



Complementary Health Approaches

PEBTF

July 2016

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Learning objectives

Complementary health approaches

- Introduce types of complementary medicine
- Review examples of natural and mind and body complementary practices
- Learn the risks and benefits of complementary medicine

• Types of complementary medicine

- **Complementary**

- A nonstandard treatment or medicine that you use together with conventional treatment or medicine

- **Alternative**

- A nonstandard treatment or medicine that you use instead of conventional medicine

- **Integrative**

- A combination of standard medical therapies and complementary or alternative therapies about which there is scientific evidence of safety and effectiveness

Practices used in complementary health approaches

“Natural”

- Herbs (botanicals)
- Vitamins and minerals
- Probiotics



Mind and body practices

- Acupuncture
- Massage therapy
- Chiropractic
- Meditation techniques
- Relaxation techniques
- Tai chi and Qi gong
- Yoga





Natural

• Natural: dietary supplements

- Natural products are often sold as dietary supplements, which are substances you can eat or drink
 - Vitamins, minerals, herbs or other plants, amino acids
 - Available in pill, capsule, tablet, or liquid form
 - Not a substitute for food
- They may contribute to health maintenance and well-being

Always tell your doctor if you are using a dietary supplement or if you are thinking about combining a dietary supplement with your conventional medical treatment



• Natural: probiotics

- What are they?

- **Bacteria** that may help to keep the natural balance of organisms in the intestines
- May be used to treat problems in the digestive system (diarrhea, gas, cramping)

- In the United States, probiotics are available as:

- **Dietary supplements** (including capsules, tablets, and powders)
- **Dairy foods** (such as yogurts with live active cultures)

PROBIOTICS

• Natural: probiotics

- Research has shown:

- Few side effects
- Some evidence that probiotics **may be helpful for acute diarrhea, antibiotic-associated diarrhea, and atopic eczema** (a skin condition most commonly seen in infants)
- While some probiotic formulations have shown promise in research, **strong scientific evidence** to support other uses of probiotics for most conditions **is lacking**

- Risks/concerns:

- Regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as food, not as drugs
 - **Has not approved any health claims for probiotics**
- Data on safety is limited (especially long-term)
- People with underlying health conditions may be at greater risk for serious side effects

Probiotics don't appear to cause illness. More study is needed on the safety of probiotics in young children, the elderly, and people who have weak immune systems.

Mind and body practices



Acupuncture

Overview

- Based on the theory that **energy, called chi**, flows through and around your body along pathways called **meridians**
- A **certified acupuncturist** places very thin needles into your skin at certain points on your body
- May be used to **relieve pain and treat certain health conditions**
 - Use by itself or part of a treatment program
 - May be used to treat nausea and vomiting related to pregnancy, chemotherapy and some types of pain

Risks/concerns

- In general, acupuncture is safe when done by a certified provider
- In rare cases, problems may occur – you could get an infection, especially if the needles aren't sterile
- Talk with your doctor if you have questions about the safety of acupuncture



• Massage therapy

- Rubbing the soft tissues of the body, such as muscles
- May provide short term help to reduce tension and pain, improve blood flow, and encourage relaxation
- **What are some types of massage?**
 - Swedish massage
 - Deep tissue massage
 - Self-massage
 - Trigger point massage
- When done properly, massage is considered safe



Chiropractic

Overview

- Focuses on the relationship between the body's structure and it's functioning
- Mainly perform **adjustments to the spine** or other parts of the body
- Most research on chiropractic has focused on spinal manipulation – benefits low back pain
 - May be helpful for headaches, neck pain, upper- and lower-extremity joint conditions and whiplash-associated disorders

Risks/concerns

- Side effects may include temporary headaches, tiredness or discomfort in the treated area.
- Rare complications such as stroke
 - Whether spinal manipulation actually causes these complications is unclear



• Meditation techniques: mindful meditation

- **Goal:** Focus your attention on the things that are happening right now in the present moment
 - Note what you experience without trying to change it
- **Benefits**
 - Helps you relax and relieve stress
- **Practice**
 - Sit in a comfortable position or lie down
 - Close your eyes
 - As you sit, pay attention to your breathing
 - Try to notice your thoughts and then let thought go, and bring your focus back present moment and your breathing



• Relaxation techniques

- Produces the body's natural relaxation response
 - Slower breathing
 - Lower blood pressure
 - Feeling of increased well-being
- Common techniques
 - Deep breathing
 - Guided imagery
 - Progressive relaxation



• Tai chi and qi gong

- **Moving meditation**

- **Tai chi:** Move body slowly, gently, and with awareness while breathing deeply
- **Qi gong:** Combines gentle physical movements, mental focus, and deep breathing

- **Benefits**

- May improve physical condition
- May improve balance and decrease risk of falls
- May ease pain and stiffness
- May improve sleep
- May improve overall wellness

- **Research suggests strong evidence of beneficial health effects, including: bone health, cardiopulmonary fitness, balance, and quality of life**

- Speak with your healthcare provider before practicing Tai chi or Qi gong



Yoga

- **Mind and body practice** which combines physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation
- **Benefits may include:**
 - Reduction of stress and anxiety
 - Lowering of heart rate and blood pressure
 - Improving physical fitness
 - Enhancing quality of life
- If you have a medical condition, speak with a healthcare provider before starting your yoga practice
 - Like any physical activity, yoga can cause muscle strains or sprains



