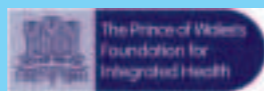


This booklet contains general information produced on behalf of the British Holistic Medical Association which can be used as the first step to help you decide the best course of action to take when you or your family are not well. In the absence of any examination it is not possible to reliably diagnose and treat a medical condition. Diagnosis can only be carried out by a suitably qualified health professional consultation.

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Making **complementary medicine** work for you



Making complementary medicine work for you

This booklet will help you to make sure that you know what questions to ask and what information you need to give, to get the best out of your treatment. It will explain the following:

- how complementary and conventional medicine work together
- how to decide what treatment you need
- questions to ask about your treatment
- what complementary therapies are regulated
- how to decide which therapy to use.

What is complementary medicine?

Complementary medicine includes health-related therapies and treatments that are available in addition to conventional medical treatment (from a health professional such as a GP, nurse, pharmacist etc). Complementary medicine can be used alongside conventional medicine. There are many different kinds of complementary therapies and treatments available including acupuncture, chiropractic, herbal medicine and osteopathy.

Complementary and conventional medicine working together

Complementary medicine is becoming increasingly popular and there is now good evidence that some complementary treatments can be effective.

Complementary medicine is not an alternative to seeing your GP, nurse, hospital doctor, pharmacist or other health professional for conventional diagnosis and treatment. Using both complementary and conventional medicine and treatment can offer you a wide range of choice to help you manage your health. This is why some GP practices now offer access to some form of complementary therapy.

In order to get the best out of any treatment or medicine it is important to make sure that the health professional or complementary practitioner treating or advising you is fully informed about any other treatments or medicines you may be taking (including any supplements like vitamins and minerals).

Mixing medicines

Some medicines, whether they are prescription, over-the-counter or complementary can interact with other medicines to produce unpleasant side-effects. They can also block the effects of other medicines and stop them from working. For example, women using the contraceptive pill should not take St John's Wort (a herbal medicine commonly used to help reduce depression and

Cut out, fold and keep this card as a reminder when talking to a health professional or complementary practitioner.

Ask about your treatment

Making **complementary medicine** work for you

- What will this treatment do?
- How long will I need to be treated for?
- How much will it cost?
- Can I take this treatment alongside other treatment/medicines?
- What are the chances of side-effects or after-effects?

Make sure you get the best from complementary medicine. Here are some questions to ask your complementary practitioner or health professional if you are thinking about using complementary medicine. It may also be useful to write down any further questions you may have before you visit the complementary practitioner or health professional.

All medicines come with instructions on how to take them and details of what they contain. Always read the label and the instruction leaflet before you take any medicine. If you are worried or things aren't clear, ask your pharmacist or complementary practitioner.

BHMA
British Holistic Medical Association

fold

fold

British Medical Acupuncture Society

(For conventional doctors who have training in acupuncture techniques)

BMAS House, 3 Winnington Court, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 1AQ

Tel: 01606 786 782

Email: admin@medical-acupuncture.org.uk

Website: www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk

Chiropractic

– deals with the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mechanical disorders of the musculo-skeletal system and the effects of these disorders on the function of the nervous system and general health. Manual treatments like spinal manipulation are usually used.

General Chiropractic Council

44 Wicklow Street, London, WC1X 9HL

Tel: 020 7713 5155, Email: enquiries@gcc-uk.org / regulation@gcc-uk.org

Website: www.gcc-uk.org

Herbal Medicine

– makes use of the healing properties of plants and herbs.

European Herbal Practitioners Association

45a Corsica Street, London, N5 1JT

Tel: 020 7354 5067, Email: info@euroherb.com

Website: www.euroherb.com

Homeopathy – is a system of treatment that involves giving patients remedies made from very diluted substances. The basic principle is ‘like cures like’.

Council of Organisations

Registering Homeopaths

11 Wingle Tye Road, Burgess Hill, West Sussex, RH15 9HR

Tel: 01444 239494, Email: admin@corh.org.uk

Website: www.corh.org.uk

Hypnotherapy

– the mental state where a person is so relaxed that they become more open to suggestion is called hypnosis and can be used to help people with health problems.

The British Society of Medical

and Dental Hypnosis

(Group of doctors, dentists, psychologists and other healthcare professionals who use hypnotherapy in their practice).

Website: www.bsmdh.org

London area Tel: 07000 560 309

Email: nat.office@bsmdh.org

Rest of England and Wales Tel: 020 8905 4342

Email: valentine.la@talk21.com

Scotland Email: bsmdh@bsmdhscot.fsnet.co.uk

Osteopathy – osteopaths work with the body’s musculo-skeletal system, which is made up of the bones, joints, muscles, ligaments and connective tissue. They use their hands to diagnose and treat abnormalities in the way the body is working and damage caused by disease.

General Osteopathic Council

Osteopathy House, 176 Tower Bridge Road, London, SE1 3LU

Tel: 020 7357 6655

Email: info@osteopathy.org.uk

Website: www.osteopathy.org.uk

Reflexology – is based on the principle that certain points on the feet and hands, called reflex points, correspond to various parts of the body and that by applying pressure to these points in a systematic way, a practitioner can help to release tensions and encourage the body’s natural healing processes.

