

FOR YOUR PATIENT



Integrative care options

Acupuncture is the ancient Chinese practice of manipulating very fine needles through the skin at specific points on the body. It is used most commonly to treat pain. The traditional belief is that energy or life force (called *qi* or *chi* [chee]). Chi is believed to flow through pathways (called meridians) in the body. Acupuncture reflows chi and restores balance to the body's energy flow.¹ The modern or Western definition of acupuncture is that the needles, placed at specific nerve points, stimulate the nerves, muscles, and connective tissues, which increases blood flow and boosts the body's natural painkillers.¹

Some patients with cancer have used acupuncture to ease chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting. Patients are advised to check that the acupuncturist is reputable. Acupuncture needles should be disposable, one-time use only. You should ask the acupuncturist about their protocols for needle use.¹

Distraction is the use of a highly interesting activity that takes the patient's mind off of his or her pain or discomfort. It can help patients who are anxious, feeling nauseous, or in pain. Activities that are effective distracters include listening to music, art, dance, imagery, and virtual reality and computer games. Daily living activities that also effectively

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Meditation techniques for cancer patients

A **CANCER DIAGNOSIS** changes a person's life. It entails stress, pain, and anxiety. Meditation is the ancient practice of achieving a thoughtless alertness. Research has shown that meditation can help reduce anxiety and stress. The classic definition of meditation is the deliberate self-regulation of attention through which the stream of consciousness is temporarily suspended.¹ The goal is to achieve a thoughtless awareness of one's person and/or surroundings.¹ Many types of meditation are practiced throughout the world. Some types are practiced in a sitting position (transcendental, mindfulness), and some types incorporate movement (aikido, qigong, tai chi). Patients, especially those with chronic conditions such as arthritis or heart disease, are advised to check with their health care team before beginning any type of activity that involves the joints or movement.

AIKIDO

Aikido is a noncombative Japanese martial art that teaches students to restore harmony in conflictive issues through the study of the martial way (Budo).² The martial art requires students to squarely face life situations in a proactive, constructive manner.^{2,3} Aikido utilizes various wristlocks, arm pins, or unbalancing throws to subdue and neutralize attackers without serious injury; the practice is in tandem with learning the art of falling, which trains the body and mind to receive such techniques in a safe manner.⁴ Aikido is

not a sport and has no competitive tournaments. The martial art involves cooperative training used to better oneself without the intention of harm or fear of injury.⁴

The Aikido Resolution Foundation sponsors a program called "Cut the Cancer" through schools affiliated with the Aikido Association of America. The program teaches cancer patients the physical and philosophical tenets of Budo to help them in their fight against cancer. Fumio Toyoda Shihan, founder, Aikido Association of America, explains the benefits of studying the martial arts, "Why study the martial

arts? A true martial artist does not train to only defeat others. He trains also to defeat the enemies inside himself, the enemies we all have. He trains to forge his life into something beautiful, something helpful to the world. He wishes not to draw a sword, but to put it away—once and for all."² Cancer patients should have approval to exercise from their health care providers, and caregiver participation is encouraged.

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distract your mind include talking with friends or relatives, watching television, listening to the radio, reading, or working on a hobby.

Reflexology is the application of pressure to the hands and feet based on a system of zones and reflex areas.² The practitioner uses specific finger, thumb, and hand techniques to apply the pressure in a way that affects changes in the body. According to Kunz and Kunz, studies conducted by nurses in 10 countries demonstrated that reflexology helps patients with cancer after chemotherapy sessions, during the postoperative period, with symptom management, and as part of their palliative/hospice care.²

Patients with cancer should be aware of several cautions when considering reflexology. It should be avoided during active treatment or if you are experiencing any swelling in the foot or lower leg. Pressure should not be applied directly to any known tumor sites or to lumps that may be cancerous. If your bones are fragile for any reason, physical manipulation or deep pressure should be avoided. In addition, patients who also have chronic conditions (such as arthritis and heart disease) should talk to their health care team before having any type of therapy that involves moving the joints and muscles.³ ■

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MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

Mindfulness meditation is the practice of being in the present moment.⁵ Mindfulness meditation can be learned on your own with practice; however, classes are available if you are having difficulty developing your practice or if you feel more comfortable with formal instruction.

You should find a quiet space to meditate.⁵ You do not need an entire room or a completely empty area. You can arrange an altar or have candle or incense burning; just make sure there are no distractions such as

the television or a computer. Place comfortable seating in the space that will allow you to sit with your feet supported, your back comfortably straight (not rigid), and your hips higher than your knees.⁵

You should allow your gaze to fall at a point a few feet in front of you, but do not focus on a particular object. The release comes in not trying to get away from it, but by accepting what it is. Mindfulness is the practice of being able to be with all of your experiences. As you experience the moment, thoughts will come into your mind; they should be allowed to flow freely. But if the thoughts become a central focus, you should gently bring your mind back to the moment. An acknowledgment that the thought occurred may help you let go of it. Recommended practice is to sit for 10 to 15 minutes, and you can build your practice to sitting for up to 45 minutes to 1 hour.⁵

QIGONG

Qigong (chee-gong) is an ancient Chinese health practice that is more than 5,000 years old.⁶ Qigong combines slow graceful movements with mental concentration and breathing to balance personal energy. Referred to as Chinese yoga, the exercises can be modified to be done sitting, lying down, standing, or moving. A set of exercises (form) can consist of repetitive movements that take up to 8 minutes to complete or a sequential routine that can take up to 40 minutes to complete.⁶



