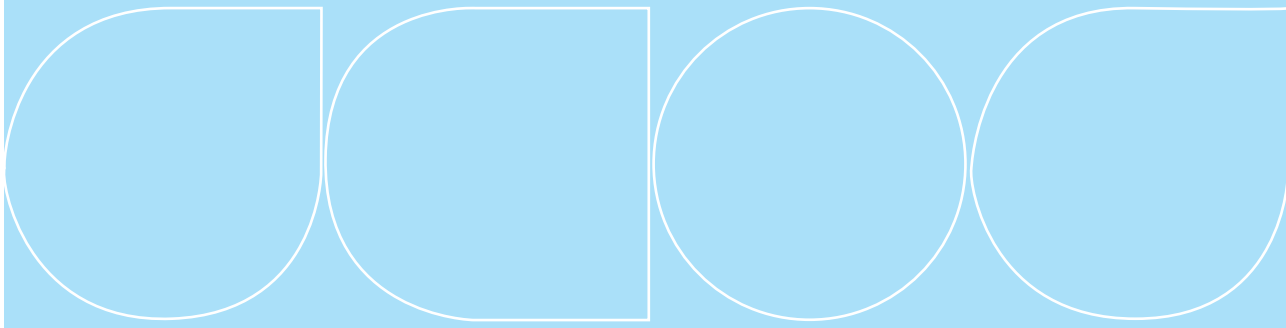




The Prince of Wales's  
Foundation for  
Integrated Health



# Complementary Healthcare: a guide for patients



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The Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health  
London, England



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# Contents

<b>Section A</b>	<b>General Information</b>	page
1	About this guide	7
2	Important points to be aware of before having treatment	8
3	How to find out which therapy to use	9
4	Standards and safety	12
5	Where to find a complementary healthcare practitioner	14
6	Questions to ask a practitioner before going for treatment	16
7	What if I'm unhappy with the treatment?	17
<b>Section B</b>	<b>Complementary Therapies</b>	
	<b>Statutorily regulated</b>	
8	Chiropractic	22
9	Osteopathy	23
	<b>Proposals made for statutory regulation</b>	
10	Acupuncture	25
11	Herbal medicine	28
	<b>Other therapies</b>	
12	Aromatherapy	31
13	Craniosacral therapy	33
14	Healing	34
15	Homeopathy	36
16	Hypnotherapy	38
17	Massage therapy	39
18	Naturopathy	41
19	Nutritional therapy	43
20	Reflexology	44
21	Reiki	46
22	Shiatsu	47
23	Yoga therapy	49
<b>Section C</b>	<b>Further Information</b>	
24	Sources of further information	51
25	References	53

# Section A

## General Information

# 1 About this guide

## What is included?

The aim of this guide is to give you enough information to help you choose a complementary therapy that is right for you and find a properly trained and qualified practitioner of that therapy. It includes information about:

- important things to be aware of before going for treatment
- how to find out what might be helpful
- how to find a properly qualified and competent complementary practitioner
- what to do if you are unhappy with treatment
- 16 of the most widely used complementary therapies
- where you can find further information

Looking at various healthcare options is part of taking more responsibility for your own health. It is important that you have the right information to help you do this.

There is not space in this booklet to include information on all the complementary therapies available in the UK, so we have concentrated on some of the therapies that are most widely used. The general information in this guide is relevant whatever therapy you are interested in. If you want to use a therapy not mentioned in this guide, please contact The Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health for information.

We have not been able to include all the existing complementary medicine professional organisations in this guide. Our policy is to include in our publications the organisations that are working together to form a single regulatory body for their profession.

To make reading the guide easier, when we want to use the pronouns 'he' or 'she' instead of saying 'the practitioner' or 'the chiropractor', we say 'she' in one chapter and 'he' in the next and so on, throughout the guide. We are not suggesting that in reality all chiropractors are women or, for example, that all massage therapists are men.

## General precautions

This booklet is about using complementary healthcare provided by a qualified, competent practitioner. It is not about treating yourself with products you can buy in shops or over the internet. You should get advice from an appropriate practitioner before doing so, unless it is for minor illnesses like coughs and colds that you can normally buy medicines at the chemist for. An appropriate practitioner could be a trained and qualified complementary practitioner, your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. If you do buy products over the counter read the patient information that should come with them and take note of the safety information in this guide.

It is important to remember that anything that has the power to help you could also cause harm if taken unnecessarily or provided by an untrained or insufficiently trained person. In addition, some complementary treatments that may be helpful when used properly, can affect other medicines if taken at the same time. For example, St John's Wort can make some prescription medicines or the birth control pill work less well and it could be dangerous to take St John's Wort at the same time as anti-depressants. That is why we emphasise the importance of telling your doctor about all complementary treatments you are taking and telling your complementary healthcare practitioner about all other medication you are taking. A properly trained, qualified and regulated complementary practitioner should ask you about this.

**Never change or stop taking prescribed medication without talking to your GP first.**

Please note that the aim of this booklet is to provide general information about complementary healthcare and to point you in the direction of sources of further information. Inclusion in this guide does not imply recommendation or endorsement. Please be aware that **the information in this booklet should not be taken as a substitute for medical advice** and that decisions about healthcare and treatment should be made in consultation with a healthcare practitioner and based on your own individual needs.

## 2 Important points to be aware of before having treatment

### Have you seen your doctor first?

If you are planning to see a complementary practitioner because you feel unwell, you should see your doctor first about any symptoms you have. It is important that your doctor has the chance to rule out any dangerous or life threatening illness and to discuss treatment options with you. It is also important that your complementary practitioner is aware of any medical conditions you are known to have (see also the next section: *Keep everyone informed*). A well-trained complementary practitioner should tell you to see your doctor if she realises you might have something serious that your doctor does not know about. She should also know when she cannot help you and suggest you see someone else.

### Keep everyone informed

This is very important for your safety and includes telling your doctor what complementary treatments you are taking, letting your complementary practitioner know about any medicines your doctor has prescribed for you and any other complementary treatments you are having. Don't forget to mention any product or supplement you may have bought for yourself. Different treatments can sometimes have an effect on each other, which could make them work less well, cause unpleasant side effects or be possibly dangerous for you. This is particularly important for herbal remedies, as there are some you should not take at the same time as certain medicines prescribed by your doctor. There is more information about this in *Chapter 3: How to find out which therapies to use* and *Chapter 11: Herbal medicine*.

Always try to discuss your decisions about using complementary medicine with your GP, practice nurse or hospital doctor (including

your midwife or obstetrician, if you are pregnant). It can be helpful to talk about your ideas with others before making a choice.

Ideally, you should keep all healthcare professionals involved in what you are doing so they can work together to help you get the best healthcare. Your complementary practitioner may tell your doctor, with your permission, about the treatment you are having and what progress you are making.

### Claims about cures

A reputable practitioner will not tell you, nor say in advertisements, that she can cure a specific disease or condition. You should, therefore, be suspicious of any one who does. Such claims can lead patients to have unrealistic expectations of their treatment and are not legal unless they can be proved. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) oversees advertising in newspapers, magazines and direct mail and provides information about what can be said about the effectiveness of products and treatments. The ASA says that unqualified claims such as "cure" are generally not acceptable.

### Medical history

When you see a complementary practitioner for the first time, she should take a medical history from you. This should include finding out what other medication, conventional and complementary, you are taking. You should tell her about everything you are taking, whether it has been prescribed for you or whether you have bought a product yourself. You should also let her know about any other complementary treatments you are having. She should ask what illnesses or medical conditions you have and whether you are pregnant. If the practitioner does not ask you about all these things, you should tell her.

### Cost

Before you start treatment find out exactly what you will have to pay.

#### NHS treatment

In some areas you may be able to get complementary treatment on the NHS. This may be at no extra cost or you may be



asked to pay something towards it. At the homeopathic hospitals (see *Chapter 5*), your treatment is on the NHS but you will be asked to pay a prescription charge for your homeopathic remedies. If your doctor has recommended you to a complementary practitioner, either in a GP practice or outside, check beforehand how much you will be expected to pay.

### Private treatment

If you are seeing a complementary practitioner privately and paying all the cost yourself, bear in mind that the first consultation may be longer, and so cost more. What you are paying for is the practitioner's time but with some therapies there may be extra costs for herbs or nutritional supplements. Some private health insurance schemes and medical cash plans cover the cost of some complementary therapies, so if you belong to one of these check beforehand what it covers.

In the chapters on each therapy we give an idea of how much you might expect to pay a private practitioner. This is usually the minimum you could pay, as the costs will vary depending on the practitioner and where you live. London, other large cities and the south of Britain are likely to be more expensive.

### Low cost treatment

Complementary healthcare is sometimes available in healthy living centres, voluntary organisations or charities (see *Chapter 5*). In these cases, you might be able to get free or subsidised treatment. Some practitioners offer reduced rates for small children, pensioners or people on income support.

### Length of treatment

The total cost of your treatment will depend also on how long your course of treatment is and how often you see the practitioner. After your first appointment with a practitioner she should be able to give you an estimate of how long your treatment is likely to continue.

## 3 How to find out which therapy to use

### Use of complementary healthcare

An estimated 5.75 million people a year in the UK go to see a complementary practitioner for treatment.<sup>1</sup> People with long standing illnesses are more likely than others to use complementary healthcare,<sup>2</sup> although the majority of people who do have complementary treatment see their doctor about their illness first.<sup>3</sup> Some studies that looked at the use of complementary medicine found that musculoskeletal problems, especially back pain; stress relief; anxiety and depression; and the maintenance of good health are among the most common reasons given for seeing a complementary practitioner.<sup>4,5,6,7</sup>

In the chapters in this guide on individual therapies, we give an indication of the conditions each therapy can be used to treat, along with examples of some of the evidence available from research about what they might be helpful for.

### What information is there?

A friend of yours may tell you that her arthritis got better after she was treated with a particular complementary therapy. This is interesting and good news for your friend, but you should really have more information before you make a decision about which complementary therapy to use. In this chapter we give examples of the kinds of information you can look at. In the last chapter of the book we list some other sources of further information you could use.

While there hasn't been as much research into complementary medicine in comparison with conventional medicine, there is an increasing amount of evidence available. The government has started to fund more research into complementary medicine and to increase the opportunities for research and raise the standards of research being done.



There are a number of ways in which complementary therapies can be tested to see how well they work and different views about which are best. One method is the randomised controlled trial, a clinical trial that is seen as the 'gold standard' in research. Many researchers believe that randomised controlled trials produce the most scientific and best quality results. Some complementary therapies have been shown to be helpful when tested in this way.<sup>8</sup>

**In a randomised controlled trial the patients taking part in the research study are divided into groups in a random way. Patients in one group get the treatment being tested, while those in other groups are given a different treatment or a dummy treatment.**

You might be interested in looking at other kinds of evidence in addition to that from randomised controlled trials. For example, observational studies look at the results of a large group of patients having the same treatment over a period of time<sup>9</sup> and systematic reviews and meta-analyses of clinical trials bring together and analyse together the results of previous research.

### Information about reading and using research

Looking at research may sometimes be confusing, because there is often some that contradicts other research you have already read. Here are details of a book and websites that have information about using research.

*The Which? Guide to Complementary Therapies* (Consumers' Association, 2002) by Helen Barnett has a chapter about research.

The Best Treatments website, which is run by the publishers of the British Medical Journal, explains how to use research to support your treatment decisions [www.besttreatments.co.uk/btuk/decision\\_index.html](http://www.besttreatments.co.uk/btuk/decision_index.html)

The Research Council for Complementary Medicine has an introduction to research on their website. [www.rccm.org.uk/static/Research\\_intro.aspx?m=4](http://www.rccm.org.uk/static/Research_intro.aspx?m=4)

The US National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine has information about clinical trials and complementary medicine.

<http://nccam.nih.gov/clinicaltrials/factsheet/index.htm>

*Making Sense of Medical Research: An Alternative and Complementary Medicine Resource Guide* by the Alternative Medicine Foundation in the USA.

<http://www.amfoundation.org/medresearch.htm>

Informed Health Online, produced by the Health Research and Education Foundation Ltd in Australia has information about research and understanding research at [www.informedhealthonline.org//item.aspx?tabid=26](http://www.informedhealthonline.org//item.aspx?tabid=26)

### Information about safety

This guide provides information about how each complementary therapy can be used safely.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) points out that the standards of production of some unlicensed traditional Chinese herbal remedies vary. Some have been found to include substances, often undeclared on the label, that could be harmful and that are illegal. The MHRA publishes a web page *Herbal Safety News* which provides information and advice for the public about the safety of herbal medicines and traditional Chinese medicines. You can read *Herbal Safety News* via the home page of the MHRA web site [www.mhra.gov.uk](http://www.mhra.gov.uk).

*The Desktop Guide to Complementary and Alternative Medicine* (Mosby, 2001), edited by Edzard Ernst contains safety information relevant to most of the complementary therapies included in this booklet and about a wide range of herbal and non-herbal medicines.

The UK Medicines Information website [www.ukmi.nhs.uk](http://www.ukmi.nhs.uk) has a section on complementary therapies with factsheets, including safety information, on some herbal remedies.

### Research evidence

The book and websites below give information about the results of research into complementary medicine.

*The Desktop Guide to Complementary and Alternative Medicine* (Mosby, 2001), edited by Edzard Ernst.

In the United States there is a government agency, the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine,

that provides information on its website (<http://nccam.nih.gov>) about complementary medicine and research. The website includes a database, CAM on PubMed, of references to research into complementary medicine:

[www.nlm.nih.gov/nccam/camonpubmed.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/nccam/camonpubmed.html)

MedlinePlus is a website for the public giving health information. It is run by the American National Library of Medicine and National Institutes for Health and includes some information, including safety and research, about complementary medicine including acupuncture, herbal medicine, chiropractic and homeopathy.

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/complementaryandalternativetherapies.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/complementaryandalternativetherapies.html)

[www.besttreatments.co.uk](http://www.besttreatments.co.uk) has some information about complementary therapies that have been shown to be helpful for specific conditions and whether they can affect prescribed medicines.

Bandolier, located at Oxford University, is a journal and website offering evidence based healthcare information. It specialises in putting information from a range of research sources (including systematic reviews, meta-analyses, randomised trials and observational studies) into simple bullet points. The website [www.jr2.ox.ac.uk/bandolier/index.html](http://www.jr2.ox.ac.uk/bandolier/index.html) is free to search.

