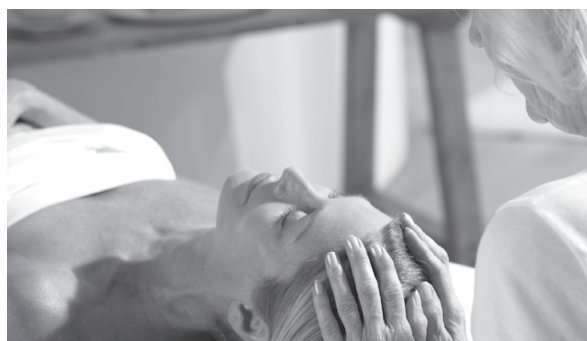


Integrative Medicine

Integrative Medicine

Integrative therapies engage the mind, body and spirit in the healing process. They help with your treatment program and can improve your quality of life. They are meant to complement, rather than replace the medical care you receive from your doctors and other health care providers. Talk to your doctor, nurse or social worker about the integrative therapies available at Sutter Health or in your community. We encourage you to seek integrative therapy practitioners who have specialized training in cancer care and who have experience working with people who have been diagnosed with cancer and are undergoing cancer treatment.



Guided Imagery

This gentle technique uses the power of mental imagery to assist in your healing. In mentally visualizing healing places, activities, sensations and experiences your sense of well-being can be enhanced and healing processes may be activated.

Guided imagery is a safe, easy and powerful tool to relieve tension, lower stress, improve sleep, and cope with anxiety and other emotions. By becoming attuned to your body and your breathing rhythm, you can send warm energy to parts of your body that may be tense, breathe out the tension and breathe in peace and healing.

You can listen to guided imagery recordings, or make an appointment with someone trained in guided imagery.

Massage

Massage should be performed by a certified massage therapist who is specially trained to work with cancer patients. Massage is a powerful therapeutic tool to help relieve muscle pain and tension. It also provides healing touch and comfort, enhances well-being and fosters nurturing.

There are many types of massage therapies. Craniosacral massage, for example, uses a light touch as the therapist monitors the rhythm of the craniosacral (brain and spinal) system to detect restrictions and imbalances. Delicate manipulations are used to improve the central nervous system and foster a deep sense of calm and well-being.

Massage therapists can use different degrees of pressure depending on your condition and preference. Make sure to discuss this with your massage therapist. Lighter pressure is usually better to start with. It is important to note that while massage can be extremely therapeutic, it can cause harm if done incorrectly or by an inexperienced practitioner.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese technique based on the understanding that our life force or “chi” flows through channels in the body known as meridians or pathways. Needles as thin as a human hair are inserted at specific points along these meridians to stimulate, disperse and regulate the flow of chi. Acupuncture can be used before, during and after your treatment. The goal is to restore a healthful energetic balance, alleviate discomfort and treatment side effects, and support the immune system. Please let your doctor or nurse know if you choose to explore acupuncture.

Energy Therapies

The purpose of these therapies can be broadly defined as the healing of mental and physical illness by rebalancing the energy fields in the body. A gentle, non-invasive form of energy work is used to manage the side effects of treatment. Some of these include therapeutic touch, meditation, Qi-gong and Reiki therapy.

Yoga and Other Movement Therapies

Movement therapies are forms of exercise that integrate the mind, body and spirit. They use stretching, movement, breathing techniques and meditation to create a state of peacefulness, as well as physical and mental well-being. They may enhance your quality of life by reducing stress and increasing feelings of relaxation. Be sure to check with your doctor about what kind of movement would be helpful for you.



Expressive Art Therapy

Expressive art therapists work with your imagination and intuition to help you create healing images. Drawing a picture, creating a collage, writing a poem, listening to music or making a scrapbook may provide healing on many levels. They can improve your quality of life and help you understand or cope better with sadness, anxiety and other emotions. Expressive art therapists listen to your unique story and show you how to express your feelings in the most comfortable and appropriate way for you.

Herbal and Nutritional Supplements, Vitamins and Antioxidants

It is very important that you discuss herbs, supplements, vitamins and antioxidants with your oncology team. Some supplements may interfere with your cancer treatments. For more detailed information, please refer to the *Resources* section of this binder in the Complementary and Alternative Information section.

Nutrition and Integrative Nutrition

Your oncology team may refer you to a registered dietician to help you manage specific aspects of your health and cancer treatment. Your dietician will evaluate your nutritional status and help you develop a personalized nutritional plan that may include lifestyle changes, specific nutrition goals, supplements and healthy enjoyable ways of eating.

Optimal nutrition before, during and after cancer treatment can support your immune system as well as your level of strength, weight management and muscle mass. It can also reduce inflammation and decrease the stress on your digestive tract.

