

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?
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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?
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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?
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- 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?
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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?
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