

Chapter 9. Integrative Health

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Complementary therapies engage the mind, body and spirit in the healing process. They help round out your treatment program and can be used for the rest of your life to help keep you healthy. They are meant to complement, rather than replace, the medical care you receive from your doctors and other health care providers (which is why they are also called alternative medicine). Talk to your doctor, nurse or social worker about complementary therapies available at your hospital or in your community.

Guided Imagery

This gentle technique uses the engaging power of imagery to assist in your healing. You visualize places, activities, sensations and/or experiences in your mind that help enhance your sense of wellbeing. It is a safe and easy, yet powerful, tool to relieve tension, lower stress, improve sleep, and cope with anxiety and other emotions. By becoming attuned to your body and your breathing rhythm, you can send warm energy to parts of your body that may be tense, gather up the tension and breathe it out. Deep breathing can have a cleansing action to help you imagine your body fighting the cancer cells. You may want to listen to guided imagery audiotapes or CDs, or make an appointment with someone trained in guided imagery.

Massage

Massage should be performed by a certified massage therapist who is specially trained to work with prostate cancer patients. Massage is a powerful therapeutic tool to help relieve muscle pain and tension. It also provides care and comfort, enhances well-being and fosters nurturing. There are many types of massage therapies. Craniosacral massage, for example, uses light touch as the therapist monitors the rhythm of the craniosacral (brain and spinal) system to detect restrictions and imbalances. Delicate manipulations are used to improve the central nervous system and foster a deep sense of calm and well-being. Massage therapists can use different degrees of pressure depending on your condition and preference. Please discuss with your massage therapist how deep you would like your tissue to be massaged before he or she begins.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese technique based on the belief that the life force or “chi” flows through channels in the body known as meridians or pathways. Needles as thin as a human hair are inserted at specific points along these meridians to stimulate, disperse and regulate the flow of chi. The goal is to restore a healthful energetic balance, alleviate discomfort and treatment side effects, and support the immune system. Chinese herbs may be given in addition to acupuncture. If you choose to explore acupuncture, please let your doctor and health care team know. Remember it takes more than one session to achieve results.

Yoga

Yoga, meaning “union,” is a form of exercise that integrates the mind, body and spirit. It uses stretching, movement, breathing techniques and meditation to create a state of peacefulness, as

well as physical and mental well-being. It may enhance quality of life by reducing stress and increasing feelings of relaxation.

Art Therapy

Expressive art therapists work with your imagination and creative spirit to help you access healing images. Drawing a picture, creating a collage, writing a poem, listening to music or making a scrapbook may help heal the spirit and improve quality of life. They can also help relieve cancer treatment related symptoms, such as nausea or fatigue, and help you understand or cope better with sadness, anxiety and other emotions. Art therapists can listen to your unique story and show you how to express your feelings in the most comfortable and appropriate way for you.

Herbal and Nutritional Supplements, Vitamins and AntiOxidants

Taking herbal and nutritional supplements is appropriate when using prescribed by a holistic physician or other practitioner who specializes in complementary therapies and other supplements. It is very important that you discuss this with your medical oncologist and other doctors and get their approval before beginning any supplements.

Some supplements may interfere with your cancer treatments. It is also important to purchase the highest quality products. If you and your physician decide supplements are right for you, you can get them at the Health and Healing Center at California Pacific Medical Center, a not-for-profit hospital in San Francisco, carries seven lines of doctor-recommended supplements. Each product is well researched and selected by physician and practitioner juries to be of the highest quality in its category. You can call 415-600-HEAL (4325) or visit www.myhealthandhealing.org to order supplements that can be sent to you, receive product names you can obtain locally, or receive a consultation about how they can help your recovery.

Specifically, you may want to talk with your doctor about the following dietary supplements, which you may hear about, but are not endorsed by their inclusion in this material.

- **Citrus Pectin** (modified) may inhibit the growth of prostate cancer cells.
- **Garlic** may enhance immune function and slow cancer cell growth.
- **Gravel Root, Hydrangea, Oat Straw and Yarrow** are diuretics that may also dissolve sediment.
- **Ginger** may settle your stomach.
- **Green Tea** may kill prostate cancer cells.
- **Saw Palmetto** may act as a diuretic and urinary antiseptic.
- **Selenium** is necessary for proper prostate function and may prevent the recurrence of prostate cancer.
- **Vitamin E** may prevent the recurrence of prostate cancer.
- **Vitamin D** may help ease osteoporosis (a bone disorder that results in a loss of bone density) induced by hormone therapy.

If you decide to start taking any of these supplements, be sure to notify your health care team so that they can consider any possible interactions with your conventional medications and/or treatments.

The results of taking the supplements listed here mainly lie in anecdotal and/or small clinical studies. No clear data has been gathered using large, controlled randomized trials. To help answer some of the outstanding questions related to these vitamins and minerals, and to better identify the specific groups that might benefit most from both vitamin E and selenium supplementation, the National Institutes of Health has launched the selenium and vitamin E Chemoprevention Trial (SELECT), the largest cancer prevention trial evaluating nutrition supplementation ever attempted. Over 30,000 healthy men have been randomized to selenium alone, alpha-tocopherol alone, or the combination for a minimum of seven years and a maximum of 12 years. Enrollment in this trial began in 2001 and was completed in 2004; the first set of results is anticipated in 2006.

References

Prescription for Nutritional Healing, 3rd Edition, Phyllis Balch, CNC; James F. Balch, M.D.

Prostate Cancer Foundation

http://www.prostatecancerfoundation.org/site/c.itlWK2OSG/b.788357/k.7C0B/Vitamins_and_Minerals.htm (last accessed 8/17/06)

Aromatherapy

The use of essential oils (from plants) for psychological and physical well-being can be added to other complementary therapies, such as massage, to support health. There is no scientific evidence that aromatherapy can cure anything, but some essential oils have been shown to have effects on the nervous system. One of the best-known essential oils for aromatherapy is lavender, which is recommended for treating wounds and helping people get better sleep by reducing anxiety and insomnia.

Several cancer centers are using aromatherapy currently, to help reduce the anxiety of patients undergoing treatment, to help aid healthy sleep, to reduce nausea and discomfort, and improve compromised immunity.

Meditation

There are many forms of meditation, and all provide relaxation and may contribute to your overall health. Here are instructions for a simple, relaxing meditation.

First Step: Sitting. Be very comfortable. Sit in a straight-backed chair with both feet flat on the ground, hands on your thighs, palms facing up. Partially close your eyes and look forward, about four feet. Focus on something. You can also close your eyes.

Second Step: Breathing. You need to breathe slowly in and out very deeply. People start this in a number of ways; some people count to six while breathing in slowly, hold the breath for another count of six, and then let the breath out while (again) counting to six. This slows your breath and counting helps with the third step.

Third Step: Stopping your brain. This is the hardest part. Some people repeat in their brain "IN" while breathing in and "OUT" while breathing out just to do something with their thoughts; other people literally do not think. If a thought goes through your mind, just think "thinking" and stop it. Keep trying to let your brain stop—no pictures or favorite spots, or images. The idea is to stop your brain completely and just focus on your breath!

If you do just this for five minutes, twice a day, you may feel much more peaceful!