

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)



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Defining Terms

- **Complementary:** used in combination with, or supplemental to standard medical care
- **Alternative:** used alone or instead of standard medical care
- **Integrative Medicine:** is the combined use of standard medical care along with CAM treatments that have been shown to be safe and effective.

<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/whatiscam>

Complementary/Alternative Medicines

- **Biologically-based:** use of substances found in nature (e.g. herbs, diets, vitamins)
- **Energy medicine:** use of energy fields such as magnetic fields and bioelectric fields (e.g., reiki, touch for health and healing touch)
- **Manipulative and body-based practices:** manipulation or movement of one or more body parts (e.g., massage, various exercises, chiropractic)

Complementary/Alternative Medicines

- **Mind-body medicine:** techniques that enhance the mind's ability to affect bodily function and symptoms.
- **Whole medical systems:** systems of theory and practice. Often these systems have evolved apart from and earlier than conventional medical approach used in U.S.
 - E.g. Chinese medicine, including acupuncture
<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/whatiscam>

Massage

- Ancient modality, involves various techniques of pressing, rubbing, gentle stretching.
- Over 80 different types of massage therapy—each can be useful to specific situations.
- **Swedish massage** technique is required for licensing and certifications.

Massage

- **Sports massage:** vigorous massage for loosening and relieving sore muscles, increasing flexibility and improving performance
- **Medical massage:** specific application of massage to treat a condition, e.g. shoulder problem, Parkinson's disease.

Massage

- **Micro-holding technique/mindful massage:** deliberately slow and soothing massage technique used to calm the nervous system, reduce distressing symptoms, and comfort.
- **Manual lymph drainage:** manual technique for reducing swelling and edema.

Massage (continued)

- Most common massage therapy technique is Swedish Massage
 - Method used to improve circulation and release muscle tension and loosen tight muscles and improve range of joint motion/flexibility.
 - Based on a system of five strokes (effleurage, petrissage, friction, vibration and tapotement) that can be used as needed.

Massage (continued)

- Has been shown to be helpful with reducing pain, especially low back pain, relieving stress, anxiety and depression.

<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/massage/>

Yoga

- Originated in India. It is an ancient mind/body spiritual practice of moving the body with awareness.
- There are many types of yoga (e.g., Hatha and restorative yoga)
- All types include breathing exercises, contemplation/meditation and healthy lifestyle habits (e.g. vegetarian diet).

Yoga

- Has been shown to be helpful with pain reduction, rehabilitation, fitness, and quality of life improvements .Used for health maintenance and improvement (e.g. for depression, high blood pressure and stress-related conditions).

<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/yoga/introduction.htm>

Meditation

- Originated as an ancient spiritual practice for the development of insight, compassion and moral character.
- Many types: e.g., Insight, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Relaxation Response, Imagery and Breath work
- Modern versions such as MBSR are secular and involve cultivating awareness and attention to reduce stress and reactivity while improving mental and physical health.

Meditation

- Meditation can be guided by an instructor or self-directed.
 - The personal experience of trying to practice meditation is where potential learning and healing happens.
 - Has been shown to reduce stress and symptoms such as depression, anxiety, pain. Can improve attention and reduce obsessive rumination.

<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/meditation/overview.htm>

- For additional CAM therapies that can be affective in treating pain see “get the facts”

<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/pain/chronic.htm#science>

Benefits of CAM

1. “reduce or eliminate chronic pain”
2. “reduce the need for medications”
3. “improve mood and affect”
4. “enhance sense of wellbeing”

Benefits of CAM

5. “reduce stress and stress-related visits to physicians”
6. “improve functionality and the ability to perform activities for daily living”
7. “and provide the patient with a greater sense of control over his or her life.” [1]

[1] Hart, Jane. “Complementary Therapies for Chronic Pain Management.” *Alternative and Complementary Therapies* (2008): 64-68.

A word to the wise

- Speak with your health care provider about the CAM therapies you are considering and using.
 - For information about talking to health care providers about using complementary modalities: <http://nccam.nih.gov/timetotalk>
- Get referrals by asking a “trusted source” such as a medical professional.

A word to the wise

- Use CAM that is well-researched, such as massage, meditation, yoga and acupuncture.
- Check credentials of the CAM providers, e.g., are they certified or licensed to practice?

To verify professional licenses see:

<http://www.op.nysed.gov/opsearches.htm#nme>

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