

# CAMEO

Complementary Medicine Education & Outcomes Program



## Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) & Cancer in British Columbia

Complementary Medicine Education and Outcomes (CAMEO) Research Program

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**BC Cancer Agency**  
CARE & RESEARCH  
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

## Purpose of this booklet

CAMEO (see page 24) has made this booklet to help people living with cancer and their support persons find information and support for making evidence-informed decisions about the use of complementary medicine (CAM) in their cancer care. When possible, CAM resources in British Columbia are included.

This booklet builds on the general information found in the 2009 Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) booklet: “*Complementary Therapies: A Guide for People Living with Cancer*” (found under the “Alphabetical list of publications” in the Publications section of the CCS website, [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)).

### After reading this booklet, it is hoped that you will:

- Know where to find credible sources of information and support in British Columbia to help you make decisions about CAM and cancer
- Know how to find a CAM practitioner in British Columbia
- Know how to monitor your response to a CAM therapy

## DISCLAIMER

This booklet contains general information about CAM. It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified healthcare provider.

It is important to talk to your oncologist, oncology nurse(s), and family physician about your CAM use to check if:

- There are any known benefits or risks associated with the CAM therapy
- There are any potential interactions between the CAM therapy and the cancer treatment or medications you are receiving, or another health condition you have.

## CAM Use and Cancer

**It is important to discuss any use of CAM with your health professionals, and review the available research evidence.**

- There is a risk that CAM can affect your conventional cancer treatments, producing unwanted results. NHPs may also interact with other medications you are taking for other medical conditions.
- Given the large number of CAM therapies, researchers have not yet tested many CAM treatments. Thus CAM treatment effects are not known, particularly for specific groups like people living with cancer or specific cancer types.
- There are currently no CAM therapies that have been shown to cure cancer, but several have been proven to help manage symptoms and overall quality of life.
- Lifestyle choices like good diet, exercise, and quitting smoking are still the most important lifestyle changes you can make. They will improve your cancer treatment outcomes and quality of life, and help prevent recurrence.

## Defining CAM

### Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)

Complementary and alternative medicine is “a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are **not** presently considered to be part of conventional medicine.” The term “**Complementary and Alternative Medicine**” is frequently referred to as “**CAM**”. (NCCAM definition)

*Complementary* treatments are used in combination with conventional medicine. *Alternative* treatments are used *instead* of conventional medicine.

For more on defining CAM, please see NCCAM, [www.nccam.nih.gov](http://www.nccam.nih.gov)

## Types of CAM

**Biologics and Natural health products** “Biologics” describes food and nutrition as a form of managing your health. This includes changes in diet and special diets and foods, as well as natural health products (NHPs). NHPs are defined as vitamins and minerals, herbal remedies, homeopathic medicines, probiotics, and other products like amino acids and essential fatty acids.

**Mind-body practices** include meditation and prayer, relaxation therapies, visualization, and creative activities, such as art and music therapy.

**Manipulative and body-based practices** include therapies such as spinal manipulation and forms of massage.

**Energy therapies** involve the use of energy fields such as therapeutic touch, reiki, and acupuncture.

**Whole Medical Systems** are based on distinct theories about treatment and practice and include multiple products and/or practices. Examples are traditional Chinese medicine and naturopathy.



Common complementary therapies used by people with cancer can be found in the Canadian Cancer Society booklet, *Complementary Therapies* (see access information on page 3).

## Why People Use CAM

People living with cancer give many reasons for using CAM. Some of these reasons include:

- Easing cancer symptoms or the side effects of conventional treatments
- Dealing with the stress of cancer and its treatment
- Restoring a sense of hope
- Strengthening the body’s ability to heal
- Offering a sense of control over their cancer experience
- Seeing the treatments as natural and less toxic than medical treatments.

## CAM Use in British Columbia (BC)

Surveys have shown that many people living with cancer in Canada use CAM. These surveys also show that CAM use in BC is higher than in any other province.

A recent survey of 412 people conducted by CAMEO at the BC Cancer Agency in November 2008 showed that:

- 49% have used CAM during their cancer experience
- 42% discussed CAM with their oncology health professional, but only 23% received enough information.



This booklet has been made to address many of the questions and issues patients identified.

## Fundamentals for Making a CAM Decision

In order to make a safe and informed decision, consider the points below **before** deciding whether or not to use CAM therapies or practitioners.

