

Alternative treatments for cancer: What you need to know

Are you or is someone you know considering a so-called alternative cancer treatment? If so, play it safe. Talk to your doctor before you try anything, and find out all you can about the treatment. The National Cancer Institute suggests you ask these questions, and avoid the treatment if you answer Yes to any.

- Is the treatment untested?
- Do the practitioners of the approach claim that the medical community is trying to keep their cure from the public?
- Does the treatment rely on nutritional or diet therapy as its main focus?
- Do those who endorse the treatment claim that it is harmless and painless and that it produces no unpleasant side effects?
- Does the treatment depend upon a "secret formula" that only a small group of practitioners knows how to use?

Remember, no one has yet discovered a cure for cancer. But there are many types of treatment available, and the outlook is improving all the time. You and your doctor together can decide which treatments are best for you. Educating yourself is crucial. The following are some reliable sources.

BOOKS

Choices in Healing: Integrating the Best of Conventional and Complementary Approaches to Cancer,

Lerner M: Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press; 1994.
This title is also available on-line at
<http://www.commonwealhealth.org/choicescontents.html>

What You Need to Know About Cancer,
Scientific American—A Special Issue:
New York, NY: WH Freeman & Co; 1997.

Cancer and Nutrition: A Ten-Point Plan to Reduce Your Risk of Getting Cancer,
Simone CB: Garden City Park, NY: Avery Pub; 1994. This title is also available on-line at
<http://www.drsimone.com/cgi-bin/var/drsimone/newhome1.htm>

ON-LINE

Boston University Medical Center sponsors an informative Web site on alternative cancer treatments at <http://web.bu.edu:80/COHIS/cancer/about/alttx/about.htm>

Quackwatch is a useful Web site highlighting the unproven and possibly harmful approaches at <http://www.quackwatch.com/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/cancer.html>

ORGANIZATIONS

The national organizations of many alternative medicine practitioners can provide information on licensing, qualifications, and referrals.

American Academy of Medical Acupuncture

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American Association of Naturopathic Physicians

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For referrals, call (206) 298-0125
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<http://www.infinite.org/Naturopathic.Physician>

American Botanical Council

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Fax: (512) 331-1924
<http://www.herbalgram.org>