

Living with Cancer

How Alternative Therapies Can Help

Exploring the various forms of complementary medicine and incorporating one or more of them into your treatment plan can give you an upper edge in your battle. Current research trials are showing promising results as they study the effects of everything from acupuncture to yoga. The following alternative therapies are commonly used to strengthen the mind, body and spirit and can be helpful when incorporated into your treatment regime.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is a technique that uses insertion and manipulation of fine needles into specific points on the body for therapeutic purposes. As acupuncture and oriental medicine continue to gain acceptance in the West, they are increasingly being used in conjunction with western conventional medicine to treat a range of conditions, including cancer. Acupuncture in particular has received much attention for its use in cancer pain and post-operative and chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting. Traditional Chinese acupuncture encourages the growth of healthy functioning cells resulting in increased energy in cancer patients. This could be important for counteracting the effects of radiation and chemotherapy that tend to attack both normal and abnormal cells. An additional benefit of acupuncture is that it can induce a state of deep calm and relaxation and alleviate physical and emotional tensions.

Chiropractic Care

Chiropractors diagnose, treat and prevent disorders of your bones, muscles, ligaments, tendons and joints. Chiropractors believe that gentle adjustment (manipulation) of the spine and other joints helps the body to heal itself. This is based on the concept that a healthy spine and nervous system are directly related to general good health and a feeling of well being. Chiropractic care can be beneficial to many patients including those undergoing cancer treatments. By adjusting and connecting the musculoskeletal dysfunctions, stress to the nervous system is reduced, which in turn, can help restore the body's ability to heal.

Hypnotherapy

Hypnotherapy is a "talking therapy" during which a patient's subconscious can be encouraged through positive messages and reinforcements. A trained clinical hypnotherapist can induce a state that will bypass your conscious mind. The hypnotherapist uses the trance to make suggestions to the client's subconscious mind, without those suggestions being intercepted by the conscious mind.

Many people with cancer use hypnotherapy to help them relax and cope better with symptoms, treatment and emotional distress. Hypnotherapy can help people to feel more comfortable and in control of their situation. There is evidence that hypnotherapy can help alleviate pain, depression, anxiety and stress thereby contributing to a patient's overall state of good health.

Massage

Massage therapy involves the manipulation of the soft tissues of the body to enhance function and promote relaxation and well-being. Unlike the typical painful invasive medical procedures of cancer treatment, massage brings a unique *focus* to the body of a cancer patient; one of nurturing attention. For the most part, the life of a cancer patient revolves around eradicating the cancer. The medical treatments are anything but pleasant and can challenge your body. Massage nurtures, soothes, comforts and subtly heals that same body. An experienced oncology massage therapist can work with a cancer patient to help release some of the tension, stress, anxiety and pain that is part of their everyday life.

Nutrition

A Holistic Nutritionist can advise you on the best possible diet to support your fight. The immune system and the body's natural detoxification systems are directly involved with cancer. Proper nutrition from natural and organic nutrient-rich foods can be very beneficial in supporting these critical systems. Sugar creates mineral imbalances, which create roadblocks for normal metabolic function - resulting in an acidic environment for cancer to thrive. Sugar is also taken into cancer cells much more readily than into other cells. Trans fats and artificial sweeteners have an altered molecular structure that is man-made and is known to be carcinogenic. A Holistic Nutritionist can educate you and work with you to design a diet specific to your own condition.

NAET-Allergy Treatment Technique

NAET is a series of painless acupressure treatments designed to identify and treat substances that the body is not recognizing as friendly. Patients are tested and treated for vitamins, minerals and other nutrients they may not be absorbing, food in their diets and substances in the environment. Cancer patients can benefit from increased immune system function as a result, improved absorption of nutrients and reduced or eliminated reactions to the everyday substances they are in contact with. Using this acupressure technique to treat medications that cancer patients are on can reduce or eliminate side effects they may be experiencing.

NET-Neuro Emotional Technique

The NET treatment consists of muscle testing (kinesiology) and the use of ancient meridian points which have emotions associated with them. It is fast, gentle, and effective way to clear the emotional barriers by “recalling” a traumatic event while tapping on specific meridian points on the spine. NET helps your body release emotional events that are deeply embedded in your mind creating problems. Any health challenge, especially a dramatic one like cancer has many emotional components from the day of the diagnosis, to treatment protocols and decisions around them, to any pain and dysfunction associated with the disease, to future and unknown effects and lifestyle changes. NET helps to identify these issues and erases them from the cellular memory thus creating health and wholeness which can lead to a restoration to optimal wellness

Nia

Nia is a fun “movement therapy” combining three elements: the dance arts, the martial arts, and the healing arts. Jazz is playful, ballet is graceful. Tae Kwon Do is a dance of precision; Aikido is the dance of harmony and blending. Yoga connects you to your emotions. Nia uses practical and diverse movements, free expression and the senses to experientially create fitness and wellness. It is rejuvenation, celebration, recreation, play, meditation and rest. Combining these elements into a fun hour of movement enhances the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of the cancer patient.

Reiki

Reiki is a Japanese energy-based therapy that promotes healing and overall wellness. Reiki is administered by a specially trained practitioner, using his or her hands. Hands are placed above the body and "life force energy" is transmitted. Many people report feeling a sense of warmth during Reiki sessions. Reiki sessions generally last for about an hour each. Many cancer patients report that Reiki has helped with pain management, relaxation, and side effects of treatment like nausea and stomach upset.

Tai Chi

Developed originally in China as a self-defense strategy, or martial art, Tai Chi is practiced in modern times primarily as a gentle exercise technique. Described as "meditation in motion," Tai Chi is an ancient form of exercise, dating back approximately 2,000 years old that at one point had over 100 separate movements or postures. Tai Chi has proven an excellent therapy for cancer patients in many ways. Its benefits include improved awareness of balance, increased strength/endurance and reduced stress. Tai Chi also offers a positive way to cope with pain, promoting relaxation and a feeling of well-being. The slow, controlled movements require total focus and concentration, so the exercises make patients feel

they have more control over their body and give them a tool for pain control other than pain medication.

Yoga

Yoga incorporates meditation, relaxation, imagery, controlled breathing, stretching and physical movements. A recently conducted study measured the benefits of this form of exercise experienced by patients while undergoing radiation for breast cancer. The study found that participants, who practiced yoga twice a week, were in better general health, were less fatigued and had fewer problems with daytime sleepiness. Perhaps the greatest finding in this study was that those who practiced yoga while undergoing radiation treatment had higher physical function than those who did not.

Progressive hospitals, researchers and medical practitioners have been increasingly recognizing the benefit of alternative treatment methodologies when developing their client care protocols. Speak to your primary health care provider about how some of these modalities can affect your mind, body and spirit in a way that will lighten your load and give you the extra tools you need to successfully fight your battle. Each of these services is available from experienced, certified practitioners at the Authentic Living Center in Troy. For more information call 248 822 9253 or log on to www.authentic-living-center.com.