Each point will be covered in order on pages 8 – 29

### What is your goal for using the therapy?

- Goals may be physical, emotional, and/or spiritual

### What are the risks and benefits of the therapy?

- Consider the evidence or science behind the therapy
  - Verify that the therapy can help address your goals
- Balance and consider what is not known
- How credible and current is the information?
- What is a safe dose? More is not always better!

### Will the therapy interact with other treatments or health conditions?

- Multiple CAM therapies can interact with each other too, creating unexpected results.
- Some NHPs can speed up or slow down how drugs are processed in the body, resulting in ineffective treatments or toxic levels of the drugs.

### What are the training, credentials and experience of the CAM practitioner?

### What are the costs of using the therapy?

- Consider the financial, time, and energy costs

### What CAM support or services can you find at the BCCA?

### How will you monitor your CAM use results?

## Achieving Your Goals

When starting a CAM therapy, you should consider your goal(s) in using the therapy and when you expect to see results.

Some common goals are:

- Survivorship / prevention
- Stress management
- Side effects management
- Taking action / hope

Take the time to carefully consider what you hope to achieve, then match those goals to appropriate CAM therapies. Be specific.

## Finding & Evaluating CAM Evidence

When looking at information about CAM, it is important to examine how credible it is before using it to make decisions. If you answer “**NO**” to any of the following questions, check with other sources of information and a health professional, and use some caution.

**For each resource type, here are some questions to consider:**

### RESEARCH ARTICLES

- Was the study published in an academic scientific journal?
- Was it reviewed by other researchers? (i.e., peer-reviewed)
- Consider the evidence pyramid on page 10.
  - Is it a randomized clinical trial (people randomly assigned to different treatment groups) or based on a large population of patients? (30 is tiny, 300 is better)
  - Was it done on humans?  
(cell or animal study results are early stages of research)
- Did the study include people with your type of cancer?

## WEBSITES (For credible websites, see pages 30–31)

- Is the purpose of the web site clear? (e.g., education, sales)
- Is the website from a reliable source? (e.g., university, medical facility, government, company, society)
- Is there evidence from published research articles to support the claims made?
- Has it been recently updated?

The BCCA Library website (see page 30) has excellent guidelines on *Evaluating Websites*, under *Recommended Websites*.

## BOOKS

- Are they recent? (i.e., published in the last 5 years)
- Does the author have good credentials? (e.g., researcher or connected with a university)
- Are they published by a recognized scientific publisher? (e.g., Mosby, Elsevier, Sage)
- Does the information come from research on humans?
- Do they cite other research?

## WORD OF MOUTH

- Did you hear about it from a reputable source?
- Is there scientific evidence to back up what you heard?

## RED FLAGS

- The information is anonymous or does not cite any evidence.
- The information is biased or one-sided
- The information is outdated
- There is a conflict of interest (e.g., A company published a study about a product they make or sell)
- It claims a “miracle,” “secret cure,” “treats all kinds of cancer,” or “no side effects/risk”



## Balancing the Benefits and Risks of CAM Use

When making decisions about CAM it is important to consider:

- What evidence is available about the benefits of the therapy?
- Will the therapy meet your goals?
- What is the risk of harm of using a therapy? Has the therapy been shown to be safe, or does it cause side effects or interact with other treatments?
- Is there evidence supporting the use of the therapy in humans? For your cancer type? (Has it shown benefit?)



The following is an *evidence pyramid*. Scientists generally consider that the higher an evidence source is on the pyramid, the stronger the evidence is.



## Working with a CAM Practitioner

You will need to balance the risks and benefits for a therapy. It can be challenging to balance the evidence of whether or not a therapy works against the known risks of harm, like side effects or negative interactions with medication or health conditions.

The following diagram may be helpful when evaluating the balance of risks and benefits. Work with your health care provider in understanding complex situations, and in developing your CAM use monitoring plan.

Does it work? <b>X?</b> Is it safe to use? <b>✓</b> <b>Use only under supervision of your health care provider</b>	Does it work? <b>✓</b> Is it safe to use? <b>✓</b>  <b>Consider use, monitor effects</b>
Does it work? <b>X?</b> Is it safe to use? <b>X?</b>  <b>Don't use</b>	Does it work? <b>✓</b> Is it safe to use? <b>X?</b> <b>Use only under supervision of your health care provider</b>

? = evidence to date is contradictory or unclear

Based on Cohen et al., Ann Intern Med, 2002

### Timing of CAM Treatments

While some CAM can be used safely during cancer treatment and care, others cannot. It is important to find out if your CAM therapy of interest is best used before, during, or after active treatment of your cancer.