Complementary health approaches: risks vs. benefits

Risks

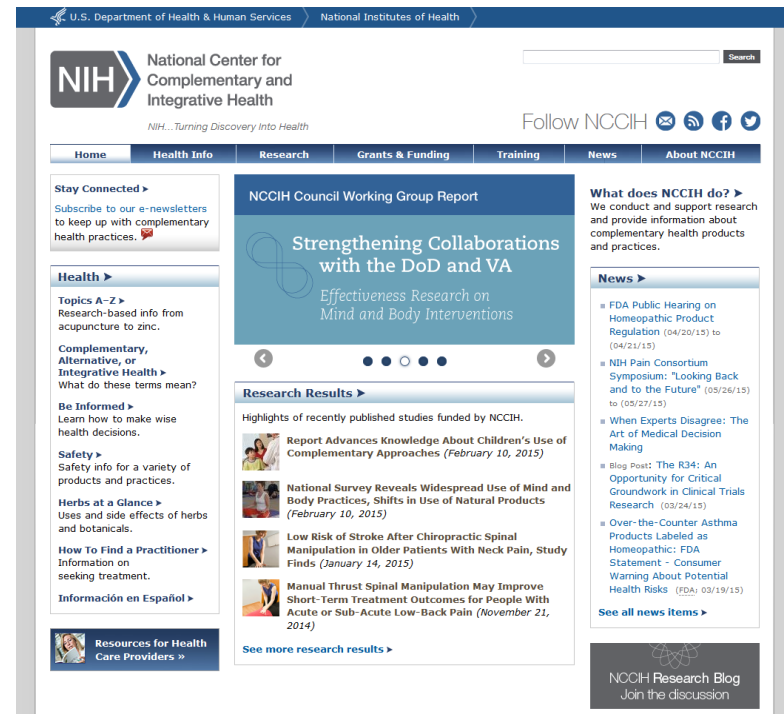
- Using these treatments **INSTEAD** of going to your regular doctor
- Some practices may be dangerous when combined with other medications.
- Not controlled as much as standard medicine
 - May be at risk for fraud
 - Require large up-front payments.
 - Promise quick results or miracle cures
 - Warn you not to trust your doctor

Benefits

- Take a “whole person,” or holistic approach, to treatment
- In some cases, works as well as standard medicine
- Some feel more in control when they are more involved in their own health

Is research being done on it?

- Many of these treatments have not yet been studied to see how safe they are or how well they work
- The **National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health** was formed to test the safety and effectiveness of these treatments
 - The Center has guidelines to help you choose safe treatments that are right for you
 - Visit: <https://nccih.nih.gov/>



Summary

- Often used to complement, or in addition to, standard care
- Lack of evidence on safety and effectiveness
- Review the benefits and risks before using complementary medicine
- Always talk to your doctor before starting or using any complementary medicine
- Your insurance may not cover the cost of some treatments

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Wellness Webinar Series:
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Sundance Wilander
Director of Consumer
Engagement
January 26, 2016
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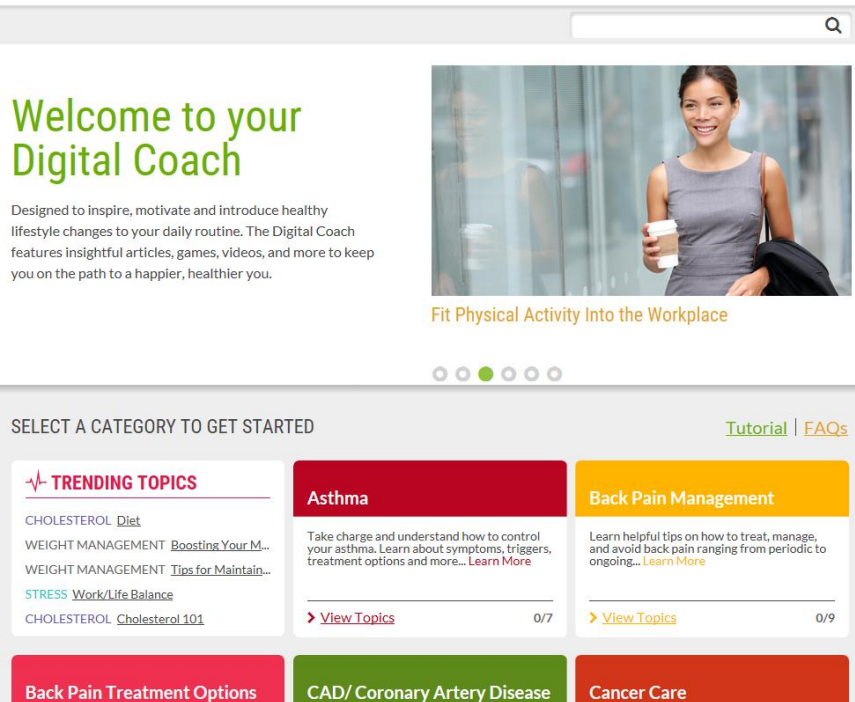
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