Question checklist for complementary therapies

You may find these questions helpful when thinking about what to ask your complementary therapist and doctor.

**Things to consider before using a complementary therapy**

- What are the benefits?
- What is the scientific evidence to support its use?
- What are the risks and possible side effects of the therapy?
- Are there any interactions with other medicines I am taking?
- Will the therapy potentially harm me because of the therapist’s advice to stop or delay conventional treatment?
- Can I afford the cost of the therapy or medicines?
- How long will I need to use the therapy for?

**General questions to ask your treatment team**

- Are you familiar with complementary therapies or medicines?
- Do you have any qualifications in complementary therapies?
- Are there any complementary therapies you think might help me?
- Would you be happy for me to use complementary therapies? If not, why and what should I do if I decide to use complementary therapies?
- Do you know whether the complementary medicines I am taking or wish to take will interfere with any of my treatments?
- Would you be willing to guide me in my choice of complementary therapies?
- Would you be willing to talk to my complementary therapists?
- Can you recommend any complementary therapists?
- Does this hospital or treatment centre offer complementary therapies?
- Can you give me a letter for my therapist outlining my treatment?

**General questions to ask potential complementary therapists**

- What are your qualifications?
- Are you a member of a professional association?
- What training or experience do you have in treating people with cancer? Have you treated anyone with my type of cancer?
- Do you practise in an integrative way with conventional health practitioners?
- What exactly is the therapy? How does it work?
- How can the therapy you practise help me? How long will it take to work?
- Are there any specific precautions I should take?
- Has the therapy been tested in clinical trials? Have the findings been published, and are they available to read?
- Can this therapy be combined with conventional cancer treatment and medicines?
- Do you expect me to stop my conventional medicines and treatments?
- Are you willing to liaise with my doctors or any other health professionals I may need to see?
- How will I know the therapy is working?

*continued on next page*
• Are you able to do home visits if I am not well enough to attend your clinic?
• What do you charge for a consultation? Can I claim the cost on Medicare or from my health fund?
• How long are your consultations? What can I expect during a consultation?
• How many consultations do you recommend, and how often?
• Do you dispense your own medicines and supplements?
• How much can I expect to pay for medicines?
• Have the products or medicines you dispense been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration?
• What side effects may occur?

Questions to ask about specific therapies

Mind–body techniques
• What type of therapist would you recommend for my concerns?
• Can you refer me to a psychologist or counsellor?

Body-based practices
• Are there any forms of massage or bodywork that would help me?
• Are there any forms of massage or bodywork I shouldn’t have?
• Are there any areas on my body where a massage therapist or acupuncturist needs to take special care?
• What precautions, if any, should I take?
• Would I be able to participate in qi gong, tai chi or yoga?
• What level of exercise intensity would be suitable for me?
• Can you provide me with a letter giving your approval for me to have massage or other bodywork therapy?

Therapies based on diet
• Are there any general dietary changes I should make?
• Should I eat organic foods?
• Are there any vitamin or mineral supplements that will help manage specific side effects caused by conventional treatment?
• Should I be taking any particular nutritional supplements?
• What can I eat to improve my digestion and bowel movements?
• Are there any foods or supplements that I should definitely have, or definitely avoid, during and after cancer treatment?
• Should I see a dietitian or a nutritionist?

Therapies using herbs and plants
• Are there any herbs you would recommend during or after cancer treatment?
• What dosage should I take? Does it have side effects?
• Are there any herbs I shouldn’t take because of my medicines, surgery or other conventional treatments?
• If I use herbal medicine, when should I take it in relation to my other medicines or conventional treatments? Is it okay to use at the same time or should I take it at a different time?
• Do you think using flower remedies or homeopathy would benefit me?
• Will I have any side effects from homeopathy remedies?
Questions about joining a clinical trial
• What therapies are being tested and why?
• What tests are involved?
• Can I take part in the trial while having conventional treatment?
• What are the possible risks or side effects?
• What are the possible benefits?
• How long will the trial last?
• Who can I contact if problems occur while I am in the trial?
• Can I be paid back for any out-of-pocket expenses?
• Who is funding the trial? Has it been approved by an ethics committee?
• Have the researchers declared any conflicts of interest? How will these be managed?

My questions

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