Finding a credible practitioner (pages 17 – 19) that is right for you can be a challenge. The questions on the following pages may help you select a practitioner with whom you will feel comfortable. (Adapted from <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/decisions/practitioner.htm>)

**This section assumes** you know about the therapy you want to pursue and the qualifications the practitioner should have.

### PREPARING FOR THE FIRST VISIT

Before you visit a practitioner for the first time, you should ask some questions about their services. Some of these questions may also be addressed during your first visit. Consider:

- What is your training or other qualifications?
  - Have you taken any cancer-specific training?
- Is there a brochure or website with more about your practice or your therapy?
- Can we do a brief consultation in person or by phone? (this consultation may or may not involve a charge)
- Do you specialize in cancer care? How frequently do you treat patients with problems similar to mine?
- How will your therapy help address my situation?
- What will be involved in the first and on-going visits?
  - Time per session?
  - Clinic hours for appointments?
  - Costs?
  - Insurance coverage?
- Are the office location and hours convenient for you?

Observe how comfortable you feel during these first interactions.

## THE FIRST VISIT

The first visit is very important. Come prepared to answer questions about your health history, such as surgeries and illnesses, as well as prescriptions, vitamins, and other supplements you take.

Not only will the practitioner wish to gather information from you, but you will want to ask questions too. Write down ahead of time the questions you want to ask, or take a support person with you to help you remember the questions and answers. Some people bring a tape recorder to record the appointment (ask the practitioner for permission to do this in advance). Here are some questions you may want to ask:

- What benefits/risks can I expect from this therapy?  
Do the benefits outweigh the risks?
- What side effects can be expected?
- Are there conditions for which this therapy should not be used?
- Could the therapy interact with conventional treatments for cancer (e.g., chemotherapy, radiation)?
- Will the therapy interfere with daily activities?
- Will I need to buy any equipment or supplies?
- How long will I need to undergo treatment?  
How often will my progress or plan of treatment be assessed?
- Do you have scientific articles or references about using the therapy for cancer?

## AFTER EACH VISIT

It is important to reflect after each visit on how satisfied you were with the care provided. Here are some questions you may want to ask yourself after each visit:

- Was the practitioner easy to talk to? Did he/she make me feel comfortable?
- Was I comfortable asking questions? Did the practitioner engage with me, and were my questions answered?
- Was she/he open to how both CAM therapy and conventional medicine might work together for my benefit?
- Did he/she get to know me and ask me about my illness?
- Did she/he seem knowledgeable about the type of cancer I have?
- Does the treatment recommended seem reasonable?
- Was he/she clear about the on-going time and costs associated with therapy?



## ON-GOING VISITS

Remember to check in with your practitioner each visit as you begin:

- Review your progress to date
- How you have been doing since the last visit
- Where you are in the on-going treatment plan

Each CAM therapy is different in terms of length of treatment and when the therapy may be most appropriate. Make sure you talk to your practitioner about your needs and expectations for treatment.

## CAN I CHANGE MY MIND ABOUT THE TREATMENT OR THE PRACTITIONER?

Discuss with your practitioner the reasons you are not satisfied or comfortable with treatment. If you are not satisfied or comfortable, you can look for a different practitioner or stop the therapy. However, talk with your practitioner before stopping to make sure that it is safe to simply stop treatment—it may not be advisable to stop some therapies midway through a course of treatment.



## CO-ORDINATING YOUR CARE

Communicating with all your health care providers is key to ensuring the best possible health care. The Canadian Cancer Society booklet, *Complementary Therapies*, has some excellent tips on talking to your health care providers (see access information on page 3).

It is important to remember that everything you do for your health impacts your body and your health care. Treatments, therapies, diet, lifestyle changes can all interact with each other, and could also interact with your cancer treatment.

It is therefore important to keep all your health care providers aware of the treatments you are receiving. If you decide to stop a therapy or seek another practitioner, make sure that you share this information with any other health professionals you may have, as this will help them make decisions about your care.

The CAM diary can help you share your health information with your health care providers (see page 29).

