

# Complementary therapies

Breast Cancer Care is the UK's leading provider of information, practical assistance and emotional support for anyone affected by breast cancer. Every year we respond to over two million requests for support and information about breast cancer or breast health concerns. All our services are free.

We are committed to campaigning for better treatment and support for people with breast cancer and their families.

For more information visit [www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk) or call the Breast Cancer Care helpline free on 0808 800 6000 (for Typetalk prefix 18001).



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# Introduction

Complementary therapies have become more and more popular as a way for people to look after their general health, to treat specific physical conditions and to help with emotional issues. A growing number of people with breast cancer are also using complementary therapies to try and control some of the side effects of medical treatment as well as to increase their overall sense of wellbeing.

This booklet is for anyone who has, or has had, breast cancer and is interested in finding out more about complementary therapies. It provides useful information about complementary therapies, looks at some of the things you may need to consider before trying a therapy and describes a selection of the most popular complementary therapies available.

**'Before I tried complementary therapies I was physically and emotionally lost. My body was very painful and my mind was only able to concentrate on very negative thoughts. The medical assistance plus having complementary therapy lifted my soul and I began to be the lively spirited person that I had always been.'** Yvonne

**'At the end of the formal treatment I was told "see you in six months!" I felt abandoned and decided to be active in support of my immune system. So I sought out and selected various therapies which I thought would help.'** Tim

# What are complementary therapies?

There is a wide range of complementary therapies available, all of which offer different ways of helping people. They should only ever be used alongside conventional medical treatments and for this reason they differ from 'alternative' therapies, which are used instead of conventional medical treatment.

Complementary therapists look at the whole person, including their physical and emotional wellbeing. This is known as a holistic approach. Essentially, most complementary therapists believe that a person's symptoms mean that something more is happening in the body. They support the person by using their type of therapy to find the source of a health condition and also to discover any other lifestyle factors that may have made the condition worse.

While it is important to remember that complementary therapies are not a cure for cancer, they may help to relieve some of the problems linked to a breast cancer diagnosis or the side effects of medical treatment. For example, massage can encourage relaxation, acupuncture can be helpful with nausea, pain and balancing emotions, and some herbal remedies may reduce hot flushes.

**'They [complementary therapies] are a set of treatments I can draw on for emotional maintenance or when I feel I am starting to lose control and become low.'** Bev

**'The doctors treat the physical symptoms but the complementary therapies deal with general wellbeing and state of mind.'**  
Angela

# Choosing a therapy

It is a good idea to look at what therapies are available and how they work, and to find out which therapies are most effective for what you personally need.

**'I think individuals should explore what's available and choose what suits them.'** Tim

You may also want to think about how comfortable you are with what is involved in a particular therapy. For example, it is worth bearing in mind that for certain therapies you will need to partially or fully undress and this may be inappropriate for people from some cultural and religious backgrounds.

The thought of undressing may also be uncomfortable for some people who have had surgery for breast cancer and feel self-conscious about their body. It is important to remember that a complementary therapist will do their best to put you at ease.

Fitting complementary therapies into your lifestyle is also something to think about. For therapies such as acupuncture or reflexology, you may have regular contact with a therapist and will need to find time to see them every week or fortnight. Other therapies involve less frequent contact with a therapist. For example, after a first visit to a homeopathist or herbalist you may be given a remedy to take for several weeks before seeing them again.

It is important when choosing a therapy that you feel happy with when and how often you need to go – if trying to keep up with appointments becomes difficult, the added stress may affect how beneficial you find the therapy itself.

**'I try to arrange my appointments after work or on a Saturday.'**

Barbara

# Will any of the complementary therapies affect my medical treatment?

Many complementary therapies may help to improve the side effects of medical treatments without affecting the way they work. However, some complementary therapies may affect the medical treatments you are having.

Because of this, it is essential you tell your complementary therapy practitioner about your medical treatments before you begin. The therapist will be able to advise you if there are any reasons why you should not use that particular therapy.

For example, massage should be avoided over a scar that is still healing. Also, some of the herbs used in herbal medicine can interact with conventional medical treatments and should be avoided.

Whichever complementary therapy you are thinking about trying, it is important to talk to your breast care nurse or specialist team first to ensure that it will not affect any medical treatment you may have.