Some communities may also have access to certified and experienced integrative nutritionists or functional medicine nutritionists. Integrative nutrition examines both your diet and the root causes of chronic disease and symptoms. These professionals can offer detailed lab tests that will provide additional information and advice about your dietary needs and how you can use nutrition to support healing.

Ask your oncology team for a referral to a registered dietician who has experience working with people who have cancer. You may also ask your oncology team if they know of an experienced integrative nutritionist or certified functional medicine nutritionist in your area.

Counseling, Therapy and Integrative Psychotherapy

Counseling, (also known as “psychotherapy” or “therapy”) can be very helpful in lowering your stress and learning to cope with the feelings that may occur when going through cancer diagnosis and treatment. When choosing a counselor or therapist, it is recommended that you work with someone who is licensed and who has experience working with people diagnosed with cancer. Ask your oncology team for referrals to experienced professionals in your community.

Some therapy professionals practice “integrative psychotherapy”. Mind, body and spirit are not separate; and integrative psychotherapy attends to all the dimensions of human. It works with the body, feelings, beliefs, thoughts and one’s spiritual orientation.

Integrative psychotherapy uses practices that develop wisdom and compassion, heal the heart, balance the mind, receive the body’s wisdom and meet life’s challenges with responsiveness.

This focus supports you in deepening your connection with your whole self, cultivating self-compassion, wholeness and well-being.

You might choose to work with an integrative psychotherapist if you want to listen deeply to the wisdom of your body, heart and mind. You may wish to use mindfulness, art therapy and other healing methods to improve your mental health and well-being.



Some of the other forms of therapy which are also effective include:

- *Client Centered (or Supportive or Expressive) Therapy* provides a supportive environment where you can express your thoughts and feelings.
- *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy* focuses on developing coping strategies and changing unhelpful patterns in thoughts, beliefs and attitudes.
- *Dialectical Behavioral Therapy* helps you regulate emotionally and mentally by learning about what triggers cause you to react and helps you build coping skills for these situations.
- *Psychodynamic Therapy* is a form of depth psychology that invites the unconscious to be revealed in order to create greater wholeness, freedom and integration.

Many therapists are trained in one or more of these methods.

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is a practice in which scented oils are inhaled through the nose. Some people apply it to their skin, however, many oncologists believe this is harmful during cancer treatment. Even though these are natural, they can cause allergic or sensitivity reactions. Be sure to talk with your oncologist before using aromatherapy during your cancer treatment.

Aromatherapy is not used to treat cancer but rather to help manage symptoms and side effects. Research in cancer patients has shown that aromatherapy may help relieve anxiety, depression, lack of energy and nausea among other problems.

The oils used in aromatherapy, called "essential oils," are the highly concentrated extracts of flowers, leaves, stems, roots, seeds, bark, resin or fruit rinds. Essential oils can be purchased in most health food stores. Because of their high concentration level, essential oils must be diluted before they are applied to the skin. Oils are usually diluted with a "base" or "carrier" oil, which is a vegetable oil that helps spread the essential oil over a larger area and protects the skin from a reaction.

An aromatherapist can help to select an oil or combination of oils to fit each person's specific needs. Commonly used essential oils include: peppermint and ginger for nausea; lavender, bergamot, sage and chamomile for relaxation or sleep; peppermint for headache; lemon, orange, cedarwood, cinnamon for energy.

Other ways to use aromatherapy:

- Place a few drops of essential oil in a diffuser to allow a soothing fragrance to fill the room.
- Sprinkle 2-4 drops of oil on a tissue or a handkerchief, and hold it up to your nose. Keeping your eyes closed to avoid irritation, take 2-3 deep breaths through the nose.
- Place 10-15 drops of oil in a 4-ounce spray-bottle of water. Shake the bottle and then spray fragrance around a room.



Important things to consider before trying aromatherapy:

- Make sure you're using essential oil. The label should say "pure essential oil," not "blend" or "massage" oil. If the label isn't clear, don't purchase the oil.
- Some essential oils are poisonous. You should NEVER TASTE OR SWALLOW any essential oil.
- Pregnant women and children should not inhale essential oils or rub them on their skin.
- If your oncologist agrees with using essential oils directly on your skin, always do a skin test first.
 - Spread a little bit on a small area of your arm and put a bandage over it.
 - Wait 24 hours to make sure there is no skin reaction before trying it on a larger area.
 - If the area becomes red, swollen, or sore, do NOT use the oil again.
 - It's important to use "organic" oils that have been produced without chemicals. Oils made with chemicals can irritate the skin.
- If you find that you are sensitive to different aromas, you may need to avoid those essential oils.

Important: As with other integrative therapies, check with your oncologist before using essential oils or aromatherapy.

Mindfulness Meditation

Please see the *Survivorship and Wellness* chapter for more information about mindfulness meditation.