## Integrative Health Clinics

Integrative health clinics may include any combination of regulated and unregulated health professionals. Regulated health professionals can include physicians, nurses, physiotherapists, chiropractors, naturopaths, massage therapists, traditional Chinese medicine doctors, and acupuncturists. The clinics may also include any number of unregulated CAM professionals.

The method of integration can occur in a variety of ways, and will vary from clinic to clinic. For example, regulated healthcare professionals may offer some CAM services or refer to CAM practitioners in the clinic. This provides some co-ordination of service amongst the health care providers. In other cases, the practitioners may share the space but may not coordinate care.

Regardless of the type of integrated clinic, the links to credible CAM associations for identifying credible practitioners (pages 18 – 19), and recommendations on working with CAM providers (pages 12 – 15) apply to the CAM practitioners you may be working with in an integrated clinic.

### InspireHealth

One centre that offers physician-coordinated CAM and supportive cancer care in Vancouver, BC is InspireHealth ([www.inspirehealth.ca](http://www.inspirehealth.ca)). Consultations with physicians at InspireHealth are covered by the BC Medical Services Plan. Services with CAM practitioners, including a naturopathic doctor, acupuncturist, and massage therapist are fee-for-service.

**It is important to talk to your oncology health care provider(s) about any care you are receiving in an integrated clinic.**

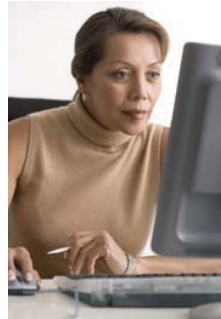


## Finding a CAM Practitioner in BC

Selecting a CAM practitioner is a personal decision. It is important to consider the training of a practitioner, whether they are regulated and/or licensed, and have experience in caring for people living with cancer. It is also important to consider how comfortable you feel with a practitioner.

Some practitioners who provide CAM are **regulated** by the BC government through established **regulatory colleges**. The services **regulated** practitioners can provide are defined by law. The regulatory colleges function to control practitioners' practices and standards. Regulatory colleges exist in BC for:

- Traditional Chinese medicine & acupuncture
- Chiropractic medicine
- Massage therapy
- Naturopathic medicine



The colleges' contact information can be found at [www.health.gov.bc.ca/leg/](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/leg/). Contact them to verify if a practitioner is entitled to practice one of these therapies or if you have concerns about a registrant's practice or conduct.

Most CAM practitioners, regulated and unregulated, are members of **professional associations and societies** (See pages 18 – 19). You can contact these organizations if you have questions about a therapy and its use in cancer, the credentials of members, concerns about a practitioner's conduct, or about how to find a practitioner in your region.

Remember to check if a member is in good standing and to interview potential practitioners.

## CAM Associations & Societies

These are the primary associations and societies for CAM more commonly used in by patients with cancer. They all have practice standards, codes of conduct and ethics, and disciplinary procedures.

Inclusion on these pages is for reference only and does not imply endorsement (therapies or members) by CAMEO or the BCCA.

Use the tips on pages 12 to 15 when choosing and working with your health care practitioners.

<b>AROMATHERAPY</b>	BC Alliance of Aromatherapy <a href="http://www.bcaoa.org">www.bcaoa.org</a> toll-free 1-866-339-2226
<b>ART THERAPY</b>	BC Art Therapy Association <a href="http://www.bcarttherapy.com">www.bcarttherapy.com</a> 604-878-6393
<b>CHIROPRACTIC</b>	BC Chiropractic Association <a href="http://www.bcchiro.com">www.bcchiro.com</a> 604-720-1332
<b>HEALING TOUCH</b>	Healing Touch Canada <a href="http://www.healingtouchcanada.net/">www.healingtouchcanada.net/</a>
<b>HERBALISTS &amp; NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS</b>	Canadian Herbalist's Association of BC <a href="http://www.chaofbc.ca">www.chaofbc.ca</a>
<b>MASSAGE THERAPY</b>	Massage Therapists' Association of BC <a href="http://www.massagetherapy.bc.ca">www.massagetherapy.bc.ca</a> toll-free 1-877-321-3404  Natural Health Practitioners of Canada <a href="http://www.nhpcanada.org">www.nhpcanada.org</a> toll-free 1-888-711-7701
<b>MINDFULNESS BASED STRESS REDUCTION FACILITATORS</b>	MBSR facilitators of BC <a href="http://www.mbsrbc.ca">www.mbsrbc.ca</a> (contact the individual facilitators)

## Paying for CAM Services

The costs of most CAM services and natural health products are not covered by the BC Medical Services Plan (MSP) or Pharmacare. As a result, CAM use can be expensive. Therefore, it is important that you carefully consider the costs involved when making your decisions about CAM, and look into what insurance coverage you may have.