Informed Health Online, produced by the Health Research and Education Foundation Ltd in Australia, has information for the public about research into complementary medicine

[www.informedhealthonline.org//item.aspx?topic=1208](http://www.informedhealthonline.org//item.aspx?topic=1208)

[www.positivehealth.com](http://www.positivehealth.com) is the website of the journal *Positive Health*. The website includes updates of research into complementary therapies and into the treatment of particular conditions.

When you are looking at research “It should be noted that stating that there is a lack of compelling evidence for a treatment does not imply that the treatment is ineffective.”

Ernst E (ed). *The Desktop Guide to Complementary and Alternative Medicine*. Mosby, 2001

## Other information

### NHS Direct Online

NHS Direct Online has some information on

acupuncture, chiropractic, osteopathy, homeopathy and safety.

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

### Patients’ experiences

Other patients’ experiences can be a helpful additional source of information. DIPEX.org ([www.dipex.org](http://www.dipex.org)) is a website that includes patients telling you about their experiences of particular illness and treatments. This includes experiences with complementary medicine in relation to cancers, heart disease, mental health and neurological conditions, which are the areas covered by DIPEX at present. There are plans for a number of other topics in the future.

### Patient organisations

Some patient support organisations, such as the Parkinson’s Disease Society ([www.parkinsons.org.uk](http://www.parkinsons.org.uk)), Breast Cancer Care ([www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk)) and Arthritis Research Campaign ([www.arc.org.uk](http://www.arc.org.uk)) have leaflets about using complementary medicine. You can find details of patient support organisations and self-help groups on the website [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

You can find organisations that have telephone helplines through the Telephone Helplines Association, which publishes a directory of helplines. The directory can be searched via the Telephone Helplines Association website [www.helplines.org.uk](http://www.helplines.org.uk)

### Using healthcare information

The information sources we list in this chapter are reputable and should contain reliable, up-to-date information. If you are looking at other websites on the internet, you should remember the general advice in *Chapter 2* and be aware that while some information on the internet is reliable, a lot is not. A recent survey of websites giving information about complementary medicine for cancer concluded that “The most popular websites on complementary and alternative medicine for cancer offer information of extremely variable quality. Many endorse unproven therapies and some are outright dangerous.”<sup>10</sup> You can read the survey at

<http://annonc.oupjournals.org/cgi/content/full/15/5/733>

### Quality guidelines

There are guidelines to help people find and assess health information on the

internet. The Judge project has developed guidelines for judging the quality of health web sites. You can find these at [www.judgehealth.org.uk/consumer\\_guidelines.htm](http://www.judgehealth.org.uk/consumer_guidelines.htm)

DISCERN is a brief questionnaire that can be used to assess the quality of health information. It was originally developed for use with printed consumer health information but it is also useful for information on the internet. You can find it at [find www.discern.org.uk](http://www.discern.org.uk)

The Hi Quality website also has guidance on its website at [www.hfht.org/hiquality/default.htm](http://www.hfht.org/hiquality/default.htm) to help you check the quality of health information.

The US website MedLine Plus has a guide to looking for health information on the internet at [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthyweb\\_surfing.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthyweb_surfing.html)

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine in the USA has a list of questions you can ask called *10 Things To Know About Evaluating Medical Resources on the Web* at <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/webresources/index.htm>

## 4 Standards and safety

### Healthcare and regulation

When we see a healthcare professional we expect high quality care and treatment. Therefore, it is important that the practitioner is well trained and that there is a system for overseeing how she does her work. This should include a way of ensuring that something can be done if we are unhappy with treatment or if something goes wrong. An organisation which does this is called a regulatory body and its purpose is to protect the public.

In the UK, the work of conventional healthcare professionals, such as doctors, nurses, dentists and physiotherapists, is governed by the regulatory body for each profession. Most conventional healthcare practitioners must be registered with the regulatory body for their profession in order to work. To become registered, practitioners have to complete a suitable course of training and show that their work meets agreed standards. Regulatory bodies like these, which have been set up by Acts of Parliament, are called statutory regulatory bodies. In the rest of this booklet we use the phrase 'regulated by law' to mean statutorily regulated by an Act of Parliament.

A healthcare regulatory body should:

- ensure that practitioners are trained and practise to agreed minimum standards
- keep a list (a register) of practitioners who meet those standards
- have a code of ethics and behaviour to ensure that practitioners practise properly and professionally
- ensure that practitioners are insured to practise, so that you can be compensated if anything goes wrong with the treatment or if you have an accident on their premises
- ensure that practitioners take part in ongoing training, and keep up-to-date with developments in their profession
- have a system for patients to make a complaint if they are unhappy with their treatment (complaints procedure)
- have a system through which practitioners can be dealt with if their work is not satisfactory, which could include being taken off the register if they become unfit to practise (disciplinary procedure)

## How complementary healthcare professions are regulated

Osteopaths and chiropractors are regulated by law, like doctors and nurses. The other complementary healthcare professions are at different stages of developing voluntary systems of regulation.

A voluntary system of regulation can give patients most of the benefits that a statutory system provides, but it does not have the weight of the law behind it and practitioners do not have to register with the regulatory body. In fact, for a particular profession or therapy, there may be more than one association keeping lists of practitioners and they may all have different standards of training and practice. That is why we suggest you ask practitioners the questions in *Chapter 6*.

All healthcare practitioners have a legal duty of care towards their patients, whether they are practising a therapy that is statutorily regulated or voluntarily regulated. This means that a practitioner has a duty not to harm patients and, if a patient does suffer harm due to a practitioner's negligence, the practitioner can be sued in a court of law by the patient.<sup>11</sup>

### Osteopathy and chiropractic

The General Osteopathic Council is the statutory regulatory body for osteopathy and has a register of all osteopaths in the UK. The General Chiropractic Council regulates chiropractors and has a register of all chiropractors in the UK. To get on the registers practitioners must meet particular standards of training and practice and only those on the registers are allowed to call themselves osteopaths and chiropractors.

The regulatory bodies have codes of ethics that govern how their practitioners work and practitioners must have insurance. There are complaints procedures that will be followed if you have a complaint against an osteopath or chiropractor. There are also disciplinary procedures to deal with practitioners whose work is not satisfactory. Ultimately, practitioners could be taken off the register, which means they could not legally practise as osteopaths or chiropractors.

### Acupuncture and herbal medicine

The different professional associations registering acupuncturists are working together to develop common standards of

training and practice. In September 2003 they published a report proposing how they might become regulated by law. A number of doctors, nurses and physiotherapists practise acupuncture and they are already statutorily regulated as doctors, nurses and physiotherapists.

Herbal medicine practitioners have also been working together, through their professional associations and under the umbrella of the European Herbal Practitioners Association (EHPA) to develop common standards of training and practice. In the UK, the EHPA represents, through its member professional associations, approximately 2,000 practitioners working in Ayurveda, Chinese, Tibetan and Western herbal medicine. In September 2003, a working group that included the EHPA and other relevant organisations made recommendations about how herbal practitioners should be regulated.

In March 2004 the government published a consultation document asking for views about the future statutory regulation of acupuncturists and herbal medicine practitioners. At the time this booklet was printed, the government was about to publish an analysis of the consultation responses. For up-to-date information please look at our website [www.fihealth.org.uk](http://www.fihealth.org.uk) or check with the professional associations listed in *Chapter 10* and *Chapter 11*.

### Other complementary therapies

The other complementary therapies are not regulated by law, although some complementary practitioners are also doctors, nurses, midwives, physiotherapists and pharmacists who are regulated by law as registered members of their medical professions.

Within each complementary profession there are usually several professional associations that practitioners can belong to. Practitioners are not required to join or register with a professional association in order to practise, but many do. However, standards of training can vary, which is why we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.

The professional associations within some of the complementary therapies not regulated by law are now working together to develop common standards of training and practice for their therapy. In some

cases they are working towards having one register of all practitioners of that therapy who meet a required standard. This process takes time. For up-to-date information please see our website [www.fihealth.org.uk](http://www.fihealth.org.uk) or contact our office.

## Training, qualifications and registration

In addition to finishing their training satisfactorily, which gives them a qualification, practitioners should also be registered with a professional association or regulatory body, which should mean they have insurance and that there is a way for you to make a complaint, if you are not happy with your treatment.

Practitioners often use letters after their name to show their qualifications and/or which professional association or regulatory body they belong to or are registered with. For example, MBACc means 'Member of the British Acupuncture Council' (see *Chapter 10*) and MFHom means 'Member of the Faculty of Homeopathy' (see *Chapter 15*). *The Which? Guide to Complementary Therapies* (see *Chapter 24, Sources of Further Information*) has information about what some letters mean, but if you are not certain you can ask the practitioner to explain.

Letters after the name of practitioners who are not statutorily regulated may not necessarily mean that their training or practice meet minimum standards. It is important that the practitioner has a qualification, is a current member of a professional organisation and has professional insurance. However, the level of qualifications and the length of training vary. For instance, there are some courses that are not suitable for people wishing to become practitioners.

You might not be able to tell this from the letters alone, so always ask the practitioner what her qualification is, how long her training was and what association she is part of. You can check her membership by contacting the association. Some professional associations say they register practitioners but do not actually require the practitioners to show that they meet high standards. That is why we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.

# 5 Where to find a complementary healthcare practitioner

## Where practitioners work

### Charities and community organisations

Many charities and community health services, such as those for people with alcohol or drug-related problems, mental health issues, cancer or HIV, offer complementary therapies as part of their programme and treatments may be given at lower cost. You can find out about these services by asking your GP or local library, or by looking in the local yellow pages or business directory.

### Healthy living centres

Healthy living centres are lottery-funded programmes that offer a range of health services to local people. As part of their promotion of good health, many healthy living centres provide complementary therapies to people who otherwise could not afford to benefit from them.

### NHS

Half the GP practices in England now provide access to complementary therapies in some way.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes practitioners work alongside the GPs in the surgery building and some GPs practise complementary therapies themselves. If this is not the case, GPs or other staff in the surgery can sometimes help patients to find a practitioner working nearby. If your GP practice does provide some complementary healthcare you may find that you are asked to pay something towards the cost of the treatment. In general, however, not everyone will find complementary treatment on the NHS in his or her local area. Each primary care trust, local practice or hospital trust decides individually whether or not to provide complementary healthcare.

Complementary therapies are provided in many hospices and palliative care services and in some hospitals and pain

clinics. There are five NHS homeopathic hospitals in the UK which offer outpatient complementary therapy services, in Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool, London and Tunbridge Wells. Glasgow also offers inpatient treatment. You will need to get a referral from your GP to attend these hospitals. If you need help with this, or if your GP has questions or concerns about referring to these hospitals, you can contact the British Homeopathic Association for their leaflet *How to Get Homeopathic Treatment on the NHS*.<sup>13</sup>

Having complementary healthcare available alongside conventional medicine, the treatment you normally receive at your doctor's surgery or local hospital, is called *integrated healthcare*. It gives you more choice of treatments. Integrated healthcare is also offered at some private medical practices.

Some statutorily regulated conventional healthcare practitioners, such as doctors, nurses and dentists, also practise complementary therapies including acupuncture, homeopathy, hypnotherapy and reflexology. They may work in the NHS or as private practitioners.

### Private practice

Most complementary practitioners are self-employed, and run their own practices. They may be based in complementary health clinics or have a clinical practice room in their home. There might be a clinic near you that you have seen or you can find listings of complementary health clinics and individual practitioners in your local telephone directory. However, please bear in mind the guidance in this booklet if you choose a practitioner this way.

## Finding a practitioner

When you have decided which complementary therapy you would like to use, the next step is to find a practitioner of that therapy. As explained in *Chapter 4*, standards of training and practice of complementary therapies can vary and the different therapy professions are at different stages in the development of regulatory systems.

In each of the chapters in this book about individual therapies (*Chapters 8-23*), we give a list of the associations that



register practitioners of that therapy. For osteopathy and chiropractic, which are regulated by law, we give the contact details of the one regulatory body for each. For therapies in which the different professional associations that register practitioners are working together to develop common standards of training and practice, we give the contact details for the joint organisation. If you contact the relevant organisation for the therapy you are interested in, you should be able to get information about practitioners near you.

It is a good idea to ring a few practitioners and talk to them about why you want to see them before finally making up your mind about which one you feel most comfortable with. You can ask them the questions suggested in the next chapter before deciding.

### Word of mouth

It can be very useful if someone you know recommends a complementary practitioner he or she found helpful. However, you should still check that the practitioner is trained and registered with a professional association or regulatory body and you can still ask him the questions in *Chapter 6*.

## 6 Questions to ask a practitioner before going for treatment

It is important that you see a practitioner with appropriate training and qualifications, and that the practitioner has the experience and facilities to help you. You can check these things by asking the practitioner a number of questions. Feel free to ask a practitioner anything that will help you to decide whether or not she is the right professional to work with you. If you are thinking of seeing a practitioner who works from a clinic or centre, along with other practitioners, the clinic should have details of training, qualifications and experience.

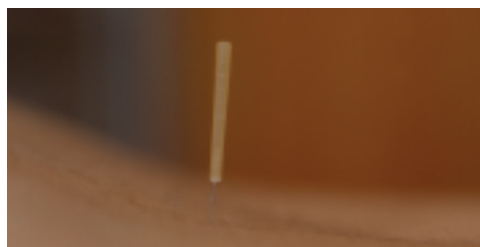
Even if you are going to see a practitioner who has been recommended by someone you know, you can still ask the following questions. When you have spoken to a practitioner on the phone don't feel obliged to make an appointment with her if you don't feel comfortable; it is fine for you to speak to several if you need to before making a decision.

### Is the practitioner regulated?

Is the practitioner registered with a statutory regulatory body or professional association? The practitioner should be able to give you contact details for her regulatory body or professional association. You can contact the organisation to check this. You can also ask what the practitioner had to do to become registered. The practitioner may have her registration certificate displayed in the consulting room or she should be able to show it to you.

### Training and qualifications

The length of training courses can vary, so you can ask how long the practitioner has trained for and what qualification(s) she has. Weekend or very short courses are not suitable for people wishing to practise



professionally with patients. It is also important that practitioners carry on learning and keep up with developments in their profession. The practitioner may have her certificate of qualification displayed in the consulting room or she should be able to show it to you.

