

When you have cancer...asking questions is important.

Questions to ask about complementary therapies

Asking questions is important

It is important to ask questions about the complementary therapies you are interested in. This will help you make decisions on the kinds of complementary therapies that would be of benefit and be safe for you. Read through these questions and make a note of the ones that are relevant to you to help in your discussions with complementary therapists, doctors or other health professionals.

Things to consider before using complementary therapies

Some questions you might ask when deciding what complementary therapies to use or whether to use them at all, are:

Will the therapy directly harm me because of:

- its side-effects?
- its possible interactions with other medication?
- needing to stop conventional treatment?
- being told by the therapist to stop or delay all conventional treatment?

Is the cost of the therapies or medicines beyond my means?

To help you answer these questions, you need to talk to complementary therapists and doctors. Depending on their area of specialty they may not know the answers to some of these questions and you may need to work together to find out more information.

General questions to ask any potential complementary therapist

What are your qualifications? Are you a member of a professional association?

What training or experience do you have in treating people with cancer? Have you treated anyone with my type of cancer?

Are you willing to work with my doctors or other health professionals I may need to see?

How can the therapies you practise help me? Are there any specific precautions you would take for me?

Are there side-effects or risks associated with these therapies?

Has the therapy been tested in clinical trials?

Have the findings been published and are they available for me to read?

Can these therapies be combined with conventional treatment?

How long should I use this therapy and how will I know if it's working?

Are you able to do home visits if I am not well enough to attend your clinic?

How long are your consultations?

What do you charge for a consultation?

Do you dispense your own medicine and supplements?

How much can I expect to pay for my medicines?

Have the products or medicines you dispense been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration?

General questions to ask you doctor

Are you familiar with complementary therapies or medicines?

Are you qualified in complementary therapies yourself?

Are there any complementary therapies you think might benefit me?

Would you be happy for me to use complementary therapies?

Would you be willing to talk to my complementary therapists about my case?

Do you know whether the complementary medicines I am taking or wish to take will interfere with my chemotherapy or other conventional treatments?

Questions to ask your health professional about specific therapies

Mind Body techniques

What type of therapist would be the best for my issues?

Can you refer me to a psychologist or a counsellor?

Body-based practices

Are there any forms of massage or bodywork that would benefit me?

Would you advise against any particular form of massage or bodywork?

Can you provide me with a letter giving your approval for me to have massage or other bodywork therapy?

Are there any areas on my body where the massage therapist needs to take special care? Can the area be touched or should it be avoided all together?

Can I have acupuncture before and/or after surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy?

What precautions, if any, should I take?

What type of exercise would benefit me the most?

Would I be able to participate in tai chi, qi gong or yoga?

What level of exercise intensity would be suitable for me?

Biological-based therapies

Nutrition

Are there any dietary modifications I should make for my general well-being?

Should I eat organic foods?

Are there any vitamin or mineral supplements that will help specific side-effects caused by conventional treatment?

Should I be taking a multivitamin?

What can I eat to improve my digestion and bowel movements?

Are there any foods or supplements that I should definitely have or definitely avoid during and after cancer treatment?

Should I see a dietician or a nutritionist?

Herbal Medicine

Are there any herbs that you would recommend during or after cancer treatment?

Are there any herbs I shouldn't take because of my medication, surgery or other conventional treatments?

If I use herbal medicine, when should I take it in relation to my other medication or conventional treatments? Is it ok to use it at the same time or should I take it at a different time?

Can I use a herbal cream to help with redness from radiation?

Is it ok for me to drink herbal teas as a general beverage?

Are there any foods or supplements that I should definitely have or definitely avoid during and after cancer treatment?

Should I see a dietician or a nutritionist?

Other therapies

Flower remedies and homeopathy

Will I have any side effects from these remedies?

Is it ok for me to use these remedies at any time?

Do you think flower remedies or homeopathy would benefit me?

Asking questions is important

Please keep this question list as it will be useful for you and your family in future consultations.

Write down any questions you may think of that are not listed above.

An expert and voluntary Board of Directors oversee the business of The Cancer Council which is now a company limited by guarantee.

For more information visit the website at:
www.cancercouncil.com.au

The Cancer Institute NSW is Australia's first statewide, government-supported agency dedicated to the control and cure of cancer through prevention, detection, innovation, research and information.

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www.cancerinstitute.org.au

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