The BC MSP may cover a portion of some CAM services for **individuals on the Premium Assistance Program**. Currently, MSP will pay \$23 per visit for a combined annual limit of 10 visits each calendar year for the following services:

- Acupuncture
- Massage therapy
- Chiropractic
- Naturopathy



Costs above this amount are the responsibility of the individuals receiving care. To find out if you qualify for MSP Premium Assistance Program visit:  
<http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/infoben/benefits.html>

Currently, there is no coverage for natural health products through the Pharmacare or Fair Pharmacare programs.

Some private health insurance programs may offer coverage for some CAM therapies and practitioner visits. Check your individual policies for details.

<b>MUSIC THERAPY</b>	Music Therapy Association of BC www.mtabc.com 604-924-0046
<b>NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE</b>	BC Naturopathic Association www.bcna.ca toll-free 1-800-277-1128
<b>REFLEXOLOGY</b>	Reflexology Association of Canada www.reflexolog.org toll-free 1-877-722-3338
<b>REIKI</b>	Canadian Reiki Association www.reiki.ca toll-free 1-800-835-7525
<b>SHIATSU</b>	Shiatsu Therapy Association of BC www.shiatsutherapy.ca 604-433-9495
<b>THERAPEUTIC TOUCH</b>	BC Therapeutic Touch Network www.bctherapeutictouch.com
The BCCA offers Therapeutic Touch. Patients can ask their physician/nurse to make a request or call 604-877-6000 (local 672192)	
<b>TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE</b>	BC Qualified Acupuncturists & Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Association (QATCMA) www.qatcma.org 604-278-6220
<b>YOGA</b>	Yoga Association of BC http://yogabc.org toll-free 1-877-630-6711

Non-CAM-specific health profession services commonly referenced by CAMEO:  
**Counsellors:** www.bc-counsellors.org    **Dietitians:** www.dietitians.ca  
**Physiotherapists:** www.bcphysio.org    **Psychologists:** www.psychologists.bc.ca  
 See also pages 22 – 23 for health services within the BCCA.

## CAM Information and Support at the BC Cancer Agency (BCCA)

A wide variety of services related to CAM information and support are available at the BCCA for registered BCCA patients and their families. In the following section, a description of these services and their contact information is provided.

### LIBRARY AND CANCER INFORMATION CENTRES

Librarians are located at the Victoria and Vancouver BCCA library centres. They can provide:

- Consultation and assistance with finding sources of information about CAM
- Loans of CAM-related materials (books, relaxation CDs and videos, etc.)
- Contact information for relevant health care professionals both within the BCCA and in local community health care settings

Cancer Information Centres located at each regional centre have some CAM information resources available.

#### Contacting the BCCA Library

- **In person:** from any BCCA Centre Library/Cancer Information Centre.
- **Via telephone:** Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm by calling 1-888-675-8001 or local 67-8001.

Materials may be borrowed by anyone in BC or the Yukon by using the online catalogue order service:  
<http://bccca.andornot.com>

### ONCOLOGY NUTRITION SERVICES

All of the BCCA centres have registered dietitians available for BCCA patients who are receiving treatment and are having eating challenges. Contact them by calling your regional cancer centre. (See box, page 23, for the phone numbers of the regional centers)

A registered dietitian with oncology experience can also be reached through HealthLinkBC at 1-800-667-3438 or “811”. You can also find information on the website: [www.healthlinkbc.ca/dietitian/](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/dietitian/).

### DRUG INFORMATION PHARMACIST

All patients receiving treatment at the BCCA can receive information from a pharmacist about the safe use of natural health products, **including possible interactions with conventional cancer treatments.**

#### The Provincial Drug Information Telephone Line

1-800-663-3333, local 67-6275.

Or e-mail your question to: [druginfo@bccancer.bc.ca](mailto:druginfo@bccancer.bc.ca)

Look for NHPs approved by Health Canada’s **Natural Health Product Directorate** for safety, quality and health claims. These NHPs have a natural product number (NPN) on the product label. Other NHPs (not yet approved or mail order from out of country) may be at risk for contamination from drugs, pesticides and other substances, and may be of poor quality.

