



# Wellness News Network™

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## Natural Therapies to Support Conventional Cancer Treatment

Presented by: **Total Health Systems**

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### Introduction

Conventional cancer treatment involves either removing the cancer from the body (i.e., surgery) or eliminating the cancer cells and shrinking tumors through various methods (i.e., chemotherapy and radiation). In many cases, all these (and possibly other) strategies are employed to help stop the proliferation and spread of rapidly dividing cancer cells. The kind of therapy used to treat cancer depends on many factors, including the location and grade of the tumor(s), the stage of the disease and the general health status of the person receiving the therapy.

According to a 2008 study published in the journal *Current Oncology*, there has been a shift toward complementary alternative cancer treatments in recent years - a reflection of many personal factors among cancer patients, including the perceived severity of conventional therapy side effects, the desire for greater control over treatment decisions and increasingly favorable attitudes toward holistic therapies.<sup>1</sup>

A middle path (i.e., a combination of conventional and complementary alternative approaches) may be optimal for many. Natural therapies may be most helpful in *supporting* conventional cancer treatments. Natural

therapies may help boost immune function and minimize the severity of side effects caused by surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. In this edition of the Wellness Express, we will take a look at several natural therapies that may be helpful in supporting conventional cancer treatment.

### Herbal Supplements

Certain herbal supplements may help cancer patients manage treatment side effects and symptoms, such as nausea and vomiting, pain, fatigue and insomnia. According to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), recent studies indicate that the herb ginger may be useful in controlling chemotherapy-related nausea when used in



combination with anti-nausea medication.<sup>2</sup> Another study, published in 2007, states that Chinese medicinal herbs, when used together with chemotherapy, may improve bone marrow and quality of life in breast cancer patients.<sup>3</sup> A further study published in 2005, notes that decoctions of Huangqi

### QUESTION:

**What spice may be helpful in controlling nausea?**

- A) Nutmeg
- B) Cinnamon
- C) Ginger

### ANSWER:

- C) Ginger

### TRUE OR FALSE:

**Yoga may help reduce fatigue in breast cancer patients and survivors**

### ANSWER:

True

### QUESTION:

**What natural remedies may be used to support conventional cancer treatments**

- A) Herbal supplements
- B) Chiropractic care
- C) Massage
- D) All of the above

### ANSWER:

- D) all of the above

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(*Astragalus*) may stimulate immunocompetent cells and reduce side effects in cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy.<sup>4</sup>

## Yoga

Preliminary evidence, notes the NCCAM, suggests that yoga may be helpful in treating anxiety, depression, distress and stress in cancer patients, and that it may also help reduce fatigue in breast cancer patients and survivors. An increasing number of research studies have examined the potential benefits of yoga in breast cancer patients and survivors. A 2009 study published in the journal *Integrative Cancer Therapies* states that yoga may help in managing self-reported psychological distress and favorably alter circadian patterns of stress hormones in early breast cancer patients undergoing radiation therapy.<sup>5</sup> According to a 2006 study published in the journal *Psycho-Oncology*, yoga may also have significant potential as a beneficial physical activity for breast cancer survivors.<sup>6</sup>

## Acupuncture

Acupuncture is emerging as an extremely beneficial alternative therapy for treatment-related nausea and vomiting in cancer patients. A 2008 study published in the journal *Acupuncture in Medicine* reports that acupuncture treatment can significantly reduce nausea in cancer patients undergoing a period of chemotherapy.<sup>7</sup> Acupuncture may also be helpful in reducing cancer pain and other symptoms. According to a 2009 study published in the journal *Breast Cancer Research and Treatment*, acupuncture appears to provide effective relief from hot flashes in women who undergo

breast cancer surgery and are treated with Tamoxifen (a prescription drug used to treat early or advanced breast cancer).<sup>8</sup>

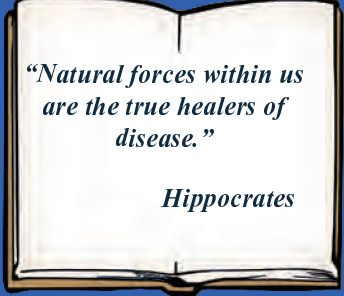
## Manual Therapies

Manual medicine, such as chiropractic and massage therapy, may also be helpful in addressing cancer treatment-related symptoms, such as pain, nausea, anxiety and depression. Care must be taken by the practitioner, however, to avoid deep pressure and specific regions of the body (e.g., tumor sites or areas of sensitive skin caused by radiation therapy). A 2005 study published in the journal *Seminars in Oncology Nursing* states that the judicious application of chiropractic care in cancer patients is both an economical and effective way to decrease pain and improve overall patient health.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, a 2004 study published in the *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* notes that massage therapy may significantly improve cancer patients' symptoms.<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

If you have been diagnosed with cancer and wish to incorporate natural therapies into your treatment, it is important that all your healthcare providers are aware of your plans. The goal is to make sure that everyone (conventional and alternative practitioners alike) is working toward the same positive outcome. To learn more about the role of chiropractic care in cancer treatment and recovery, please ask your chiropractor for further details.

## Quote to Inspire



*“Natural forces within us are the true healers of disease.”*

*Hippocrates*

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