Natural therapies are sometimes called natural medicines or complementary therapies. They include:

- traditional bush medicines and foods
- massage and aromatherapy
- meditation, prayer or spiritual healing
- herbal medicine
- acupuncture
- counselling, art therapy and music therapy.

How can natural therapies help?

You may have problems caused by the cancer and its treatment, such as pain, feeling sick, not being hungry, feeling tired, not sleeping well, rashes, sore gums, stress, fear or sadness.

You may find that certain natural medicines or therapies can help with these problems. The therapies you use depend on what you want to try and what your doctor advises.

Are they safe?

They're generally safe if you go to see a qualified natural therapist.



Keep your doctor informed

Should my doctor know?

Yes. It's important to talk to your doctor if you want to use natural therapies. This is to make sure they are safe, and treatment from the doctor and any other therapies work well together.

When can I use natural therapies?

It depends on your health and the cancer treatment that you're having. Your doctor and natural therapist will work out the best time for you.

It may be okay to use different therapies throughout cancer treatment, but there are some natural medicines that can stop your cancer treatment from working properly. You may need to wait till treatment is over.

What about bush medicines?

Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use traditional bush medicines to help them get through cancer. These may also help you.

- If you want to use bush medicine, discuss this with an Aboriginal health care worker or elder.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse about any natural therapies or medicines that might benefit you.

More information

● **Cancer Council Helpline**
13 11 20
www.cancerCouncil.com.au

● **Australian Traditional-Medicine Society**
(02) 9809 6800
www.atms.org.au

● **National Herbalists Association of Australia**
(02) 8765 0071
www.nhaa.org.au