## PATIENT AND FAMILY COUNSELING (PFC) PROGRAM

Social workers and counselors are available at the BCCA to provide individual, couple, and group counseling for registered patients, and their family members.

The following mind-body therapy programs may be available:

- Mindfulness-based stress reduction classes
- Therapeutic Touch clinics
- Relaxation groups and resources
- Support groups
- Art therapy (for children of people living with cancer)
- Pet visitor program

For more information

[www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/copingwithcancer/emotional/supportprograms](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/copingwithcancer/emotional/supportprograms)

Contact them by calling your regional cancer centre, below.

### Contacting your regional cancer centre

- **Vancouver:** 604-877-6000 / Toll free:1-888-633-3333  
PFC: extension 67-2194 Dietitians: extension 67-2013
- **Fraser Valley:** 604-930-2098 / Toll free:1-800-523-2885  
Dietitians & PFC: extension 65-4000
- **Abbotsford:** 604-851-4710 / Toll free:1-877-547-3777  
Dietitians & PFC: extension 64-4733
- **Victoria:** 250-519-5500/ Toll free:1-800-670-3322  
Dietitians & PFC: extension 69-5525
- **Kelowna:** 250-712-3900/ Toll free:1-888-563-7773  
Dietitians & PFC: extension 68-3963



## The Complementary Medicine Education and Outcomes (CAMEO) Research Program

CAMEO is a collaborative University of British Columbia / BC Cancer Agency (BCCA) research program at the Vancouver Centre of the BCCA. The CAMEO program was developed to address the needs expressed by cancer patients in BC for complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) information and support in making decisions about CAM.

The mission of this research program is:

*“To integrate and evaluate evidence-informed CAM education and decision-support strategies within the context of everyday conventional cancer care, and facilitate the development of new CAM research.”*

The aims of CAMEO are to:

- Determine how best to support people living with cancer in making evidence-informed CAM decisions
- Evaluate how to improve health professionals’ knowledge and decision-support skills related to CAM
- Facilitate the development of new CAM and cancer research knowledge



## CAM Recommendations at the BC Cancer Agency

### Who is eligible for CAMEO services and programs?

- Registered patients and their support persons who have been seen at the BCCA within the last 5 years,
- health professionals of the BCCA

### CAMEO Programs and Services

See: [www.bccancer.bc.ca/cameo](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/cameo) under  
“Participate: Research and Workshops”

- CAM education programs for people with cancer and their support persons (family / friends)
- One-to-one decision-support services for people living with cancer making specific decisions related to CAM
- CAM education programs for health professionals
- Clinical tools/guidelines to assist health professionals in supporting informed decisions about CAM
- Self-directed decision-making tools and support services, like this brochure

#### Contacting CAMEO

- **Telephone:** Monday to Thursday, 9am – 5pm  
by calling 604-707-5960  
toll free for British Columbia: 1-800 663 3333 x5960
- **Email:** [cameo@bccancer.bc.ca](mailto:cameo@bccancer.bc.ca)
- **Mailing Address:**  
Suite 912 – 750 West Broadway  
Vancouver, BC. V5Z 1H1.

Due to the interest in CAM expressed by people with cancer, the BC Cancer Agency increasingly recognizes the need for information about CAM. This section summarizes or lists the recommendation documents developed at the BC Cancer Agency about natural health products (NHPs) and CAM therapies.

### Natural Health Products and Cancer Therapy

Found at: [www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/UnconventionalTherapies/naturalhealthproductscancertherapy.htm](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/UnconventionalTherapies/naturalhealthproductscancertherapy.htm)

This recommendation addresses the use of NHPs during active cancer treatment (e.g., chemotherapy, radiation).

*In summary, this recommendation states:*

- A regular strength multiple vitamin/mineral supplement is acceptable during active treatment. The supplement should contain a wide variety of nutrients and contain the recommended daily requirement specific to your age group (not high doses).
- Natural health products are not recommended during chemotherapy or radiation treatments because they **may change the way your chemotherapy or radiation works** and prevent your treatment from having the desired effect, or it may increase side effects. For example, some NHPs may reduce the amount of chemotherapy drug in your blood and cause fewer cancer cells to be destroyed.
- There are limited studies on the effect of specific NHPs in people undergoing cancer treatment. As a result, the safety or benefit of taking natural health products is unknown.