### Experience

Does the practitioner have experience in treating people with your condition? In some circumstances, for instance if you have cancer and are interested in having complementary treatment in addition to your conventional treatment, it may be best to see a practitioner with special training. If there is an organisation or society for people with your condition, they may give advice about this.

### Insurance

You should check that the practitioner is insured so that you can be compensated if anything goes wrong with the treatment or if you have an accident on her premises. Again, practitioners should have a certificate showing that they are insured.

### What will it cost?

What is the charge for a treatment? Does the first appointment cost more? Sometimes practitioners charge more for the first appointment because they need to spend longer taking details of your medical history. Will there be extra costs for the remedies or supplements they give you?

### How long will the course of treatment be?

After your first visit a practitioner should usually be able to give you an idea of how many treatments you might need.



## Information

Does the practitioner have any information about her practice and therapy she can send you before you see her?

## Is there anything you need to do beforehand?

Are there any preparations you need to make before treatment, such as not eating for a short time, or wearing particular clothing?

## How might you feel afterwards?

How might you feel after treatment? Are there any precautions you need to take straight after a treatment, such as not driving? Are you likely to feel discomfort or pain and, if so, how long is this likely to last?

## Do you have particular needs?

If you have a disability, make sure the practitioner has what you need, such as wheelchair access.

# 7 What if I'm unhappy with the treatment?

You have the right to make your feelings known if you are unhappy with the treatment you have received. Reasons you may not feel happy include not liking the treatment, being hurt or injured during treatment or while you were in the practitioner's clinic, or the practitioner's behaviour towards you. Some things are relatively simple to sort out.

- **I didn't like the treatment.** It may be that the treatment is not the best one for you. But before you decide to stop, talk to the practitioner and explain what you did not like and why. Feedback from you is important in helping a practitioner decide how to treat you. He may be able to adapt the treatment if you discuss your concerns.
- **I didn't get along with the practitioner.** The professional relationship between you and your practitioner is very important in getting the best out of your treatment. Relationships don't always work. If you feel that you can't work well with a practitioner, it is best to go somewhere else for treatment.

However, if the reason you did not get on with the practitioner was because you were not happy about his behaviour towards you, you may want to do something about it. The Prevention of Professional Abuse Network (POPAN) says that "when a professional takes advantage of their client or patient's trust....does not act in their best interests and fails to keep professional boundaries,"<sup>14</sup> the practitioner's behaviour can be called professional abuse.

- **I'm unhappy about what the practitioner tells me to do.** Reputable complementary healthcare practitioners should not tell you what to do. They should not tell you to stop seeing your doctor or another complementary



practitioner, or to stop taking any medication prescribed by your doctor. Any decisions you take should be yours, made after thinking about the issues and with full information. You should feel happy with the decisions you make about your treatment. If you are not happy, you could talk it over with a friend and, if you can, with the practitioner. If you still feel he is trying to get you to do things you have doubts about, you should stop seeing him. You may decide you want to take the matter further.

- **I'm unhappy with the way the practitioner behaved.** If you feel uncomfortable about the way a practitioner behaved towards you, stop seeing him. You might find it helpful to talk it over with a friend, if you can. You may decide that you want to do something about it.

## What can I do?

In many cases, when you are not satisfied with your treatment, you can sort it out informally by talking with the practitioner and other relevant people. Who you can talk to and what they are able to do depends on whether the practitioner is employed by the NHS and whether he is regulated by law or not.

Where you have serious concerns about your practitioner's behaviour towards you, you may wish to speak with someone other than the practitioner. You can speak with your doctor, the NHS complementary healthcare service manager, if relevant, the practitioner's regulatory body or the professional organisation he is registered with. You may also wish to contact the Prevention of Professional Abuse Network (POPAN), a national charity that assists people who have concerns about abusive health professionals. You can visit their website at [www.popan.org.uk](http://www.popan.org.uk) or ring their confidential helpline on 08454 500 300.

If you find that talking it through has not been enough you may decide to make a formal complaint. You should be aware that making a complaint can be stressful or distressing, depending on the reason why you are complaining. It is, therefore, very helpful to have someone who can support you during the process.

## When the practitioner is employed by the NHS

If the practitioner you see is employed by the NHS and you have been referred to him by your GP or another doctor, you should make sure that you raise your concerns with the doctor and/or the manager of the complementary healthcare service, if there is one. If your GP sends you for treatment to a complementary practitioner who is not statutorily regulated, the GP is still responsible for your treatment so you should always discuss any concerns with your GP. Other people in the NHS who might be able to help are the:

- NHS trust patient and advice liaison (PAL) officer (England)
- trust or local health board complaints manager (Wales)
- trust or health board patient liaison or complaints officer (Scotland)
- local health and social services board (Northern Ireland)

If you don't feel that talking it over has been enough and you decide to make a complaint you can do so using the local NHS complaints procedure.

### Making a complaint

Your GP; the practice manager; the manager of the complementary therapy service; the local health board or trust patient liaison officer or complaints manager; or, in England, the NHS trust patient and advice liaison service (PALs) should be able to give you information about how to do this. You can also get information about how to make a complaint from the places below.

#### England

For information on how to complain about NHS treatment in England see the NHS website at [www.nhs.uk/england/aboutTheNHS/complainCompliment.csmx](http://www.nhs.uk/england/aboutTheNHS/complainCompliment.csmx) or phone NHS Direct on 0845 46 47. To find your local NHS trust in England phone NHS Direct or use the NHS website at [www.nhs.uk/england/authoritiestrusts/pct/default.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/england/authoritiestrusts/pct/default.aspx)

#### Scotland

As this guide went to print the complaints system in Scotland was being revised. However, information will be available from

your NHS board's patient liaison officer or complaints officer or from the NHS Helpline in Scotland 0800 224488. To find your local NHS board phone NHS 24 on 08454 24 24 24 or look on the Scottish NHS website at [www.show.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk)

### Wales

For information on how to complain about NHS treatment in Wales phone NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47 or look on the NHS Wales website at [www.wales.nhs.uk/documents/complaints-leaflet-e.pdf](http://www.wales.nhs.uk/documents/complaints-leaflet-e.pdf) You can find your local health board or trust by telephoning NHS Direct Wales or looking at the NHS Direct Wales website at [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/nhsdirect.asp?id=22](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/nhsdirect.asp?id=22)

### Northern Ireland

The local health and social services boards can give information on how to complain about NHS services in Northern Ireland. You can get contact details for your local board by asking at your GP's surgery or on the Internet at [www.n-i.nhs.uk/](http://www.n-i.nhs.uk/) You can also find out how to make a complaint by looking on the Central Services Agency website at [www.centralservicesagency.n-i.nhs.uk/display/how\\_to\\_make\\_a\\_complaint](http://www.centralservicesagency.n-i.nhs.uk/display/how_to_make_a_complaint)

### Help with making a complaint through the NHS

Sometimes making a complaint may not feel straightforward and you may need help or support.

#### Help from inside the NHS

In England, patient advice and liaison services, based in NHS trusts, give advice and support to patients, carers and their families and can help if you want to make a complaint. In Scotland NHS boards have patient liaison or complaints officers who can help.

#### Help from outside the NHS

If your complaint is about an NHS service, your local independent complaints advocacy service (ICAS) will be able to help you. You can find your local advocacy service by contacting NHS Direct in England on 0845 46 47.

There is also a list of the independent complaints advocacy services in England on the complaints policy section of the Department of Health website [www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/OrganisationPolicy/ComplaintsPolicy/fs/en](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/OrganisationPolicy/ComplaintsPolicy/fs/en)

In Wales the local community health council runs the independent complaints advocacy service. You can find your local community health council by telephoning the Board of Community Health Councils in Wales on 0845 644 7814 or looking on the website [www.patienthelp.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.patienthelp.wales.nhs.uk)

In Scotland the local health councils have been supporting people making complaints. From 1 April 2005, local branches of the new Scottish Health Council will take over responsibility for doing this. You will be able to find out how to contact your local branch by telephoning NHS 24 on 08454 24 24 24.

In Northern Ireland the local health and social services councils give advice and support on making a complaint. You can find your local council on the Northern Ireland NHS website at [www.n-i.nhs.uk/index.html](http://www.n-i.nhs.uk/index.html)

The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux website has information about how to complain about NHS services in England, Scotland, Wales and N Ireland at [www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/family\\_parent/health/nhs\\_complaints.htm](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/family_parent/health/nhs_complaints.htm) including a self-help pack to support you when making a complaint [www.adviceguide.org.uk/icas\\_self\\_help\\_pack.pdf](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/icas_self_help_pack.pdf)

Local citizens advice bureaux in the UK may also be able to provide help to make a complaint. You can find out where your local citizens advice bureau is by looking in the local telephone directory or on the internet at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice)

The Public Law Project has a guide to help people making a complaint about NHS treatment. It is available from the Public Law Project, 266-268 Holloway Road, London N7 6NE. Telephone 020 7697 2190. The guide is free but you need to send an A4 size envelope with your name and address and a 54p stamp for each copy you order.

## When you are seeing the practitioner privately

If the practitioner is regulated by law and talking to him has not helped, or you don't feel you can do that, you can talk to someone at his regulatory body about your concerns. It may be that the matter can be

sorted out in this way. If not, the regulatory body will have a complaints procedure and the practitioner may also have a local complaints procedure for his clinic. These should be available for you to see but if you prefer not to talk directly to the practitioner you can get a copy from the regulatory body.

Sometimes the complaints procedure is available on the regulatory body's website. If not, you will have to telephone them or write to them for a copy. You will need to make the complaint in writing and include as much relevant information as possible. The regulatory body should give you advice about making a complaint. Practitioners who are found unfit to practise by their regulatory body may be taken off that body's register.

The practitioner will have insurance so that if you have been hurt or injured by treatment or by an accident in the clinic, you should be able to get compensation if the practitioner or the clinic are responsible.

**If the practitioner is not regulated by law** and talking to him has not helped, or you don't feel you can do that, the steps you can take depend on the standards of the professional association he is registered with.

Many of the professional associations that register practitioners of therapies not regulated by law do have complaints procedures that are easily available, either through the practitioner or directly from the association and do require their practitioners to have professional indemnity insurance. Some will also be prepared to listen to your concerns before you make a complaint and give you information about how to make a complaint.

However, as explained in *Chapter 4, Standards and safety*, standards can vary so you may find that not all professional associations have appropriate complaints procedures or will help you make a complaint. This is one reason we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6* before having treatment; you could also ask whether the practitioner has available a complaints procedure from the association he is registered with.

If you do make a complaint, you will need to do it in writing and include as much

relevant information as possible.

Practitioners who are found unfit to practise by their professional association may be taken off that association's register, but they could still practise or join another association.

If you see a practitioner who is not a member of a professional association you will not be able to talk to, or complain to, a professional association if things go wrong. If the practitioner is not insured and you are hurt or injured by treatment or by an accident on the practitioner's premises, you will be most unlikely to get any compensation.

If the professional association will not help you, or the practitioner does not belong to a professional association it will be very hard for you to get help if you are unhappy with your treatment. If the practitioner's behaviour towards you has been abusive, then the Prevention of Professional Abuse Network (website: [www.popan.org.uk](http://www.popan.org.uk); tel: 08454 500 300) may be able to help. In other cases, if the practitioner has been negligent and you have been harmed, going to court may be an option. However, this can be a difficult, expensive and stressful process and it could be very hard to prove your case. A local law centre or citizens advice bureau may be able to advise you but there is always a big demand for their services. You may also be able to get advice from Action against Medical Accidents, a charity that helps people who have been harmed during healthcare treatment. Tel: 0845 123 2352; website: [www.avma.org.uk](http://www.avma.org.uk)



## Section B

# Complementary Therapies

## 8 Chiropractic

Chiropractic is concerned with the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mechanical disorders of the musculoskeletal system and the effects of these disorders on the function of the nervous system and general health. In other words, chiropractors believe that the health of the spine and the nervous system running through it can influence the health of the whole body. Manual treatments, such as spinal manipulation or adjustment,<sup>15</sup> are usually used.

There are about 2000 chiropractors registered with the General Chiropractic Council. Many chiropractors do not think of themselves as complementary practitioners. They are regulated by law and prefer to call themselves primary healthcare practitioners. In 2001, about 23% of doctors' surgeries were providing chiropractic or osteopathic treatment at the surgery or making NHS referrals to chiropractors or osteopaths.<sup>16</sup>

### What is chiropractic commonly used for?

Chiropractic is used mainly for disorders of the musculoskeletal system such as spine, neck and shoulder problems; migraine and tension headaches; joint, posture and muscle problems; sciatica; sports injuries; whiplash and repetitive strain injury. It may also be used for asthma; digestive disorders; menstrual pain and infant colic.<sup>17</sup>

A Medical Research Council clinical trial, reported in the British Medical Journal in 1990, found that chiropractic treatment of back pain was 29% more effective than hospital outpatient treatment. A follow-up trial in 1995 confirmed these results and found that chiropractic patients were, on the whole, more satisfied than those who had conventional hospital outpatient treatment for back pain.<sup>18</sup> The Royal College of General Practitioners recommends manipulation for acute and sub-acute back pain.<sup>19</sup>



### What will happen when I see a chiropractor?

Your first visit will last between 30 minutes and 1½ hours. The chiropractor will take a full case history and ask about your condition, which illnesses and injuries you have had, the kind of work you do and even about the type of bed you sleep on. You will be asked to take most of your clothes off, except your underwear, and be given a gown to put on. You will be able to do this in private. The chiropractor will ask you to agree to a physical examination and may also check your pulse, heart, blood pressure and lungs. If she thinks it is necessary, the chiropractor may also request an x-ray.

Before your treatments start the chiropractor should explain what the examination found, how she plans to treat you and whether there are any risks associated with your condition or the treatment. Treatments usually last around 15-20 minutes, and involve the chiropractor making adjustments to the spine.

Your chiropractor can also suggest ways you can help yourself, such as exercise and diet. Most health conditions are treated within 4 to 12 sessions, depending on the nature of the complaint and how long you have had it. The chiropractor may suggest follow-up treatments at regular intervals.<sup>20</sup>

### Precautions

It is quite common to feel some mild discomfort or tiredness straight after treatment. If these go on longer or you feel much worse you should tell your chiropractor straight away.