**'I continued to have massage after surgery and after radiotherapy. I was told it was ok to do that by my surgeon and the team of radiographers, provided that the treatment area was avoided.'** Pam

## Finding a complementary therapist

'While waiting to be called to have radiotherapy, I saw a leaflet offering complementary therapies. I put my name forward and a couple of weeks later I enjoyed a brief aromatherapy session. It was a one-off offered by the breast care nurses, but a very enjoyable experience.'

Yvonne

There may be some complementary therapists working at your local hospital. Your breast care nurse may be able to tell you more about this or give you a list of local therapists.

You can also ask other people for advice and information on therapists, such as your GP or a local cancer support group. Some hospices, cancer support centres and other charities provide a limited range of complementary therapies. Your breast care nurse, GP or local cancer support group may know what is available. Also, Breast Cancer Care offers Healthy Living Days, which include complementary therapy sessions.

When you are choosing a complementary therapist it is a good idea to check their qualifications and insurance, and ask whether they are a member of a professional body. Professional bodies are also able to provide you with a list of therapists in your area.

You can find a list of professional bodies at the back of this booklet under **Useful addresses**.

You may want to ask the therapist if they have worked with many people who have had breast cancer. Whoever you choose, it is important you think they are trustworthy and feel comfortable with the treatment you have.

'My GP was very supportive and happy to refer me as an outpatient.' Shirley

## How much will complementary therapies cost?

Complementary therapies offered by hospitals, hospices, cancer support centres and other charities may be free or charged for according to what you can afford.

If there are no suitable free or low-cost therapies available locally, you may consider paying privately. The cost will vary with each therapist and the type of therapy you choose. It is very important to discuss the cost of any complementary therapy you are thinking about trying with the therapist before you commit to it.

For the best results many therapies involve several visits and it is a good idea to work out how much this will cost and if you can afford to keep up with the sessions. Some therapists may be willing to offer a lower rate if you need a number of treatments. As costs do vary, you may want to talk to several therapists to find out who can offer the best rate for you.

'It has been expensive, but I feel it has been a huge investment in my health and wellbeing – and really enabled me to recover from this crisis.' Shirley

'My local breast cancer support group was lucky enough to get a grant from Macmillan to allow us to invite therapists to give us taster sessions.' Jean

# Types of complementary therapies

## Acupuncture



Acupuncture has grown as a system of medicine over thousands of years. It began in the Far East, mainly in China, Japan and Korea, and has been popular in the West since the 1970s.

Traditional acupuncturists work with an energy called chi, which flows around the body in channels known as meridians. When the flow of chi is balanced we are well both physically and emotionally. Illness can arise if the flow of energy is imbalanced or blocked.

Acupuncturists work with thin needles, which are inserted into the skin at specific points on the body's meridians to help the energy flow become more balanced.

During your first visit the acupuncturist will take a detailed history of your health and lifestyle, and ask about any other problems you may have. If you have had surgery to the lymph glands under your arm, the acupuncturist will not use needles on that arm or in the chest area on that side.

You will usually lie on a couch during the session and may be asked to undress down to your underwear so that the acupuncturist can reach the right body points. Blankets and towels should be available if you do need to undress. The acupuncturist will take note of your pulse on both wrists and will also look at your tongue.

Once the points on your body have been chosen the needles may either be left in position for up to 30 minutes or be inserted and removed more regularly, depending on the style of acupuncture and the condition being treated.

Some acupuncturists may use a dried herb called moxa to warm certain acupuncture points before using a needle. As the needles used are very thin people rarely find acupuncture painful, but you may feel a slight sting when the needle is first put in place.

Normally a course of treatment is needed as the benefits of acupuncture increase the more sessions you have. People usually start to see an improvement in their symptoms after five or six sessions, although longstanding health problems can take longer to treat than more recent ones.

Acupuncture can be used to help with a wide range of health problems. Some people who have chronic pain as a result of breast cancer have found it useful. It may also relieve the nausea and sickness that chemotherapy can cause. Because acupuncture can help balance emotions, it may also be used to improve low mood and anxiety.

**'Acupuncture helps with a general feeling of calm and wellbeing.'**

**Angela**

**'I relaxed when the needles were in and "drifted away" listening to some music. I seemed to be energised afterwards.'** Kath

## Aromatherapy



Aromatherapy works by using essential oils, taken from fragrant plants, flowers, seeds and bark, to stimulate the sense of smell and help healing.

Essential oils have been used for health-giving purposes for many thousands of years and aromatherapists have studied how each essential oil works. Using their knowledge they will choose an oil or mixture of oils that will work best for your physical and emotional needs.