## Nutrition and lifestyle information

The BCCA has developed several resources about nutrition and lifestyle factors for specific cancers and stages of the cancer journey.

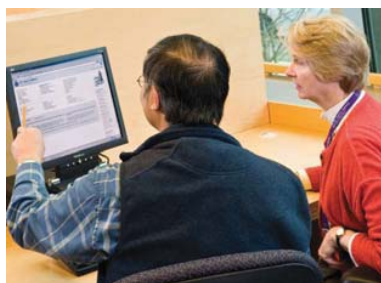
General nutrition information as well as specific CAM and dietary supplement recommendations can be found in several articles on the Nutrition page found at

[www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/copingwithcancer/specifresources/Nutrition.htm](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/copingwithcancer/specifresources/Nutrition.htm)

- *Nutrition Guide for Men with Prostate Cancer*
- *Nutrition Guide for Women with Breast Cancer*
- *Patient Guidelines for the Prevention of Osteoporosis for Breast Cancer, and for Prostate Cancer*
- *Nutrition and Lung Cancer* guideline.
- Ginger and relaxation techniques appear in the document *Food Choices to Help Control Nausea*
- Breast Cancer has a specific document on natural health products, which is described more on page 28.

Vitamin D and sun exposure recommendations can be found at:

[www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/Prevention/sunsafety/vitamind.htm](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/Prevention/sunsafety/vitamind.htm)



## Natural Health Products and Breast Cancer

From: [www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/copingwithcancer/specifresources/Nutrition.htm](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/copingwithcancer/specifresources/Nutrition.htm)

This recommendation addresses the use of natural health products (NHPs) by individuals living with breast cancer.

*In addition to the NHP and Cancer therapy recommendations (page 26), this recommendation states:*

- A daily supplement of 1,000 IU of vitamin D is recommended for bone health and the prevention of cancer.
- NHPs used for hot flashes (e.g., black cohosh, red clover) contain hormones. Hormones may stimulate breast cancer growth or impact on hormonal treatments such as tamoxifen. Use of these NHPs is not recommended outside of a clinical trial and should include discussion with your cancer doctor as their safety in breast cancer is not known, especially if your breast cancer is sensitive to hormones, such as estrogen.
- There are some NHPs that have shown limited benefit in reducing hot flashes. If you decide to use NHPs that contain hormones, use the lowest effective dose for a limited time—that is, weeks rather than months or years.

### Examples of Natural Health Products that Contain Hormones:

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| • Black cohosh                                      | • Dong quai    |
| • Evening Primrose                                  | • Red clover   |
| • Ginseng   | • Milk Thistle |
| • Soy supplements                                   | • Wild yam     |
| • Flor*Essence <sup>®</sup> and Essiac <sup>®</sup> | • DHEA         |



A complete list is in the Natural Health Products and Breast Cancer document (as at top of page).

## Monitoring Your CAM Use

Once you have decided to try a CAM therapy, it is important to monitor how your body responds to the therapy.

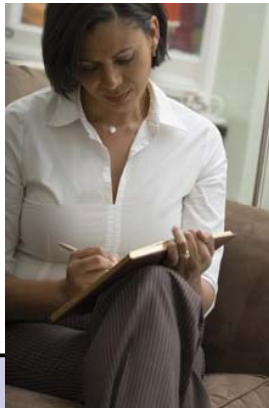
### Start by writing down:

- The name or brand of the therapy
- Your goal for using the therapy: how this therapy will help you and when you expect to see the effects
- How much and how often you are using the therapy
- Any known side effects to watch for

### Keep track over time:

- Is it helping you achieve your goal(s)?
- Are you experiencing side effects from it?

Aim to use just one new CAM therapy at a time. This will help you see if the therapy is working or if it has unexpected or unwanted effects.



### Using a CAM Diary

Some people find keeping a diary helpful in monitoring and evaluating their CAM use. A diary may also be a helpful tool when talking to your health professionals about current and potential CAM use.

CAMEO has created a *CAM Use Diary* to help you keep track of your CAM use and monitor outcomes and side effects. The diary can be found under CAMEO documents on the CAMEO website [www.bccancer.bc.ca/cameo](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/cameo).