You should not use chiropractic treatment if you have severe osteoporosis, malignant or inflammatory spine conditions or recent fractures, or if you are on anti-clotting drugs or some steroids.<sup>21</sup>



There has been some discussion about the potential risks associated with manipulation of the upper spine at the neck, which is one element of chiropractic treatment and is also used by doctors, physiotherapists and osteopaths. The BMJ's clinical evidence website puts the risk of a stroke at between 1 and 3 in 1 million manipulations.<sup>22</sup> A review which looked at the relative risks associated with the use of spinal manipulation for neck pain and the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs concluded that manipulation was much safer (by as much as several hundred times) than non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.<sup>23</sup>

## Cost

Treatment costs from between £25 and £45 a session. The first appointment will cost more, from between £30 to £60 upwards, because it will usually be a longer appointment. Some health insurance schemes and medical cash plans cover chiropractic treatment.

## Finding a chiropractor

The chiropractic profession is regulated by law. **The General Chiropractic Council** is the regulatory body and, in the UK, only chiropractors who are registered with the General Chiropractic Council are allowed to call themselves chiropractors. To find chiropractors in your area contact the General Chiropractic Council or look in your local telephone directory.

### General Chiropractic Council

44 Wicklow Street  
London WC1X 9HL  
Tel: 020 7713 5155  
Fax: 020 7713 5844  
Email: [enquiries@gcc-uk.org](mailto:enquiries@gcc-uk.org)  
Website: [www.gcc-uk.org](http://www.gcc-uk.org)

# 9 Osteopathy

Osteopaths work with the body's musculoskeletal system, which is made up of the bones, joints, muscles, ligaments and connective tissue. They use their hands to diagnose and treat abnormalities in the way the body is working and damage caused by disease.<sup>24,25</sup>

Treatment techniques that osteopaths use include muscle manipulation, joint movements and 'high velocity thrusts', which are short, sharp movements.<sup>26,27</sup> These techniques are designed to reduce joint stiffness along with tension in the muscles, and to help the spine and joints to move more freely. Osteopaths believe that this can improve circulation and promote the body's own healing processes. The treatment also includes advice about lifestyle.

An American doctor, Andrew Taylor Still, believed that some illnesses could be caused by parts of the body becoming even a little out of place. In the 1870s he developed osteopathy to help the body return to normal. The first school of osteopathy in Britain was opened in London in 1917.

Today there are around 3,600 osteopaths on the General Osteopathic Council statutory register, and more than six million consultations every year.<sup>28</sup> Osteopathy is becoming widely recognised by the medical profession, and is now made available by one quarter of GP practices.<sup>29</sup> Many osteopaths do not think of themselves as complementary practitioners. They are regulated by law and prefer to call themselves primary healthcare practitioners. In 2001, about 23% of doctors' surgeries were providing osteopathic or chiropractic treatment.<sup>30</sup>

## What is osteopathy commonly used for?

Osteopathy is often used for low back pain and there is some evidence that it is helpful for this.<sup>31,32</sup> The Royal College of General Practitioners recommends manipulation for acute and sub-acute back pain.<sup>33</sup> Osteopathy is also used for neck pain,



muscle, joint and postural problems, pain during pregnancy, sports and repetitive strain injuries, sciatica, headaches, osteoarthritis, digestive disorders and menstrual pain.

Some osteopaths use cranial osteopathic techniques, involving very gentle movements on the head and the sacrum bone, which sits at the bottom of the spine.<sup>34</sup> It is often used for children with colic, glue ear, sinus problems and constant crying, but it can also be used for adults, particularly for face, neck and jaw pain, problems following shock and injury, headaches and sinus problems.<sup>35,36</sup>

## What will happen when I see an osteopath?

When you visit an osteopath for the first time, he will take a full case history and give you an examination. You will normally be asked to remove some of your clothing and to perform some simple movements. The osteopath will then use a highly developed sense of touch, called palpation, to identify any points of weakness or strain throughout the body. He may need additional investigations such as x-rays or blood tests. This will allow a full diagnosis and suitable treatment plan to be developed for you.

Treatments usually take 30-45 minutes. Osteopaths say that most people get most benefit from between 3 to 6 sessions, depending on the condition being treated.<sup>37</sup> At the first session, your osteopath should be able to give you an indication of how many treatments you might need. For some acute pain one or two treatments may be all that is necessary. Chronic conditions may need ongoing treatments from time to time.

## Precautions

You may feel a little soreness, tiredness or have a mild headache for a day or two after

treatment. Always tell your osteopath if you feel worse or are in pain for longer than this.

The use of a technique known as a high velocity thrust is not advisable if you have certain conditions including: osteoporosis; tumours; broken bones; infections; ligament damage; inflammatory joint disease; aneurysm; haemophilia or other bleeding disorders; active multiple sclerosis; or you are taking anticoagulant drugs or are between eight and twelve weeks pregnant.<sup>38,39</sup> However, there are other osteopathic techniques that the osteopath can use, if appropriate,<sup>40</sup> so it is very important that he knows if you are pregnant or have a serious health condition.

He should find this information out when he takes your case history. It is important, too, that you tell your doctor (and midwife or obstetrician if you are pregnant) if you are planning to have osteopathic treatment.

There has been some discussion about the potential risks associated with manipulation of the spine, such as possible spinal trauma after high velocity thrusts or stroke after manipulation of the upper spine at the neck. These techniques may be used, if appropriate, as part of osteopathic treatment and are also used by doctors, physiotherapists and chiropractors. The BMJ's clinical evidence website puts the risk of a stroke at between 1 and 3 in 1 million manipulations.<sup>41</sup> A review which looked at the relative risks associated with the use of spinal manipulation for neck pain and the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs concluded that manipulation was much safer (by as much as several hundred times) than non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.<sup>42</sup>

## Cost

Treatments cost from approximately £25-£50 and upwards for a 30-40 minute session. The first session is usually longer

and may cost more. Some health insurance schemes and medical cash plans cover osteopathy.

## Finding an osteopath

The osteopathy profession is regulated by law. The **General Osteopathic Council** is the regulatory body for osteopathy and it keeps one register of all osteopaths. In the UK, only practitioners who are registered with the General Osteopathic Council are allowed to call themselves osteopaths. To find osteopaths in your area contact the General Osteopathic Council or look in your local telephone directory.

### General Osteopathic Council

Osteopathy House  
176 Tower Bridge Road  
London SE1 3LU  
Tel: 020 7357 6655  
Email: [info@osteopathy.org.uk](mailto:info@osteopathy.org.uk)  
Website: [www.osteopathy.org.uk](http://www.osteopathy.org.uk)

# 10 Acupuncture

Acupuncture is the insertion of very fine needles into the skin at particular points on the body, to prevent or treat ill health or maintain good health.<sup>43</sup> This is thought to stimulate the body's ability to heal.<sup>44</sup> There are about 7,500 acupuncturists practising in the UK,<sup>45</sup> and one in three GP surgeries are making acupuncture available to patients.<sup>46</sup>

Two main styles of acupuncture are practised in the UK today: traditional Chinese acupuncture and western medical acupuncture.

## Traditional Chinese acupuncture

Chinese acupuncture is one element of the wider system of traditional Chinese medicine, which developed in China around 4,000 years ago and is used to both diagnose and treat illness. Traditional Chinese medicine also includes herbal medicine, massage, exercise and diet.

Chinese medicine is based on the theory that energy (known as *qi*, pronounced chee) flows through pathways in the body. *Qi* consists of equal and opposite qualities - *yin* and *yang* - and when these become unbalanced, illness may result. By inserting fine needles into the channels of energy, an acupuncturist can stimulate the body's own healing response and help restore its natural balance.

## Western medical acupuncture

Western medical acupuncture is a form of acupuncture that has developed over the last 30 years. It is similar to traditional acupuncture, but is based on the principles of modern conventional medicine. Practitioners of western medical acupuncture are usually conventional healthcare professionals such as doctors, nurses and physiotherapists.<sup>47</sup>

## What is acupuncture commonly used for?

Acupuncture is used to treat a wide range of illnesses.<sup>48</sup>

**Pain:** most types of pain; including back; neck; shoulder; dental or leg pain; low back pain;<sup>49</sup>



general aches and pains; headaches; rheumatic or arthritic pain; sports injuries; sciatica or trapped nerves; chronic muscle strain; migraines; plantar fasciitis; shingles and trigeminal neuralgia; and pain relief following surgery.<sup>50 51 52 53</sup>

**Other medical problems:** including nausea and vomiting; menstrual or menopause problems; bladder, bowel or digestive problems; anxiety states; stress and depression; hay fever and rhinitis; circulatory problems; skin problems; infertility; fibrositis; ulcers; allergies; sinus problems; chronic catarrh; dry mouth or eyes; angina; insomnia; chronic fatigue syndrome and general tiredness; post operative nausea and vomiting.<sup>54 55 56 57 58 59 60</sup>

**Addictions:** acupuncture is being increasingly used for people trying to overcome addictions to alcohol, drugs and smoking.<sup>61</sup> Auricular acupuncture (putting needles into the ear) is often used.

**Maternity:** acupuncture is used during pregnancy, particularly for nausea and vomiting, for back and pelvic pain and to turn a breech baby<sup>62</sup> and for pain relief during childbirth, but should only be given by a properly trained and qualified practitioner.

## What will happen when I see an acupuncturist?

Your first appointment will last from about 30 minutes to an hour and a half. The acupuncturist will ask you about your current symptoms; medical history and any other medication you are currently taking; diet and digestion; sleep patterns and emotional state. A traditional acupuncturist will also feel your pulses on both wrists and look at your tongue. These tests help her to decide where to put the needles.

The acupuncturist will then insert very fine needles into the surface of your skin in a number of different places, called acupuncture points. The needles will be left there for an appropriate length of time before they are gently removed. Some people don't feel anything during acupuncture, while others may feel tingling or a slight sensation.

The needles may be manipulated from time to time, or stimulated electrically. Heat may be applied either to the needles or directly to the point by burning a herb called moxa. Points may be stimulated using other methods, such as massage or low level laser.

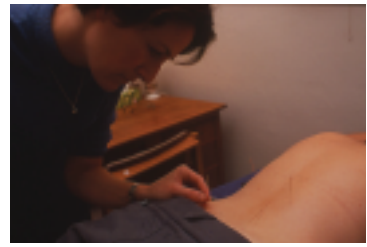
Follow-up treatments usually last between 30 minutes and one hour. The number of treatments you need will depend on the health condition that you are seeking treatment for. For most complaints, you can expect to notice improvements within about five or six sessions.<sup>63</sup> To begin with, the acupuncturist may recommend that you receive treatment once or twice a week. Patients with chronic (long-term) illnesses may need top-up treatments every few weeks with the aim of stopping them getting worse.

## Precautions

Sometimes symptoms can temporarily get worse after a treatment, though that is generally nothing to be concerned about, or you may feel tired, light headed or, occasionally, dizzy. It is best not to plan to do anything too strenuous immediately after an acupuncture treatment. If you do feel dizzy or drowsy you should not drive until you are sure you feel better. If you carry on feeling dizzy or worse, or you feel ill in a different way after the treatment you must tell your practitioner. Very occasionally there may be pain during treatment or a little bleeding or bruising after treatment. Occasionally, certain patients may faint, particularly with their first treatment.<sup>64</sup>

Serious side effects can occur after acupuncture but the risk has been estimated as less than one per 10,000 treatments.<sup>65</sup> Serious harm, including pneumothorax (a collection of air or gas in the chest or pleural space that causes part or all of a lung to collapse), damage to heart or blood vessels and nerve damage can be caused by poor practice. An article in the British Medical Journal said that in the hands of a competent practitioner, acupuncture is a very safe treatment.<sup>66</sup> Properly trained and qualified acupuncturists should use sterile, disposable needles.

For your own safety, you should tell your acupuncturist if you have ever had a fit or



fainted or if you have a heart pacemaker, damaged heart valves, if you are taking anti-coagulants or other medication. Your acupuncturist will ask you about any serious condition you may have, so make sure you tell her everything, even if you think it is not important. This includes lung disease; severe arterial disease; cancer or a bleeding disorder. Make sure also that you tell her about any other medication you are taking, including complementary medicines. If you have certain illnesses or are taking particular medicines, acupuncture may not be suitable for you or the acupuncturist may need to avoid putting needles in certain places or avoid using particular techniques.<sup>67</sup>

## Cost

Treatments cost from between £15 and £60 upwards per appointment, depending on where the acupuncturist is based.<sup>68</sup> The first consultation may cost more as it often takes longer than a follow-up appointment. Some health insurance schemes and medical cash plans cover acupuncture treatment, and acupuncture is sometimes available as part of NHS physiotherapy treatment and in NHS pain clinics.

## Finding an acupuncturist

The professional organisations listed below are working together and have made proposals about becoming regulated by law. The government then published a consultation document asking for views about the future regulation of acupuncture and herbal medicine. At the time this booklet was printed the government was looking at the views it had received and preparing to publish a further report. For up-to-date information about regulation contact The Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health or see the Department of Health website [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

### Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists (AACP) (for physiotherapists who use acupuncture as part of their treatment)

AACP Secretariat  
Portcullis  
Castle Street  
Mere  
Wiltshire  
BA12 6JE  
Email: [sec@aacp.uk.com](mailto:sec@aacp.uk.com)  
Website: [www.aacp.uk.com](http://www.aacp.uk.com)

### British Academy of Western Medical Acupuncture (BAWMA) (for nurses, doctors and physiotherapists who practise acupuncture)

12 Poulton Green Close  
Spital  
Wirral CH63 9FS  
Tel: 01747 861151  
Email: [info@bawa-hq.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:info@bawa-hq.freereserve.co.uk)  
Website: [www.westernacupuncture.co.uk](http://www.westernacupuncture.co.uk)

### British Acupuncture Council (BAcC) (practitioners of traditional acupuncture)

63 Jeddo Road  
London W12 9HQ  
Tel: 020 8735 0400  
Fax: 020 8735 0404  
Email: [info@acupuncture.org.uk](mailto:info@acupuncture.org.uk)  
Website: [www.acupuncture.org.uk](http://www.acupuncture.org.uk)

### British Medical Acupuncture Society (BMAS) (for medical practitioners who practise acupuncture)

BMAS House  
3 Winnington Court  
Northwich  
Cheshire CW8 1AQ  
Tel: 01606 786 782  
Fax: 01606 786 783  
Email: [admin@medical-acupuncture.org.uk](mailto:admin@medical-acupuncture.org.uk)  
Website: [www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk](http://www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk)

# 11 Herbal medicine

In herbal medicine the healing properties of plants are used to treat illness and maintain good health. It is one of the most ancient forms of treatment known and there are herbal medicine traditions in various parts of the world. In Britain today, the two main systems of herbal medicine practised are western and Chinese.<sup>69</sup>

Western herbal medicine is largely based on the use of plant remedies native to Britain, Europe and North America,<sup>70</sup> though practitioners may also use remedies from other places, such as Asia. Practitioners look at the condition and health of the patient as a whole and their prescriptions usually contain a mixture of herbs made up individually for each patient, aimed at restoring the balance of the body and stimulating its own healing powers.<sup>71</sup>

Chinese herbal medicine is part of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), which includes acupuncture, massage, tai chi (exercise using controlled movement) and qi gong (breathing exercises). Some practitioners are trained in, and practise, both Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture. Traditional Chinese medicine is based on the theory that energy (known as *qi*, pronounced chee) flows through pathways in the body. *Qi* consists of equal and opposite qualities - *yin* and *yang* - and when these become unbalanced, illness may result. Practitioners usually prescribe a particular mixture of herbs for each patient, aimed at putting the balance right and improving the patient's health.<sup>72</sup>

Other forms of herbal medicine practised include Ayurvedic (Indian) and Tibetan.