The Reflexology Forum

PO Box 2367, South Croydon, CR2 7ZE

Tel: 0800 037 0130 (free-phone)

Email: info@reflexologyforum.org

Website: www.reflexologyforum.org

anxiety) as it may stop their pill from working. Always check with your pharmacist, GP or complementary practitioner if you are taking or planning to take more than one treatment.

Taking more than one medicine may also mean that you get too much of a particular ingredient. Medicines you buy from a pharmacy, including complementary medicines, can be just as strong as prescription medicine. This is why mixing medicines and treatments can be dangerous.

Make sure a health professional (such as your GP or pharmacist) or a complementary practitioner knows if you are taking (or planning to take) anything else or receiving any other treatment so that they can give you the best advice.

Deciding what treatment you need

Treating your ailment yourself

Decide if you can treat your health problem yourself with self-care or advice from your **pharmacist, NHS Direct* (0845 4647)**, or **complementary practitioner**. On-line information about self-care is available at www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk.

Diagnosis and treatment

If you need more advice or treatment you should call **NHS Direct*** on **0845 4647** or your **GP surgery** to make an appointment. It is important that you are properly diagnosed by your GP or practice nurse to make sure that any illness is identified.

* Available in England and Wales only. In Scotland call **NHS24** on **0800 224488**

You should not change or stop taking prescribed medicine without talking to your GP or pharmacist first.

If you wish to use complementary medicine for your condition you can get advice from a health professional:

- some GP practices provide access to complementary practitioners so may be able to refer you
- some pharmacies sell complementary medicines and pharmacists can give you the appropriate advice.

Make sure you tell your pharmacist, GP or complementary practitioner about any prescription or over-the-counter medicines you are taking. See ‘Deciding which therapy to use’ on page 5.

Ask about your treatment

Make sure you get the best from your complementary medicine. Here are some questions to ask your complementary practitioner or health professional if you are thinking about using complementary medicine:

- **what will this treatment do?**
- **how long will I need to be treated for?**
- **how much will it cost?**
- **can I take this treatment alongside other treatment/medicines I am taking?**
- **what are the chances of side-effects or after-effects?**

Tip: Cut out the questions card on page 7 to use as a reminder. It may also be useful to write down any further questions you may have before you visit the complementary practitioner or health professional.

All medicines come with instructions on how to take them and details of what they contain. Always read the label and the instruction leaflet before you take any medicine. If you are unclear or worried about your medicine ask your pharmacist or complementary practitioner.

What complementary therapies are regulated?

- Regulation means that there is a system governing how a health professional works. It determines what happens if you are unhappy with your treatment or something goes wrong and should also ensure high standards of practice.
- There is no single regulatory system that oversees the work of **all** complementary healthcare practitioners in the UK.
- Some complementary medicine practitioners are regulated by law. Like doctors and nurses, they have a body that all practitioners have to be registered with to legally practice.
- The two complementary professions in the UK regulated by law are osteopaths (by the General Osteopathic Council) and chiropractors (by the General Chiropractic Council).

- There are complementary healthcare professions which use a voluntary system of regulation (such as acupuncture and herbal medicine at present) but without a legal requirement to register practitioners' standards of training and practice may vary.
- There are proposals for acupuncture and herbal medicine to become regulated by law.
- Other complementary healthcare professions are not regulated by law. Some are at different stages of developing voluntary systems of regulation and are working together to develop common standards of training and practice. Standards of training can vary so it is important that you have reliable up-to-date information.

Check the Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health website www.fihealth.org.uk to find out more about regulation, or contact the organisations listed in the 'Find out more' section on page 5.

Deciding which therapy to use

It can sometimes be difficult to find out if a complementary therapy is recognised by experts to be effective. In some cases there is clear and reliable evidence. In other cases there may be evidence but it may not be reliable for a number of reasons – for example if it is based on too few people to be able to draw a reliable conclusion. In still more cases there is no evidence at all. However, this does not necessarily mean the therapy does not work.

A complementary practitioner or health professional such as a GP or pharmacist may be able to advise you on which complementary therapy can best meet your needs. You can refer to the sources of information below to find out if there is reliable evidence for different therapies:

The Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health

12 Chillingworth Road, London, N7 8QJ
Tel: 020 7619 6140 Email: info@fihealth.org.uk
www.fihealth.org.uk

NHS Direct 0845 4647 (England and Wales only) / www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

National Electronic Library for Health www.nelh.nhs.uk

Find out more

To find out more about individual therapies you can contact the organisations listed in this section. If the therapy you're interested in is not listed here contact *The Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health*.

Acupuncture – fine needles are used to stimulate the body's ability to heal. Two main styles of acupuncture are practised in the UK – traditional Chinese and western medical acupuncture.

Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists

(For physiotherapists who use acupuncture as part of their treatment)
AACP Secretariat, Portcullis, Castle Street, Mere, Wiltshire, BA12 6JE
Email: sec@aacp.uk.com, Website: www.aacp.uk.com

British Academy of Western Medical Acupuncture

(For nurses, doctors and physiotherapists who are qualified to practice acupuncture techniques)
12 Poulton Green Close, Spital, Wirral, CH63 9FS
Email: info@bawa-hq.freeserve.co.uk
Website: www.westernacupuncture.co.uk

British Acupuncture Council

(Practitioners of traditional Chinese acupuncture)
63 Jeddo Road, London, W12 9HQ
Tel: 020 8735 0400, Email: info@acupuncture.org.uk
Website: www.acupuncture.org.uk