If you experience an unexpected side effect, you can report it at: [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/medeffect](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/medeffect)

## Credible CAM Websites

<p><b>BC Cancer Agency Library</b></p>	<p><b>Web address:</b> <a href="http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/RecommendedLinks/treatment/complementary.htm">www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/RecommendedLinks/treatment/complementary.htm</a>  <b>Languages:</b> English  <b>Content:</b> links to websites, programs, and information resources</p>
<p><b>CAMEO Program</b> — useful links webpage</p>	<p><b>Web address:</b> <a href="http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/RES/ResearchPrograms/cameo/usefullinks.htm">www.bccancer.bc.ca/RES/ResearchPrograms/cameo/usefullinks.htm</a>  <b>Content:</b> links to the following websites on CAM</p>
<p><b>Memorial-Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre</b> — About Herbs, Botanicals &amp; Other Products</p>	<p><b>Web address:</b> <a href="http://www.mskcc.org/mskcc/html/11570.cfm">www.mskcc.org/mskcc/html/11570.cfm</a>  <b>Languages:</b> English  <b>Content:</b> easy-to-search database of reviews of natural health products</p>
<p><b>M.D. Anderson Cancer Centre Complementary/Integrative Medicine</b> — Education Resources</p>	<p><b>Web address:</b> <a href="http://www.mdanderson.org/departments/cimer">www.mdanderson.org/departments/cimer</a>  <b>Languages:</b> English, Spanish, Turkish, Arabic  <b>Content:</b> evidence-based reviews of CAM therapies, educational videos, links</p>
<p><b>Natural Standard</b> — Patients have free access via the CAMEO Useful Links page</p>	<p><b>Web address:</b> <a href="http://www.naturalstandard.com">www.naturalstandard.com</a>  <b>Languages:</b> English, some Spanish  <b>Content:</b> Database: herbs and supplements, disease conditions, CAM practices.</p>
<p><b>Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database</b></p>	<p><b>Web address:</b> <a href="http://www.naturaldatabase.com">www.naturaldatabase.com</a>  <b>Languages:</b> English  <b>Content:</b> fee-based searchable database of NHPs and conditions. Patients can access the professional database at the BCCA Library. <b>See also Medline Plus</b></p>

<b>Medline Plus</b>	<p><b>Web address (Herbs):</b> <a href="http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html">www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html</a></p> <p><b>Web address (CAM):</b> <a href="http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/complementaryandalternativetherapies.html">www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/complementaryandalternativetherapies.html</a></p> <p><b>Languages:</b> English, Spanish</p> <p><b>Content:</b> database of information about drugs, herbs, dietary supplements, etc. Herbs &amp; supplements information is from the consumer version of the Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database</p>
<b>CAMline</b>	<p><b>Web address:</b> <a href="http://www.camline.ca">www.camline.ca</a></p> <p><b>Languages:</b> English</p> <p><b>Content:</b> evidence-based reviews of natural health products and CAM therapies; information on Canadian regulation of various CAM health practitioners</p>
<b>National Centre for Complementary &amp; Alternative Medicine (NCCAM)</b>	<p><b>Web address:</b> <a href="http://nccam.nih.gov/">http://nccam.nih.gov/</a></p> <p><b>Languages:</b> English, Spanish</p> <p><b>Content:</b> information about current CAM research, and general health information and guidelines related to CAM.</p>
<b>Natural Health Products Directorate (NHPD)</b>	<p><b>Web address:</b> <a href="http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/branch-dirigen/hpfb-dgpsa/nhpd-dpsn/index_e.html">www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/branch-dirigen/hpfb-dgpsa/nhpd-dpsn/index_e.html</a></p> <p><b>Languages:</b> English, French</p> <p><b>Content:</b> information about Canadian NHP regulations, legislation and guidelines.</p>
<b>PubMed</b>	<p><b>Web address:</b> <a href="http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed">www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed</a></p> <p><b>Languages:</b> English</p> <p><b>Content:</b> largest on-line biomedical literature research abstracts database</p>

### Please tell us about your experience with this booklet.

This booklet is a new resource developed by CAMEO. When you have finished reading it or have used some of its information, please help us understand its value to you.

Please visit <http://app.fluidsurveys.com/s/cambooklet> to complete a brief survey.

We welcome all suggestions to make this a better resource for British Columbians living with cancer.

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