## What is herbal medicine commonly used for?

Herbal medicine practitioners treat a wide range of conditions including anxiety and depression; arthritis; chronic fatigue syndrome; eczema and other skin problems; fibromyalgia; hay fever; headaches and migraine; insomnia; digestive problems including irritable bowel syndrome; menstrual and menopausal problems.

Some of the research into herbal medicine has looked at the use of single plants for particular conditions. There is good clinical evidence for the effectiveness of saw palmetto for benign enlarged prostate; ginkgo biloba for intermittent claudication,<sup>73</sup> dementia and memory impairment;<sup>74</sup> and St John's Wort for mild to moderate depression.<sup>75</sup> There is some evidence that ginkgo biloba might be helpful for tinnitus. There is also some evidence that Chinese herbal medicine could be helpful for irritable bowel syndrome<sup>76</sup> and for eczema.<sup>77</sup>

## What will happen when I see a herbal medicine practitioner?

At the first consultation the practitioner will ask about your current health, your history of illnesses, your diet and how you are feeling in yourself. He will also do a physical examination. Chinese herbal practitioners will usually feel your pulses and look at your tongue. The practitioner will then make up a prescription. Usually this is done during the consultation.

The herbs may come as a tincture (a concentrated solution of herbs extracted in water and alcohol) or in tablet form. For skin complaints, the preparation might be in the form of an ointment. Chinese medicine practitioners often use 'raw herbs', which have to be boiled in water and then drunk as a tea. This is time-consuming for the patient and practitioners may give the same prescription as a tincture or freeze dried powder instead.

Herbal medicine practitioners may also give advice about diet and exercise, if this is appropriate.

Your second appointment is likely to be between 2-4 weeks later and the length of your course of treatment will depend on the reason you are having herbal medicine treatment. The practitioner will probably adjust your herbal prescription at times during the course of treatment.

## Precautions

Herbal medicines, like other medicines, have an effect on the body and should be used with care. Sometimes people



mistakenly assume that simply because a product is natural it must be safe; there are many plants that are poisonous to humans. There are some safety issues to be aware of.

- Some herbal medicines can interact with other prescribed medicines, so you should not take them at the same time. For example, St John's Wort and antidepressants; St John's Wort and drugs for high blood pressure and for heart conditions; St John's Wort and anticoagulants such as Warfarin; ginkgo biloba and anticoagulant drugs.<sup>78</sup>
- Herbal medicines made to poor standards may be a health risk. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is the government body responsible for the safety of medicines in the UK. It collects information about any harmful effects (called *adverse drug reactions*) and it has warned the public that the standards of production of unlicensed traditional Chinese medicines can vary considerably. Some have been found to illegally contain pharmaceutical ingredients, heavy metals or toxic herbs. For example, some 'herbal' creams for skin complaints have been found to contain steroids that are not listed as ingredients.
- Poor labelling of medicines can be a risk as this can lead to patients using the product incorrectly.

It is important that you discuss all your medical treatments with your herbal medicine practitioner and tell your doctor if you are taking or planning to take herbal remedies. This is particularly important if you are about to have an operation, have had a liver complaint or are pregnant. Pharmacists can also give advice on safety.



If you feel worse or unwell in a different way while taking herbal medicines, you should tell your herbal medicine practitioner, your doctor or pharmacist straightaway. They can report any harmful effects of medicines, including herbal medicines, to the MHRA. To check whether the MHRA has issued advice about particular herbal products or ingredients, you can check *Herbal Safety News* on the agency's website [www.mhra.gov.uk](http://www.mhra.gov.uk) Phytonet ([www.escop.com/phytonet.htm](http://www.escop.com/phytonet.htm)) also collects information about harmful effects of herbal medicines.

The Medical Toxicology Unit at St Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust suggests that patients ask for a list of the ingredients in any herbal product they buy or are given. If they later suffer any ill effects and need medical treatment, doctors will know what they have taken.<sup>79</sup>

In some parts of the world, Chinese medicine practitioners use products that are made from endangered species of animals. This is illegal in the UK and the ban is strongly supported by the UK herbal medicine profession.

It has not been easy for members of the public to tell if an unlicensed herbal medicine (whether supplied over the counter in a shop or made up by a herbal practitioner) has been made to acceptable standards. The MHRA is planning changes in regulation and, from autumn 2005 onwards, will run a scheme for registering over-the-counter traditional herbal medicines. These products will have to meet assured standards of safety, quality and patient information. Advice will be available on the MHRA web site on how to identify these products.

There are some licensed herbal medicines on the market, which are made to assured standards and can be identified by the PL number on the product.

The MHRA also carried out a consultation in 2004 about possible

changes to regulations governing unlicensed herbal medicines which are made up by practitioners to meet the needs of individual patients. The aim of these changes is to give the public greater assurance about standards. The MHRA is considering the results of the consultation and information about any further developments will be on its website.

Some herbal remedies should not be taken during pregnancy because if they are taken in large amounts there is a possible risk of miscarriage. These include feverfew; golden seal; juniper; mistletoe; nutmeg; rosemary and sage. It is also advisable not to take any herbal medicines in the first three months of pregnancy, unless you are going to see a registered herbal medicine practitioner about a specific problem.<sup>80</sup>

## Cost

Appointments cost from between £40 - £50 and upwards for the first consultation and from around £30 upwards for follow-ups, which are shorter. You will normally have to pay for the herbs in addition to the cost of the consultation.<sup>81</sup>

## Finding a herbal medicine practitioner

The professional associations listed below have been working together, as the **European Herbal Practitioners Association (EHPA)**, to develop common standards of training and practice. The EHPA was a stakeholder in the working group on the regulation of herbal medicine practitioners, which made proposals about herbal medicine practitioners being regulated by law. This would include having one register of practitioners, all of whom meet a required standard, which would also give members of the public a single point of contact for finding practitioners.

At the time this booklet was printed, the government had consulted people about these proposals and was about to publish the results. For up-to-date information about regulation contact The Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health.

**European Herbal Practitioners Association**  
45a Corsica Street  
London N5 1JT  
Tel: 020 7354 5067  
Email: info@euroherb.com  
Website: www.euroherb.com

Association of Master Herbalists  
Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine  
Ayurvedic Medicine Association  
British Association of Traditional Tibetan Medicine  
College of Practitioners of Phytotherapy  
International Register of Consultant Herbalists  
Maharishi Ayurvedic Practitioners Association  
National Institute of Medical Herbalists  
Register of Chinese Herbal Medicine  
Unified Register of Herbal Practitioners

# 12 Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy uses the healing properties of essential oils, which are extracted from plants, to improve health and help prevent illness.

Essential oils can be used in different ways, including:

- massage (most commonly used method)
- baths
- inhalation (not if you have asthma)
- creams and lotions

Different oils are thought to affect the body in different ways. For instance, they can be calming, relaxing, uplifting or energising. Some oils are believed to have properties which fight infections. Tea tree oil, for example, is used as an antiseptic or to relieve fungal infections such as thrush.

## What is aromatherapy commonly used for?

Aromatherapy is used for a wide range of problems, including pain relief; anxiety and stress related conditions; insomnia; headaches;<sup>82</sup> arthritis; rheumatism and menstrual problems.<sup>83</sup> It is sometimes available in maternity services and is widely used in palliative and cancer care in hospitals and hospices.<sup>84</sup>

Research indicates that aromatherapy massage may be helpful for the short-term relief of anxiety<sup>85</sup> and that certain essential oils may relieve some symptoms associated with dementia.<sup>86</sup> There is some promising evidence that tea tree oil could be useful in treating acne and fungal infections.<sup>87</sup>

## What will happen when I see an aromatherapist?

A session normally lasts from around 45 to 90 minutes. The aromatherapist will ask questions about your medical history, general health and lifestyle. She will then choose a blend of oils and a way of applying them specifically for your needs. The essential oils are concentrated, so for massage treatment they are diluted with vegetable-based oil.

During a massage, the aromatherapist will massage the blend into your body using either a full-body massage or massage of particular areas as agreed with you, while you lie on a therapy couch. If lying down is difficult for you, you can be massaged in another position. The practitioner will cover the parts of your body she is not working on with towels.

The massage section of this booklet (*Chapter 17*) will tell you more about how massage is practised. The practitioner may also suggest ways in which you can use aromatherapy at home, such as in the bath, or by using an oil burner, and will recommend which oils are best for your present condition.

For some health problems, the aromatherapist may advise having a course of treatment, so that the benefits build up over time.<sup>88</sup>

## Precautions

Essential oils could be harmful if not used properly. They should always be diluted in a vegetable-based oil before being used on the skin and they should not be swallowed or used internally. Your aromatherapist will explain this to you if she suggests you use the oils at home. Like all medicines, essential oils should be kept out of reach of children.<sup>89</sup>

- Essential oils must never be swallowed or used internally.
- If using essential oils at home, avoid putting them on damaged skin, such as burns or dermatitis.
- Make sure you tell your practitioner if you have heart problems, high blood pressure, asthma, diabetes, epilepsy or a skin irritation, as some aromatherapy oils should be avoided for people with these conditions.
- It is thought that some essential oils could interact with particular prescribed medicines, including antibiotics, antihistamines, anticoagulants and tranquillisers, making their effects stronger or weaker. It is important, therefore, to check with your GP or pharmacist and the aromatherapist if you are taking any other medication.
- Certain oils, such as orange, lemon and bergamot, may make your skin more



sensitive to light so you might get sunburnt more easily. If you have had these oils on your skin, you should not expose it to direct sunlight, sunbeds or sunlamps afterwards.<sup>90</sup>

- There is a possibility that some essential oils might be carcinogenic.<sup>91</sup> They include basil and fennel, which are widely used and other oils which are not generally used in normal practice.<sup>92</sup>
- There may be interactions between some aromatherapy oils and homeopathic remedies, so tell your aromatherapist if you are also seeing a homeopath.
- Pregnant women are advised to consult an aromatherapist and their midwife or GP before using any essential oils. It is generally advised that essential oils are not used in the first 14-16 weeks of pregnancy and some oils should not be used at all during pregnancy.

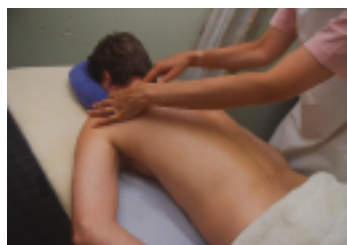
## Cost

An aromatherapy appointment usually costs from between £20 and £45 upwards. Some charitable organisations or hospices make aromatherapy available more cheaply, or free of charge.<sup>93</sup>

## Finding an aromatherapist

At the moment, there is no single body that regulates the aromatherapy profession. There are a number of professional associations that practitioners can choose to belong to but an aromatherapist is not required by law to belong to a professional association nor to have completed a specified course of training, although many do belong to the organisations listed below.

These organisations are working together as the **Aromatherapy Consortium** to develop common standards of training



and practice and one register of practitioners who all meet a required standard. When this happens, members of the public will have a single point of contact for finding practitioners. However, this process takes time and at present standards of training can vary, which is why we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.

### The Aromatherapy Consortium

PO Box 6522  
Desborough  
Kettering  
Northants NN14 2YX  
Tel/Fax: 0870 7743477  
Email: [info@aromatherapy-regulation.org.uk](mailto:info@aromatherapy-regulation.org.uk)  
Website: [www.aromatherapy-regulation.org.uk/](http://www.aromatherapy-regulation.org.uk/)

Aromatherapists Society  
Aromatherapy and Allied Practitioners Association  
Association of Medical Aromatherapists  
Association of Natural Medicine  
Association of Physical and Natural Therapists  
BABTAC  
British Complementary Medicine Association  
English Society de l'Institute Pierre Francomme  
Institute of Complementary Medicine  
International Federation of Aromatherapists  
International Federation of Professional Aromatherapists  
International Guild of Professional Practitioners  
International Holistic Aromatherapy Foundation  
Professional Association for Clinical Therapists  
Raworth Guild of Graduates

# 13 Craniosacral therapy

Craniosacral therapy is a gentle treatment, which involves a practitioner applying very light touch to the body. The craniosacral system consists of the membranes and cerebrospinal fluid that surround and protect the brain and spinal cord. It extends from the bones of the skull, face and mouth that make up the cranium, down the spine to the sacrum and tailbone area.

Practitioners believe that imbalances and restrictions in the flow of cerebrospinal fluid reflect physical, mental, emotional or psychological injuries and tensions anywhere in the body. The aim of treatment is to encourage the body's own healing process.<sup>94</sup>

Craniosacral therapy is related to cranial osteopathy (see *Chapter 9*), but craniosacral practitioners are not trained as osteopaths.

## What is craniosacral therapy commonly used for?

Craniosacral therapists treat a wide range of conditions from acute to chronic (long-term) health problems, including:

- physical aches and pains
- emotional or psychological disturbances and stress-related problems
- low vitality and recurrent infections
- migraine, eye difficulties, digestive problems
- jaw pain
- persistent colic in babies, developmental disorders and behavioural problems

## What will happen when I see a craniosacral practitioner?

The practitioner will take your case history, including details of any medication and other treatments or therapies. Treatment is carried out with the patient fully dressed and in a relaxed position.