Qigong exercises produce three intentional corrections: body posture, breathing, and mental state or awareness.⁶ Initially, the adjustment of posture, breathing, and awareness is done only during exercise times. As you continue to practice qigong, you will make these adjustments throughout the day as the practice becomes a natural part of your life.⁶

TAI CHI

Tai chi, also referred to as moving meditation, is a martial art in which the practitioner moves his or her body slowly, gently, and with awareness, while breathing deeply.⁷ This practice can be self-taught through books and Web sites, and it is also taught in dedicated schools and programs. Originating in



China, tai chi is a set of 13 exercises, developed by Chang San-Feng, a Taoist monk, that mimic the movement of animals. The practice incorporates the Chinese concept of yin and yang (opposing forces within the body) and chi (life force or energy).⁷

Many different styles are practiced, and all involve slow, relaxed, graceful movements that flow from one into the next. The body is in constant motion and posture is important. Practitioners must concentrate on their movements, pushing aside distracting thoughts, and breathe in a deep and relaxed

but focused manner. Health-related benefits of practicing tai chi include: it is a low-impact, weight-bearing exercise; it improves physical conditioning, muscle strength, coordination, and flexibility; it improves balance and reduces risk of falls, especially in the elderly; it can ease pain and stiffness (eg, osteoarthritis); and it can improve sleep and overall wellness.⁷



TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION (TM)

TM is a meditation technique that allows the mind to settle inward to a transcendental consciousness.⁸ TM is simple and natural. It is practiced twice a day for 20 minutes while sitting comfortably with the eyes closed. In a state of restful alertness, the brain functions with significantly greater coherence and the body gains deep rest. TM does not engage the mind such as focusing on an object or breathing; it allows the mind to simply, naturally, and effortlessly transcend thinking. The

practitioner experiences a deep state of restfully alert consciousness.⁸ The technique is taught through instructors certified by the program. For more information on instructors and classes in your area, visit the Transcendental Meditation Web site at www.tm.org.

WALKING MEDITATION

This is the easiest form of movement meditation because you do not have to walk fast or learn moves.⁹ Adding meditation to walking is simple. As with any form of movement, you should check with your health care providers before beginning any movement program. Recommended practice is to start with a 20-minute routine. For walking meditation, you first stand upright and become aware of your body. The meditative elements are to gently

Resources

Aikido Association of America
www.aaa-aikido.com/benefits.htm

Cut the Cancer: Rehabilitating cancer through the study of aikido.
<http://aikidoresolutions.com/cutthecancer.htm>

Everyday Tai Chi
www.everyday-taichi.com/index.html

Center for Mindfulness, University of Massachusetts Medical School
Stress Reduction Program
www.umassmed.edu/Content.aspx?id=41254&LinkIdIdentifier=id

Meditation Oasis
<http://www.meditationoasis.com/>

Psychology Today
The courage to be present: How to practice mindfulness meditation
www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-courage-be-present/201001/how-practice-mindfulness-meditation

The Qigong Institute
Promoting qigong and energy medicine through research and education.
www.qigonginstitute.org/html/GettingStarted.php#ComprehensivePractice

The Transcendental Meditation Program
www.tm.org/meditation-techniques

The World Wide Online Meditation Center
www.meditationcenter.com/index.html

United States Aikido Federation
www.usaikifed.com/

What is reflexology?
Reflexology Research Presents
www.reflexology-research.com/whatis.htm

Wildmind Buddhist Meditation
<http://www.wildmind.org/>

Yoga Journal
www.yogajournal.com

Clinical trials

The following clinical trials are listed in the National Cancer Institute database. All trials were actively recruiting participants at press time. Go to www.ClinicalTrials.gov for more information. Lead organizations/sponsors and location are in parentheses. Patients are advised to discuss their interest in participating in a clinical trial with their oncology care team.

A Mindfulness-Based Intervention for Younger Breast Cancer Survivors

(Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center at UCLA; Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation; Los Angeles, California)

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Symptom Cluster Trial for Breast Cancer Survivors

(H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute at University of South Florida; Tampa, Florida)

Effect of Quigong on Fatigue and QOL in Elderly Prostate Cancer Survivors

(University of Utah; Salt Lake City, Utah)

Yoga Intervention for Cancer Survivors

(Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center; Nashville, Tennessee)

BY THE NUMBERS

2 / 20

number of sessions per day and minutes per session of meditation

>5 million

Number of people who practice Transcendental Meditation

Source: The technique. The Transcendental Meditation Program Web site. <http://www.tm.org/meditation-techniques>. Accessed March 26, 2012.

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focus on the relationship between each body part and the motion of walking, starting with your feet and working up to your head. This meditation is best practiced outdoors. Initially, you should find an area where you can walk continuously for 20 minutes with minimal danger from traffic, other pedestrians, and distractions.⁹ Some types of walking meditation encourage you to build up your practice until you incorporate meditation into any walking you do, such as walking from the car into a building.

YOGA

Yoga is a form of nonaerobic exercise comprised of a program of precise postures, breathing exercises, and meditation.¹⁰ Research has shown that it can help ease anxiety and stress experienced by patients with cancer as they undergo treatments. Yoga can increase your ability to relax and improve physical fitness. Studies on the benefits of yoga have focused on breast cancer patients; however, new studies are investigating the impact on quality of life for patients with other cancers as well.¹⁰ Restorative yoga is a type of yoga designed to meet the unique needs of patients with cancer. The poses are gentle and supported by props. Participants are coached to relax and stretch gently. ■

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