Essential oils can be used in several ways. They can be mixed with a base oil to be used in massage, added to a bath, evaporated using an oil burner or blended with a lotion to be put on the skin.

When used in massage, it is thought that essential oils work as they are absorbed through the skin and into the muscles and bloodstream. When evaporated, they are thought to work by entering the bloodstream as the aroma is breathed in.

The properties of each essential oil and their physical and emotional effects help an aromatherapist to make up the best mixture for treatment. Some oils can cause irritation and others are not recommended during pregnancy or if you have diabetes, so it is always important to see a suitably qualified aromatherapist rather than trying any of the essential oils yourself.

Aromatherapy may help people with breast cancer who have problems with digestion, nausea, infections and pain, but on the whole it seems to be most useful in treating emotional issues such as anxiety, and in improving general wellbeing.

Oils such as peppermint and ginger may relieve nausea. Lemon and bergamot may improve mood and reduce lethargy, while lavender, sandalwood and frankincense may reduce anxiety. It is important to remember that essential oils must not be used without proper instructions, so you should always consult a qualified aromatherapist.

**'Aromatherapy was very powerful in dealing with stress and anxiety, and in preparing for surgery. It enabled me to cope very well with radiotherapy – the stress, fatigue and appetite loss, and it protected my skin. I have very dry skin anyway and yet it did not peel at all.'**

Shirley

**'I have a chat to the therapist about how I am. Relaxing music is played and the smell of oils is lovely. The lights are dimmed and I can just relax or talk if I want. Afterwards I feel far less tense, and sleepy.'** Pam

## Healing and Reiki



Healing is an ancient practice which aims to make people well or whole. There are many forms of healing, including contact, lay and spiritual healing, and Reiki.

The basic idea is to use conscious intention to improve health and wellbeing, although beliefs about what makes healing possible vary depending on the style used. Most healers believe they are channelling a universal energy that exists all around and through us.

Reiki is perhaps the most commonly known type of healing and involves energy, known as ki, flowing through the therapist to the client to help restore balance and wellbeing.

The client can either sit or lie down, fully clothed, while the therapist places their hands above or on certain parts of the body where they believe energy is strong. Care is taken not to touch any sensitive areas of the body.

Some therapists may play an audio tape of soothing messages or music during treatment. You may start to feel very relaxed during the treatment and this may even last for some time after the session has finished.

During contact healing the healer will place their hands lightly on you. You will be clothed and may be sitting or lying. The healer will often use a holding technique around the body to help direct energy. Alternatively, the healer may not make actual physical contact with your body. They may work with their hands above the body or use prayer.

People may experience a sensation of warmth or tingling and will often feel relaxed after a session of healing. With spiritual or 'faith' healing it isn't important to share the healer's beliefs, and the healer should only talk to you about these if asked.

A healer may work from a centre, hospital or their home. Although it is unclear just how effective healing is, it has become more accepted by the medical establishment in recent years, and you may be able to see a healer in hospital if your doctor is happy with their ability.

A healer will not be able to say they can cure breast cancer. However, supporters of healing say it helps with sleep, relaxation, digestion and pain relief, and improves quality of life in general.

*'Lying on the floor, on comfortable bedding in a dimly lit room with soothing music, I felt very spiritual, listening intently to the audio tape whilst Reiki was being administered. During the session I couldn't help myself, but I cried. I felt a warmth encompass me – a truly beneficial experience.'*

Yvonne

*'Complementary therapies have helped enormously, especially Reiki, to give me confidence and strength.'*

Tim

## Herbal medicine



Herbal medicine involves using plant remedies to treat a range of health conditions. Modern herbal medicine has evolved from centuries of learning about the health-giving properties of plants. Herbs are used to improve and restore the function and balance of the body. Many herbs are thought to have a reviving and strengthening effect, which can help the body to fight off illness more easily.

In conventional medicine a number of drugs are based on active plant ingredients, which are blended together. In herbal medicine the whole plant is often used, including leaves, roots and berries, and the herbalist will understand the balance of ingredients contained within the plant. For example, conventional diuretics (a medicine used to help pass urine) may cause a loss of potassium (an essential mineral for the human body). In herbal medicine, dandelion leaves would commonly be prescribed as they contain potassium as well as having a diuretic effect.

Medical herbalists diagnose using a very holistic approach and they will aim to find the underlying cause of an illness rather than just treating the symptoms.