## Precautions

Certain serious head conditions such as bleeding inside the head and raised pressure or an aneurysm within the skull, have been noted as indications against having craniosacral therapy.<sup>95</sup> People with recent head injuries have also been advised to be cautious about having treatment.<sup>96</sup>

Patients may sometimes feel a mild discomfort or a temporary worsening of symptoms after treatment and, according to John Upledger, who developed craniosacral therapy, there is a possibility that treatment can increase the effects of medicines for diabetes and epilepsy.<sup>97</sup>

## Cost

The cost of a 30 to 60 minute session starts from £30 to £70 in cities and £20 to £50 in rural areas.

## Finding a craniosacral practitioner

At the moment, there is no single body that regulates the craniosacral profession. There are a number of professional associations that practitioners can choose to belong to but a craniosacral practitioner is not required by law to belong to a professional association nor to have completed a specified course of training, although many do belong to the organisations listed below.

These organisations are working together as the **Cranial Forum** to develop common standards of training and practice and one register of practitioners who all meet a required standard. When this happens, members of the public will have a single point of contact for finding practitioners. However, this process takes





time and at present standards of training can vary, which is why we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.

#### The Cranial Forum

Tel: 07000 272 646

Website: [www.cranio.org.uk](http://www.cranio.org.uk)

Cranio Sacral Society

Craniosacral Therapy Association of the UK

Craniosacral Therapy Association of

Chartered Physiotherapists

International Association of Craniosacral  
Therapists

International Cranial Association

International Guild of Professional

Practitioners

## 14 Healing

Healing is an ancient practice that has been used for thousands of years and is sometimes referred to as the laying on of hands. It aims to promote better health by channelling energy through the healer to the patient.<sup>98</sup> Healers may put their hands near patients or sometimes on them. Some healers also work at a distance or through prayer, although there is no need for patients to have religious beliefs to receive healing. Some healers call themselves spiritual healers, while others prefer to say 'hands-on healers' or 'healers'.

### What is healing commonly used for?

Healing is used for a wide range of physical and emotional conditions. Research has shown some benefit in many areas, including:

- healing of wounds
- chronic conditions such as migraine or irritable bowel syndrome
- reducing side-effects of chemotherapy and radiotherapy for people with cancer
- contributing to pain relief
- helping relaxation
- improving sleep patterns
- reducing tension, stress and anxiety
- providing emotional and spiritual support
- contributing to a sense of well-being<sup>99</sup>

### What will happen when I see a healer?

Some healers work in a voluntary setting such as a church or charitable organisation, others work within the NHS. The healer may see you privately or in the same room with other people. If you see a healer on an individual basis, you would normally be asked for some personal details and your medical history.

The healer will ask you to sit in a chair or lie on a treatment couch, fully clothed (removing shoes only). The healing itself will usually take place in silence. Sometimes practitioners play relaxing music in the background.

The healer will place her hands either on you, or at a short distance away. You might

feel various sensations including heat, coolness or tingling or nothing at all. Some patients feel very relaxed and may fall asleep, whilst others may find emotions come to the surface.

## Precautions

You should not plan to undertake any strenuous activity after a healing session. You should tell the healer if you are having other complementary or conventional medical treatments.

## Cost

Healers working in a voluntary or charitable capacity may provide their healing free or in return for a donation to the organisation. Other healers working as practitioners may charge between about £15 and £60 or more, depending on where the practitioner is working.

## Finding a healer

At the moment, there is no single body that regulates the healing profession. There are a number of professional associations that practitioners can choose to belong to but a healer is not required by law to belong to a professional association nor to have completed a specified course of training, although many do belong to the organisations listed below.

These organisations are working together as the **UK Healers** to develop common standards of training and practice and one register of practitioners who all meet a required standard. When this happens, members of the public will have a single point of contact for finding practitioners. However, this process takes time and at present standards of training can vary, which is why we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.

### UK Healers

PO BOX 207

LEEDS

LS16 5WX

Tel: 0845 6030 137

Email: [admin@ukhealers.info](mailto:admin@ukhealers.info)

Website: [www.ukhealers.info](http://www.ukhealers.info)



Association for Therapeutic Healers  
 Association of Spiritual Healers  
 British Alliance of Healing Associations  
 British Association of Therapeutic Touch  
 British Healers Association  
 Causeway Healers  
 College of Healing  
 Community Healing Project  
 Confederation of Healing Organisations  
 Fellowship of Healers  
 Foundation of Spiritual Healing and Guidance  
 Greater World Association Trust  
 Harry Edwards Sanctuary  
 Holistic Healers Association  
 International Self Realisation Healing Association  
 Jewish Association of Spiritual Healers  
 Joseph Carey Psychic Foundation  
 Kent Healers Association  
 Lancs & District Healers Association  
 Lincolnshire Healers Association  
 Mudita International Foundation & School of Healing  
 National Federation of Spiritual Healers Charitable Trust  
 Northern Healers Forum  
 Peacehaven Natural Healing Centre  
 Quaker Spiritual Healers  
 Research & Enlightenment  
 Rosemary Altea Association  
 School of Insight & Intuition  
 Scottish Association of Spiritual Healers  
 Seekers Trust  
 Self Realization Meditation Healing Centre  
 Spectrum Trust  
 Spiritualists' National Union  
 Surrey Spiritual Healers Association  
 United Spiritualists  
 Universal Spiritualists Association  
 Warwickshire Spiritual Healers Association  
 Westcountry Natural Healing Fellowship  
 White Eagle Lodge  
 White Rose Foundation  
 World Federation of Healing

# 15 Homeopathy

The basic principle of homeopathy is 'like cures like'. This means that a substance that would produce certain symptoms in a healthy person can be used to treat a sick person with very similar symptoms. For example, raw onion makes people's eyes water. It can also cause a stinging or runny nose. A homeopathic remedy made from onion, *allium cepa*, can be used to treat patients who have a complaint like a cold<sup>100</sup> or hay fever along with watering eyes and a stinging or runny nose.

Homeopathic prescriptions are tailored to match the particular symptoms of each individual patient, so if two patients have the same illness, but show different symptoms, they are likely to be treated with different remedies. Homeopathic remedies are given in very diluted doses. They are made from many different things including plants, minerals and some animal products. The remedy usually comes in the form of a white sugar-tablet although it can also be given as a liquid. The tablets have very little taste and are taken by letting them melt under the tongue.

Homeopathy was developed more than two hundred years ago by Samuel Hahnemann, a German doctor, who wanted to find a better, gentler way of treating ill people than was usual at that time. His ideas gradually spread and in Britain homeopathy has been used for over 150 years.

Some homeopaths in the UK are also conventional healthcare professionals such as doctors, nurses, dentists and pharmacists, although not all of these practise homeopathy within the NHS. There are five NHS homeopathic hospitals in the UK (see *Chapter 5*).

## What is homeopathy commonly used for?

Homeopathy is most often used to treat chronic conditions such as asthma; eczema; arthritis; fatigue disorders like ME; headache and migraine; menstrual and menopausal problems; irritable bowel syndrome; Crohn's disease;<sup>101</sup> allergies; repeated ear, nose, throat and chest

infections or urine infections; depression and anxiety.

Children are more often treated with homeopathy than with other complementary therapies.<sup>102</sup> Homeopaths also treat many patients who feel unwell but whose doctor can not find anything specifically wrong.<sup>103</sup> Patients who have had unpleasant side-effects from drugs, or who cannot take drug treatments, may also choose homeopathic treatment.<sup>104</sup>

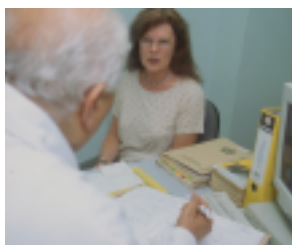
A limited range of remedies are available over the counter in many pharmacies and health food shops. Your homeopath or pharmacist can advise you on the use of these remedies to treat first aid problems such as cuts, stings, minor burns, bruises and minor ailments.

## What will happen when I see a homeopath?

A consultation usually lasts for between 30 to 45 minutes. The first appointment will probably last longer, as the practitioner will take a detailed medical history and talk to you in depth about your current state of health. The homeopath will also ask about things like your eating and sleeping patterns, your moods, and how you feel at various times of the day. Your answers will help him to find the right remedy for you.

At the end of the consultation the homeopath will normally give you a homeopathic remedy and will tell you when and how to take it. Long-term conditions may require several visits. The homeopath should give you an idea of roughly how long the course of treatment will last and how often he will need to see you.

After taking your remedy you may notice some changes. For instance your symptoms might appear to get worse for a short time. Homeopaths believe this shows that the remedy is taking effect. Sometimes a cold, a rash or some form of discharge may appear as a sign that your system is going through a cleansing stage. At the follow-up consultations, you will be asked to describe any changes that you have noticed in your condition, so you might want to make a note of these as they happen.



## Precautions

Some homeopaths think that particular medical treatments or strong smelling substances, including certain aromatherapy oils or mint toothpaste, can affect homeopathic remedies.

## Cost

The cost of homeopathy appointments start at anything from £20 to £60 upwards, depending on the practitioner (medically qualified homeopaths may charge more) and where in the country you live. The first appointment will usually cost more, anything from £35 to £95 upwards, because it will be longer.

The remedy is normally included in the cost of the appointment. If you have treatment at one of the NHS homeopathic hospitals, the homeopathic remedy will be on prescription. To go to one of the homeopathic hospitals, you will need to be referred by your GP; see *Chapter 5* for details. If you see a medically qualified homeopath outside the NHS, you may have to pay extra for the remedies. Some health insurance schemes and medical cash plans cover homeopathy.

## Finding a homeopath

At the moment, there is no single body that regulates the homeopathy profession.

The Faculty of Homeopathy is the national organisation for statutorily registered conventional healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, dentists and pharmacists, who practise homeopathy. The Faculty of Homeopathy oversees training and gives diplomas at different levels, including LFHom (basic level), MFHom and FFHom (specialist level). To find a homeopath who is a member of the Faculty of Homeopathy contact the **British Homeopathic Association**.



### British Homeopathic Association

Hahnemann House  
29 Park Street West  
Luton  
LU1 3BE  
Tel: 0870 444 3950  
Fax: 0870 444 3960  
Website: [www.trusthomeopathy.org](http://www.trusthomeopathy.org)

There are a number of professional associations that other homeopaths can choose to belong to but homeopaths are not required by law to belong to a professional association nor to have completed a specified course of training, although many do belong to the organisations listed below.

These organisations are working together as the **Council of Organisations Registering Homeopaths** to develop common standards of training and practice and one register of practitioners who all meet a required standard. When this happens, members of the public will have a single point of contact for finding homeopaths who are not also registered as conventional healthcare practitioners. However, this process takes time and at present standards of training can vary, which is why we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.

### Council of Organisations Registering Homeopaths

11 Wingle Tye Road  
Burgess Hill  
West Sussex  
RH15 9HR  
Tel: 01444 239494  
Email: [admin@corh.org.uk](mailto:admin@corh.org.uk)  
Website: [www.corh.org.uk](http://www.corh.org.uk)

Alliance of Registered Homeopaths  
Association of Natural Medicine  
British Register of Complementary Practitioners



Fellowship of Homeopaths  
 Homeopathic Medical Association  
 International Guild of Professional Practitioners  
 International Register of Consultant Herbalists  
 International Society for Homeopathy  
 Scottish Association of Professional Homeopaths  
 Society of Homeopaths

## 16 Hypnotherapy

The mental state where a person is so relaxed that they become more open to suggestion is called hypnosis.

Hypnotherapists use the state of hypnosis to help people with health problems.<sup>105</sup>

Once the patient is in this deeply relaxed state the practitioner gives therapeutic suggestions, which are aimed at influencing behaviour or relieving symptoms.<sup>106</sup>

### What is hypnotherapy commonly used for?

Hypnosis is used to treat stress, anxiety, obesity, phobias, addictions,<sup>107</sup> depression, irritable bowel syndrome and asthma. It is also used for pain relief, for pain associated with cancer treatments and for other side effects of cancer treatment, such as nausea and vomiting.<sup>108</sup> Hypnosis can be used to help people relax, especially when going for medical treatment or dental treatment.<sup>109</sup>

### What will happen when I see a hypnotherapist?

During a hypnotherapy appointment you will usually sit in a comfortable chair. The practitioner will take details of your medical history and find out why you have come for hypnotherapy treatment. She will then put you into a hypnotic state and give you therapeutic suggestions.

### Precautions

Hypnosis is not advisable for people with psychosis, personality disorders or epilepsy, as there is concern that it might cause attacks or episodes of the disorders, or for children under five years old.<sup>110</sup>

People with mental health problems and serious illnesses, such as cancer, should see practitioners who have experience of working in these areas.<sup>111</sup>



## Cost

The cost of a hypnotherapy session starts from between £30 to £60 upwards.

## Finding a hypnotherapist

A patient can be very vulnerable in the hands of someone who does not use hypnosis in a responsible way, so it is important that the practitioner is properly trained. At the moment, there is no single body that regulates the hypnotherapy profession. There are a number of professional associations that practitioners can choose to belong to but a hypnotherapist is not required by law to belong to a professional association nor to have completed a specified course of training. We therefore suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.

**The British Society of Medical and Dental Hypnosis (BSMDH)** is a group of doctors, dentists, psychologists and other healthcare professionals who use hypnotherapy in their practice.

Website: [www.bsmdh.org](http://www.bsmdh.org)

London area, tel: 07000 560 309

Email: [nat.office@bsmdh.org](mailto:nat.office@bsmdh.org)

Rest of England and Wales

Tel: 020 8905 4342

Email: [valentine.la@talk21.com](mailto:valentine.la@talk21.com)

Scotland

Email: [bsmdh@bsmdhscot.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:bsmdh@bsmdhscot.fsnet.co.uk)

# 17 Massage therapy

Massage therapy is a system of treatment of the soft tissue of the body. It involves stroking, kneading or applying pressure to various parts of the body, with the aim of alleviating aches, pains and musculoskeletal problems (problems relating to the bone and muscle structure of the body, such as headaches and back pain).

## What is massage commonly used for?

Massage is used for pain relief, muscular or joint problems such as arthritis or sports injuries, to aid relaxation and for more general health improvement. Research indicates that therapeutic massage may help with stress-related conditions, such as insomnia, irritable bowel syndrome and chronic fatigue,<sup>112</sup> and with constipation and fibromyalgia.<sup>113</sup> It can also be effective for persistent back pain.<sup>114</sup> A guideline for the treatment of multiple sclerosis, issued by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence says that there is some evidence to suggest that massage might be of benefit for people with the condition.<sup>115</sup>

Massage may also be used for people with depression or acute or short-term anxiety. This includes patients in intensive care, psychiatric institutions and hospices. Massage is increasingly being used for pain relief during childbirth and partners can be trained to use massage techniques during labour. Massage can be used to help premature babies achieve more rapid weight gain and development.<sup>116</sup>

## What will happen when I see a massage practitioner?

Before carrying out the massage, the practitioner will ask questions about your medical history, diet, lifestyle, and whether you have specific aches, pains or tensions that you are concerned about.

The most common way of giving a massage is on a therapy couch. The patient lies on the couch, usually face down for half



the session and face up for the other half. As the practitioner will generally work on most areas of the body you will normally be asked to remove most of your clothes, apart from underwear, and you will be given privacy to do this. The practitioner will cover you and keep you warm with large towels.

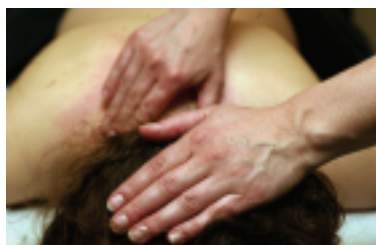
The intensity of massage can vary and the practitioner should check that you are happy with the pressure. If you feel uncomfortable for any reason with the massage you should tell the practitioner and you can ask him to stop. No professional practitioner should ever massage the genital area, or touch the patient in a way that is sexual. If this happens you should leave. See *Chapter 7, What if I'm unhappy with the treatment?*

## Precautions

Massage is not advisable on the affected areas if you have certain physical complaints such as varicose veins, deep vein thrombosis, bone fractures, swelling, bruising, cuts or infections. It is very important to tell your massage therapist about any physical problems you have, even if you don't think they are relevant to your current health situation.

Massage can be used with pregnant women and babies, but should be carried out by a specially trained practitioner.

People with cancer are advised to see specially trained massage practitioners. Deep massage on any part of the body is not advisable for those with active cancer;<sup>117</sup> massage should be gentle. If you have cancer the massage therapist should avoid any wounds, recent scars that are still healing, broken skin or infected areas. If you have lymphoedema or a swollen arm, you should not have massage on that arm or shoulder area and if you are having radiotherapy treatment you should not be massaged on the area being treated, although it is safe to have it on other areas of your body.<sup>118</sup>



## Cost

The cost of therapeutic massage starts at around £20 to £60 a session, depending on the length of the session, and where you live. Some charitable organisations or hospices make massage available more cheaply, or free of charge.

## Finding a massage therapist

At the moment, there is no single body that regulates the massage therapy profession. There are a number of professional associations that practitioners can choose to belong to but a massage therapist is not required by law to belong to a professional association nor to have completed a specified course of training, although many do belong to the organisations listed below.

These organisations are working together as the **General Council for Massage Therapy** to develop common standards of training and practice and one register of practitioners who all meet a required standard. When this happens, members of the public will have a single point of contact for finding practitioners. However, this process takes time and at present standards of training can vary, which is why we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.

### General Council for Massage Therapy (GCMT)

Whiteway House  
Blundells Lane  
Rainhill  
Prescot  
L35 6NB  
Tel: 0151 430 8199  
Email: gcmt@btconnect.com  
Website: www.gcmt.org.uk

International Federation of Professional Aromatherapists  
International Guild of Professional Practitioners

London and Counties Society of  
Physiologists Register of Remedial  
Masseurs  
Massage Therapy Institute of Great Britain  
Massage Training Institute  
Professional Association of Clinical  
Therapists  
Scottish Massage Therapists Organisation

There is also a separate organisation for practitioners of sports massage. Sports massage is used before and after sports events, and to treat injuries and problems related to physical activity.

### **Sports Massage Association**

PO BOX 4437  
London  
SW19 1WD  
Tel: 020 8545 0851  
Fax: 020 8404 8261  
Email: [info@thesma.org](mailto:info@thesma.org)  
Website:  
[www.sportsmassageassociation.org](http://www.sportsmassageassociation.org)

## 18 Naturopathy

Naturopathy is the practice of using natural treatments to help the body to heal itself. Naturopaths use a range of methods including:

- Nutrition and dietary advice
- Breathing exercises and stretches
- Hydrotherapy (hot and cold baths, mineral spas and douches), herbal compresses and dry skin brushing are used to stimulate circulation and the lymphatic system
- Physical therapies such as osteopathy (if the practitioner is appropriately trained) and massage

### What is naturopathy commonly used for?

Naturopaths treat people with a wide range of complaints, including digestive and bowel problems, skin complaints, hormonal problems, arthritis and stress problems.<sup>119</sup>

### What will happen when I see a naturopath?

At the first consultation, a naturopath will ask you about your medical history and test your blood pressure and lung function. You might also need to have a blood test or other medical tests. The practitioner will use this information to plan a programme of treatment for you. She will also give you some diet recommendations, or suggest a short cleansing diet or a fast. A fast is a planned programme where you eat certain foods only for a short period of time.

The practitioner will usually want to work with you over a period of time, and you will be asked to come back for regular consultations, every 2-3 weeks, for an agreed period of time.

### Precautions

It is important to have proper supervision if you try a fast or a special diet. Sudden changes to diet can cause physical changes, so it is important to keep in touch with your practitioner if anything concerns you. Fasting is not advisable during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.





## Cost

A first consultation will usually cost from £35-£40 upwards, although in London it is more likely to be from £50-£60 upwards. Follow-up visits are shorter and likely to cost from £20-£30 upwards.

## Finding a naturopath

At the moment, there is no single body that regulates the naturopathy profession. There are a number of professional associations that practitioners can choose to belong to but a naturopath is not required by law to belong to a professional association nor to have completed a specified course of training, although many do belong to the organisations listed below.

These organisations are working together as the **General Naturopathic Council** to develop common standards of training and practice and one register of practitioners who all meet a required standard. When this happens, members of the public will have a single point of contact for finding practitioners. However, this process takes time and at present standards of training can vary, which is why we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.

### General Naturopathic Council

15b Warrington Avenue  
Slough  
Berkshire SL1 3BG  
Email: A.Morris-Paxton@tvu.ac.uk



British College of Naturopathy and Osteopathy

British Naturopathy Association

College of Natural Therapy

College of Osteopaths

Complementary Medical Association

European Federation of Naturopaths

General Council and Register of Naturopaths

Guild of Naturopathic Iridologists

Incorporated Society of Registered Naturopaths

London College of Naturopathic Medicine

Thames Valley University

# 19 Nutritional therapy

Nutritional therapy uses food and diet to help the body's own healing ability to maintain good health and to prevent or alleviate illness. Practitioners look for nutritional deficiencies, allergies or intolerances to food, or for factors that can cause poor digestion or absorption in the stomach or intestine. Treatment involves dietary change and may include the use of nutritional supplements, such as vitamins and minerals.<sup>120 121</sup>

## What is nutritional therapy commonly used for?

Nutritional therapists often work with patients who have long-term health problems that conventional medicine finds difficult to treat. These include allergies, digestive and bowel disorders, hormonal imbalances, fatigue, depression or stress, migraine and skin disorders.<sup>122</sup>

## What will happen when I see a nutritional therapist?

On the first visit, the nutritional therapist will ask about your current health problems, your medical and family history and your diet and lifestyle. He may ask you to fill in a questionnaire about these things before or during the consultation. You might be asked to keep a food diary over a period of time so the practitioner can get a better idea of what you are eating. The practitioner may also carry out some tests to find out if you are allergic to any foods or lacking any nutrients.

He will then make recommendations about diet, supplements or herbal remedies and may also talk to you about physical exercise, or other ways in which you can promote your own good health. You may be given these recommendations at the first appointment, or the nutritional therapist might wait until the results of your tests are available.

The first session may last for about one hour, with follow-up appointments lasting between about 15-30 minutes. The



practitioner will probably want to see you for a course of treatment over a period of time and should be able to advise you on the length of the course of treatment after the first consultation. Your practitioner will monitor your progress and make changes to the therapeutic diet if necessary.

## Precautions

Some vitamins can be toxic when taken in large doses, so always follow your practitioner's advice or the guidelines on supplement packaging.

Pregnant and breast-feeding women, children and people with a serious illness should get medical advice before following a nutritional therapy programme or going on a restricted diet.

## Cost

The cost of nutritional therapy consultations can range from £40 to over £100 per appointment, depending on the location. You will probably have to pay extra for tests and nutritional supplements.<sup>123</sup>

## Finding a nutritional therapist

At the moment, there is no single body that regulates the nutritional therapy profession. There are a number of professional associations that practitioners can choose to belong to but a nutritional therapist is not required by law to belong to a professional association nor to have completed a specified course of training, although many do belong to the organisations listed below.

These organisations are working together as the **Nutritional Therapy Council** to develop common standards of training and practice and one register of practitioners who all meet a required standard. When this happens, members of the public will have a single point of contact for finding practitioners. However, this



process takes time and at present standards of training can vary, which is why we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.

#### **Nutritional Therapy Council**

British Association for Nutritional Therapy  
Website: [www.bant.org.uk](http://www.bant.org.uk)

International Guild of Professional Practitioners

Website: [www.igpp.co.uk](http://www.igpp.co.uk)

Register of Nutritional Therapists

Website: [www.nutritionalmed.co.uk](http://www.nutritionalmed.co.uk)

Wholistic Nutritional Medicine Society

## 20 Reflexology

Reflexology is based on the principle that certain points on the feet and hands, called reflex points, correspond to various parts of the body and that by applying pressure to these points in a systematic way, a practitioner can help to release tensions and encourage the body's natural healing processes.

Foot treatments have been used in many cultures, including India, Egypt and China, for thousands of years. Reflexology in its current form was developed by Eunice Ingham in the 1930s, based on the discoveries of the American ear, nose and throat specialist, William Fitzgerald in the early 20th century. It was brought to Europe by Doreen Bayly and has become very popular in the UK. It is offered in many specialist centres such as pain clinics and cancer units.

### What is reflexology commonly used for?

Some people see a reflexologist to help with a specific symptom; others use the therapy regularly to maintain good health. Many people find reflexology relaxing and use it to help reduce anxiety, stress and physical tension.

Reflexologists work with a wide range of conditions including certain types of pain, particularly back and neck pain, migraine and headaches, chronic fatigue, sinusitis, arthritis, insomnia, digestive problems such as irritable bowel syndrome, and constipation, stress-related disorders and menopausal symptoms.

There is some evidence that reflexology can be effective in treating premenstrual symptoms,<sup>124</sup> and headache.<sup>125</sup> A guideline for the treatment of multiple sclerosis, issued by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, says that there is some evidence to suggest that reflexology might be of benefit for people with the condition.<sup>126</sup>

### What will happen when I see a reflexologist?

A complete treatment will usually last around 45 minutes to one hour. The



practitioner will take a case history, asking questions about your symptoms, your lifestyle, and medical history. She will examine your feet and/or the palms of your hand. For this, you will be asked to lie down, usually on a specially designed reflexology chair. The practitioner will then apply pressure to points on the feet and/or hands, using special thumb and finger techniques to release tension or unblock 'stuck' energy. This aims to help the body to stimulate its own natural healing ability.

After the first treatment, the practitioner will have an idea of what your specific needs are, and how she needs to work with your feet or hands in the future. The practitioner will then see you for a course of treatment, usually 6-8 sessions.

## Precautions

After treatment you may feel tired, light-headed, relaxed or weepy; have tender feet; need to go to the toilet more often or have flu-like symptoms.

People taking medicines for diabetes should talk to their doctors before having reflexology as treatment may interfere with their medication.<sup>127</sup> Reflexology may not be suitable for people with gout, foot ulcers or circulatory problems affecting their feet,<sup>128</sup> or for people who have epilepsy or thyroid or depressive disorders.<sup>129</sup> People with cancer should see a reflexologist who is trained to treat people with cancer as there are particular places on the feet that should be avoided or treated particularly gently. Some blood specialists advise that people with very low blood platelet counts should not be treated with reflexology.<sup>130</sup>

It is advisable not to have reflexology during the first three months of pregnancy.

## Cost

Reflexology appointments cost from £25 to £60 and upwards, depending on the length of the treatment and where you live.



## Finding a reflexologist

At the moment, there is no single body that regulates the reflexology profession. There are a number of professional associations that practitioners can choose to belong to but a reflexologist is not required by law to belong to a professional association nor to have completed a specified course of training, although many do belong to the organisations listed below.

These organisations are working together as the **Reflexology Forum** to develop common standards of training and practice and one register of practitioners who all meet a required standard. When this happens, members of the public will have a single point of contact for finding practitioners. However, this process takes time and at present standards of training can vary, which is why we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.

### The Reflexology Forum

Dalton House  
60 Windsor Avenue  
London  
SW19 2RR

Tel: 0800 037 0130 (free-phone)  
Email: [Info@reflexologyforum.org](mailto:Info@reflexologyforum.org)  
Website: [www.reflexologyforum.org](http://www.reflexologyforum.org)

Association of Reflexologists  
British Reflexology Association  
Centre for Clinical Reflexology  
International Federation of Reflexologists  
International Guild of Professional Practitioners  
International Institute of Reflexology  
Professional Association of Clinical Therapists  
Reflexologists' Society  
Reflexology Practitioners Association  
Scottish Institute of Reflexology

## 21 Reiki

Reiki is a method of healing that originated with Mikao Usui in Japan in the early part of the 20th century. The word reiki means universal life energy in Japanese.

A reiki practitioner uses this energy to encourage the body to heal itself. Reiki is not part of a specific belief system and anyone can use it. There are different levels of reiki practitioners. Level one is for people who have learnt reiki so that they can treat themselves, or use reiki informally with their friends and family. Level two is practitioner level: people study to a higher level and are able to give reiki treatments to patients. The third level is reiki master or teacher. This level is sometimes split in two: master practitioner level and master teacher level.

### What is reiki commonly used for?

Reiki is used for a wide range of physical, mental and emotional conditions, including the relief of stress and tension.