During your first visit the herbalist will take details of your medical history, diet, lifestyle and emotions. Based on this information, they will be able to work out what herbs are needed to help you and prepare the appropriate remedy.

Herbs come in various preparations, including teas and creams. If your symptoms have come on very quickly,

remedies may be prepared that start to work within a few days. However, if you have had a health condition for a while, it will usually take longer for a remedy to work.

Herbs can be used to relieve a number of conditions, for example digestive problems, skin complaints and menopausal symptoms.

Some herbs can act like the hormone oestrogen and may not be suitable for people who have had breast cancer. For example, herbs such as black cohosh, dong quai and red clover have been said to help reduce hot flushes that can occur when taking hormonal treatments for breast cancer.

As yet it is not clear how effective or safe these herbs are for people who are having treatment for breast cancer, so it may be best to avoid them. For more information see our **Menopausal symptoms and breast cancer** factsheet.

It has also been suggested that the herbs St John's wort and ginseng may interact with the conventional medical drug tamoxifen, causing it to be less effective. Herbal products used to boost the immune system such as echinacea and iscador (mistletoe) are also thought to cause side effects if taken during chemotherapy treatment.

Some herbal supplements such as Ginkgo biloba, ginger and garlic may affect how blood clots so it is best to avoid taking these before surgery. However, an average amount of garlic in your diet is fine.

It is very important that you consult a suitably qualified herbalist and talk to your own cancer specialist or breast care nurse about any herbs you are thinking about trying.

**'I found traditional Chinese herbal medicine has enabled me to adapt to the side effects of the tamoxifen and reduced them dramatically.'**  
Shirley

## Homeopathy



Modern homeopathy was developed around 200 years ago by a German physician called Samuel Hahnemann. His work showed that 'like should be treated with like' and that ailments could be improved by giving tiny doses of a natural remedy that if taken in a larger amount would in fact cause the same symptoms of the ailment.

It is thought that the more diluted or 'watered-down' a remedy is the greater its power, meaning that remedies can be taken with very little risk of side effects. It is also thought that these doses trigger the body's own ability to self-heal.

A homeopath will talk to you about your physical and emotional health, any past illnesses and your family before starting treatment. They will also ask you about your diet, lifestyle and personality. This information helps the homeopath to understand the underlying causes of any problems so they can offer the best remedy.

Although the symptoms of two different people may be similar, often each person will need a different homeopathic remedy.

Once you have started to take a remedy, symptoms may seem worse for a little while but this usually means the remedy is starting to work. This stage is quite common and should soon pass. However, if you are worried, you can talk to your homeopath.

Often after your first visit the homeopath will ask to see you again in a few weeks. During this time you will be given one or several remedies to take. At the second visit the homeopath will review your progress and may make slight adjustments to the remedies you have been taking.

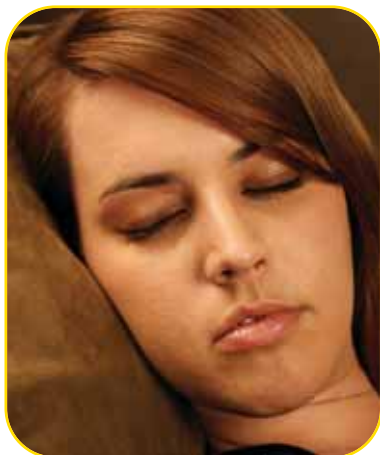
There are many homeopaths registered within the NHS and a number of homeopathic hospitals. You can be referred to one of these through your doctor.

Homeopathy may help with a range of conditions relating to the medical treatment of breast cancer, including skin reactions to radiotherapy, some of the side effects of chemotherapy and scarring from surgery. It is also thought to help with emotional issues such as anxiety and low mood.

Before trying any remedy, including over-the-counter homeopathic remedies, it is very important to consult a professional homeopath as what may work for one person may not work for another.

**'A qualified homeopath strongly recommended the arnica homeopathic remedy immediately before surgery and for several days after surgery. It really helped with the physical and emotional shock of surgery, and lessened bruising. Also the scar healed wonderfully.'** Shirley

## Hypnotherapy



Hypnosis dates back thousands of years and involves reaching a deep and natural state of relaxation, which helps the body to achieve healing.

Hypnotherapy as it is practised today developed in the mid 19th century and uses the power of the mind to help with both physical conditions and emotional issues.

A hypnotherapist will work with you to relax your conscious, or alert, mind and enter the subconscious mind where your experiences, memories and feelings are kept. In this way the therapist can find out more about the emotional factors that may have influenced the development of a health condition.