### What will happen when I see a reiki practitioner?

Reiki takes place in a peaceful and relaxing environment. You will be asked to sit, or lie on a couch and the practitioner will take your medical history. Apart from your coat and shoes, it is not necessary to take off any clothes. The practitioner will then gently place his hands on or over your body. Treatments can last for up to 1½ hours.

You may feel a flow of energy, mild tingling, warmth, coolness or nothing at all. The course of reiki treatment will vary in length according to your condition. Your practitioner should discuss your treatment plan with you and review it as necessary.

### Precautions

It is advisable to rest after a reiki treatment and drink lots of water. You should tell



your practitioner if you are having any other complementary or conventional medical treatments.

### Cost

Reiki treatment can cost from between £15 and £60 upwards, depending on where you live.

### Finding a reiki practitioner

At the moment, there is no single body that regulates the reiki profession. There are a number of professional associations that practitioners can choose to belong to but a reiki practitioner is not required by law to belong to a professional association nor to have completed a specified course of training, although many do belong to the organisations listed below.

These organisations are working together as the **Reiki Regulatory Working Group** to develop common standards of training and practice and one register of practitioners who all meet a required standard. When this happens, members of the public will have a single point of contact for finding practitioners. However, this process takes time and at present standards of training can vary, which is why we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.

#### Reiki Regulatory Working Group

Tel: 07939 533 084

Email: [info@reikiregulation.org.uk](mailto:info@reikiregulation.org.uk)

Website: [www.reikiregulation.org.uk](http://www.reikiregulation.org.uk)

British Complementary Medicine Association

Federation of Holistic Therapists

Independent Professional Therapists

International

Reiki Alliance



Reiki Association  
 Reiki Healers & Teachers Society  
 Tera-Mai Reiki & Seichem Healers  
 Association  
 UK Reiki Alliance  
 UK Reiki Federation

## 22 Shiatsu

Shiatsu is a Japanese therapy, based on the principle that vital energy (known in Japanese as *Ki*) flows throughout the body in a series of channels called meridians. According to this principle, symptoms can be caused when this energy stops flowing freely. Shiatsu practitioners use thumb and palm pressure, stretching and other techniques to restore the balance of energy.

### What is shiatsu commonly used for?

Shiatsu is used for a wide range of conditions, from injuries to more general symptoms of poor health. Conditions treated by shiatsu practitioners include back pain; headaches and migraine; whiplash injuries and neck stiffness; joint pain and reduced mobility; menstrual and digestive problems; asthmatic symptoms; sports injuries and depression. Shiatsu may also be used to help symptoms associated with pregnancy and childbirth, although special care needs to be taken during the first three months of pregnancy.<sup>131</sup>

### What will happen when I see a shiatsu practitioner?

Treatment is usually given on a special mattress, or futon, on the floor. The practitioner should advise you to wear loose, comfortable clothing, like track-suit trousers and a t-shirt. Before the treatment the practitioner will ask about your medical and family history, your diet and lifestyle. This information will help the practitioner work out the best way to treat you. After a treatment, some people find they have increased vitality and you may feel invigorated yet relaxed.

### Precautions

Shiatsu is not recommended for people with osteoporosis or low blood platelet counts. In the first three months of pregnancy certain points should be avoided



by the practitioner, particularly if the woman has a history of miscarriage.<sup>132</sup> Older people or people with disabilities may find it difficult to lie down on the floor, but shiatsu is adaptable and can be given in a chair or wheelchair.

## Cost

Shiatsu treatments can cost from between £25 to £60 upwards, depending on where you live.

## Finding a shiatsu practitioner

At the moment, there is no single body that regulates the shiatsu profession. There are a number of professional associations that practitioners can choose to belong to but a shiatsu practitioner is not required by law to belong to a professional association nor to have completed a specified course of training, although many do belong to the organisations listed below.

These organisations are working together as the **General Shiatsu Council** to develop common standards of training and practice and one register of practitioners who all meet a required standard. When this happens, members of the public will have a single point of contact for finding practitioners. However, this process takes time and at present standards of training can vary, which is why we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.

### The General Shiatsu Council

Glebe Cottage  
 Holywell Road  
 Castle Bytham  
 Grantham  
 NG33 4SL  
 Tel: 01780 410072  
 Email: [info@generalshiatsucouncil.org](mailto:info@generalshiatsucouncil.org)  
 Website: [www.generalshiatsucouncil.org](http://www.generalshiatsucouncil.org)



Accelerated Professional Training  
 British Register of Complementary Practitioners  
 College of Oriental Medicine  
 Independent Professional Therapists International  
 International Guild of Professional Practitioners  
 International Shiatsu Association  
 Shiatsu International  
 Shiatsu Society  
 South West College of Oriental Medicine  
 Zen School of Shiatsu

## 23 Yoga therapy

Yoga is an ancient tradition of mental and physical exercises, which started in India over 5,000 years ago and is now widely practised in the UK. There are many different styles of yoga. Some are physically more demanding, some are gentler, some focus more on physical postures, while others focus more on breathing and meditation.

Yoga therapy involves the use of yoga to deal with and prevent illness and to maintain good health. It includes physical exercises, breathing techniques and relaxation.<sup>133</sup>

### What is yoga therapy commonly used for?

Yoga aims to strengthen the body and calm the mind. People who practice it regularly say that it helps them to feel well and stay fit and healthy, and that the benefits increase over time.<sup>134</sup> Yoga is considered to reduce stress and encourage relaxation.<sup>135</sup>

Research suggests that yoga may be helpful for hypertension, asthma and reducing joint stiffness in osteoarthritis.<sup>136</sup> There is also some evidence to suggest that it may be useful in epilepsy (Sahaja yoga),<sup>137</sup> some kinds of irritable bowel syndrome,<sup>138</sup> for reducing cholesterol levels<sup>139</sup> and for mild depression.<sup>140</sup>

There are yoga therapy classes for a wide range of conditions including arthritis, asthma, back pain, cancer, diabetes, depression, digestive problems, fatigue, hypertension, heart disease, HIV & AIDS, ME, menstrual problems, multiple sclerosis, respiratory problems and stress. There are also classes for women before and after childbirth.

### What will happen when I see a yoga therapy practitioner?

When you begin yoga therapy for the first time, you should have an initial assessment. This would include giving information about your medical history and lifestyle and a 30-60 minute consultation with a yoga therapy practitioner. After this



the practitioner will be able to recommend a course of action, which might be one-to-one sessions with a yoga therapy practitioner or special yoga therapy classes.

### Precautions

Check with your practitioner before doing any yoga postures on your own at home. You should only practice yoga at home after you have learned the postures and techniques properly, as you could injure yourself if you try a yoga posture incorrectly. Some yoga postures should not be used by pregnant women.<sup>141</sup>

### Cost

Costs are from about £50 per hour in London. Sessions usually cost less outside London.

### Finding a yoga therapy practitioner

At the moment, there is no single body that regulates the yoga therapy profession. There are a number of professional associations that practitioners can choose to belong to but a yoga therapy practitioner is not required by law to belong to a professional association nor to have completed a specified course of training, although many do belong to the organisations listed below.

These organisations are working together as the **British Council for Yoga Therapy** to develop common standards of training and practice and one register of practitioners who all meet a required standard. When this happens, members of the public will have a single point of contact for finding practitioners. However, this process takes time and at present standards of training can vary, which is why we suggest you ask the questions in *Chapter 6*.





**British Council for Yoga Therapy**

Email: [timnaylor@btopenworld.com](mailto:timnaylor@btopenworld.com)

Website: [www.yogatherapyforum.org.uk](http://www.yogatherapyforum.org.uk)

Birthlight

British Wheel of Yoga

Friends of Yoga Society International

Integrative Yoga Therapy

Life Force Healing and Yoga

Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy

Real Yoga

Satyananda Yoga

Viniyoga Britain

Yoga Anubhava

Yoga Biomedical Trust

Yoga Clinical Interest Group for

Physiotherapists

Yoga For Health Foundation

Yoga Therapy and Training Centre

## 24 Sources of further information

Here are a selection of books, websites and organisations, in addition to those mentioned earlier in this guide, that you can use for further information. There is only room here to list a few, but if you use them they will lead you to others. There will be further lists of useful sources of information on the Foundation's website [www.fihealth.org.uk](http://www.fihealth.org.uk)

Please remember the guidance in *Chapter 3* about reading health information, particularly on the internet.

At the time this guide was printed, most of the books listed can be ordered from bookshops. If publications are not available through those outlets, we give details of how you can get copies.

### General Information

#### Books

Barnett, H. *The Which? Guide to Complementary Therapies*. Consumers' Association, 2002.

Glenville, Marilyn. *The Natural Health Handbook for Women*. Piatkus Books, 2001.

Institute of Ideas. *Alternative Medicine: should we swallow it?* Hodder & Stoughton, 2002.

Lewith, G. *Understanding Complementary Medicine*. Family Doctor Publications, 2002.

Peters, David and Woodham, Anne. *The Complete Guide: Integrated Medicine*. Dorling Kindersley, 2000. This book is now out of print but you might find copies in public libraries. A new edition is planned for summer 2005.

Vickers, A & Zollman, C. *ABC of Complementary Therapies*. BMJ Books, 2000.

#### Websites

The National electronic Library for Health ([www.nelh.nhs.uk](http://www.nelh.nhs.uk)) is an NHS library for healthcare professionals, patients and

carers in England. It currently includes some information about complementary healthcare treatments and plans to launch a specialist complementary medicine library in the middle of 2005.

NHS Scotland runs the e-Library ([www.elib.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.elib.scot.nhs.uk)), which has a list of complementary medicine resources.

Omni, [www.omni.ac.uk](http://www.omni.ac.uk), has links to a wide range of information sources about complementary medicine and some individual therapies. You can search the website using keywords such as complementary medicine; complementary therapies; complementary and alternative medicine; acupuncture; herbal and so on. Resources listed are selected according to a set of standards and you can look at these by going to <http://biome.ac.uk/guidelines/eval/cam.html> There is also a leaflet on the website giving internet sources of information for health and medicine that you can download at <http://biome.ac.uk/about/publications.html#booklet>

The British Medical Journal website has a collection of all articles relating to complementary medicine published in the British Medical Journal since 1998: <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/collections/>

As well as information about patient support organisations, as mentioned in *Chapter 3*, [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk) lists some sources of information about complementary therapies, has patient information leaflets about a wide range of medical conditions, some of which include a little information about complementary treatments, and sources of information about medicines.

### Specific aspects of complementary health

#### Life stages

Dooley, Michael and Stacey, Sarah. *Your Change, Your Choice: the integrated guide to looking and feeling good through the menopause*. Hodder and Stoughton, 2004.

Herzberg, Eileen Inge. *Know your Complementary Therapies*. Age Concern England, 2001. £9.99 + £1.25 p + p. Order from the Age Concern England website at [www.ace.org.uk](http://www.ace.org.uk) or by telephoning 0870 44 22 120 or by writing to Age Concern Books, Unit 6, Industrial Estate, Brecon, Powys, LD3 8LA (cheques/postal orders made payable to 'Age Concern England').

McIntyre, A. *The Herbal for Mother and Child*. Thorsons, 2003.

### For people with cancer

Macmillan Cancer Relief has some general information about complementary therapies on its website [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk) and has links to other sources of information. Macmillan also publishes a directory of complementary therapy services for people with cancer and you can find out what is available in your area by telephoning the Macmillan CancerLine on Freephone 0800 808 2020 or by emailing [cancerline@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:cancerline@macmillan.org.uk)

The Macmillan website has helpful guidance on looking for information on the internet.

### Individual therapies

Book: *Understanding the Bowen Technique* by John Wilks. First Stone Publishing, 2004.

The British Chiropractic Association provides information about chiropractic to the public. Address: Blagrove House, 17 Blagrove Street, Reading, Berkshire RG1 1QB. Tel: 0118 950 5950  
Email: [enquiries@chiropractic-uk.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@chiropractic-uk.co.uk)  
Website: [www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk](http://www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk)

Book: *Understanding Craniosacral Therapy*, by John Wilks. First Stone Publishing, 2004.

Book: *The NHS Healer* by Angie Buxton-King. Virgin Books, 2004.

HerbMed, accessible through its website [www.herbmed.org](http://www.herbmed.org) is a free, searchable electronic database, for use by the public, of links to research and other information about the use of herbs for healthcare. It is run by the US based Alternative Medicine Foundation: [www.amfoundation.org/](http://www.amfoundation.org/)

Herbal medicine information over the telephone: Herbal Health Advice Line, run by the National Institute of Medical Herbalists. Tel: 01392 426022

The Herb Society aims to increase understanding and appreciation of herbs and their health benefits. There is information on the society's website and benefits for members include a quarterly newsletter. The Herb Society, Sulgrave Manor, Sulgrave, Banbury OX17 2SD Tel: 01295 768899

Email: [email@herbsociety.org.uk](mailto:email@herbsociety.org.uk)

Website: [www.herbsociety.org.uk](http://www.herbsociety.org.uk)

The Homeopathic Trust. *How to Get Homeopathic Treatment on the NHS*.

Booklet available from the British Homeopathic Association, Hahnemann House, 29 Park Street West, Luton LU1 3BE. Tel: 0870 444 3950

Email: [info@trushomeopathy.org](mailto:info@trushomeopathy.org)

Website: [www.trushomeopathy.org](http://www.trushomeopathy.org)

The Homeopathy Action Trust promotes homeopathy and provides information to the public. Members receive a quarterly newsletter. The Homeopathy Action Trust, PO Box 5497, Northampton NN6 0ZH  
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Book: Stone, Julie and Matthews, Joan. *Complementary Medicine and the Law*. Oxford University Press, 1996.

### Training as a complementary practitioner

Williams, L. *Choosing a Course in Complementary Healthcare*. The Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health, London, 2003. Available to download free from The Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health website [www.fihealth.org.uk](http://www.fihealth.org.uk) or order through a bookshop or from the Foundation.

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# Complementary Healthcare: a guide for patients

With an increasing number of people using complementary healthcare, the need for reliable and accessible information for patients is crucial. This guide provides patients with the information they need to make fully informed decisions about their healthcare. It takes readers through the process of deciding on a suitable therapy and details how to find a well qualified and registered practitioner. The guide is a simple, concise and easy to use reference source.

*The Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health is committed to the concept of integrated healthcare. This includes encouraging conventional and complementary practitioners to work together to integrate their approaches. One of the Foundation's key objectives is the provision of clear and reliable information to patients, practitioners and the public.*



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