At your first visit, the hypnotherapist will aim to find out as much as possible about you, including about your health and lifestyle. They will then take you through a relaxation routine. You will be fully clothed and may sit in a comfortable chair or lie on a couch.

The therapist will help you to enter a very relaxed or 'daydream' state by using eye contact, relaxing words and/or talking in a calm and controlled tone of voice. Hypnotherapy aims to make you feel better by filling the subconscious mind with positive and healing messages.

As hypnotherapists work with the subconscious mind it is important you feel comfortable with them and are able to develop a trusting relationship. At all times during a session you will still have complete awareness and control.

In general, hypnotherapy is popular with people who want to stop smoking, control their weight, overcome a phobia or increase their overall sense of confidence and wellbeing. It may also be useful in helping with recovery from surgery, the side effects of chemotherapy such as nausea and vomiting, and pain relief.

People who find going for body scans and radiotherapy, or having injections, stressful have found that hypnotherapy has increased their confidence in being able to cope with these situations. Hypnotherapy may also help with anxiety and depression, and with coming to terms with a diagnosis of cancer in general.

**'I believe hypnotherapy could help many people get through cancer treatment as it can be used to alleviate stress and build confidence.'**

**Angela**

**'You feel calmer, not so tense and you sleep better.'**

**Barbara**

## Massage and shiatsu (acupressure)



Massage is the oldest form of physical medicine recorded and dates back to 4,000 years BC. There are many types of massage from different parts of the world, including Indian Ayurvedic massage, Hawaiian hot stone massage and Chinese Tui Na massage, among many others.

Massage involves working on the body's soft tissues, muscles, ligaments and tendons by using the hands to stretch and apply

pressure. This action can soothe stiffness in the joints and muscles and help the flow of lymph fluid and blood. The rhythmic strokes used in massage can also help you feel physically and emotionally relaxed.

At your first session the therapist will ask you about your medical history, and then you will usually be asked to undress to your underwear and lie down. The massage therapist should ensure you are properly covered with towels on the areas they are not working on. Using towels also helps to keep in the heat created by the massage, which can add to the effect of the treatment.

The therapist will either massage all over the body for general relaxation or on one area for a specific problem. The amount of sessions you have will depend on what is being treated.

Massage has been widely used for people with cancer and can treat a range of problems. For example, it can increase relaxation, reduce pain and improve emotional balance, and may also help with headaches or nausea.

It has been said that people who have had cancer should not have massage because of the risk of moving cancer cells from one part of the body to another. This has not been clinically

proven, although it is important to tell your massage therapist about your breast cancer history. If you have had surgery to the lymph glands under your arm, it is best to avoid having deep tissue massage to that arm unless your therapist has been trained in a specialist type of massage called manual lymphatic drainage.

Shiatsu is an energetic therapy, in some ways similar to massage, that focuses on the meridians, or energy channels, throughout the body. The word shiatsu literally means finger pressure and it is commonly referred to as acupressure because it uses the same meridian system that is used in acupuncture.

A shiatsu therapist believes that health problems happen because of an imbalance or blockage in the flow of energy, or chi, in the body. They will aim to release these blockages by applying pressure to the body, often using their thumbs and palms, and sometimes their elbows, knees and feet. Shiatsu can help to rebalance the body's energy and function, allowing healing to take place.

On your first visit the therapist will talk to you about your medical history and lifestyle. They will pay close attention to touching and pressing your abdomen (tummy) to find out if there are any blockages in the energy. You will usually be asked to wear loose comfortable clothing and lie on a treatment bed or mattress.

Sometimes people can have a reaction to the first session, for example, headaches or tiredness, but this is usually a positive sign and suggests that the body is getting rid of toxins and emotional tension.

Shiatsu may be used to treat a number of health conditions, including bowel and back problems. It may also be particularly effective for tension and fatigue.

**'Massage relaxed me and definitely helped me sleep, especially during the trauma of the first few months while I was still coming to terms with my diagnosis.'**

**Jean**

**'While I'm having complementary therapy I feel I have some control over my future and my own recovery and wellbeing.'**

**Bev**

## Reflexology



Reflexology works by stimulating the nerve endings in the feet, and sometimes the hands. It was initially discovered by an American surgeon called Dr William Fitzgerald who found that pressure applied to certain parts of the body had a numbing effect on other parts of the body.

He divided the body into ten zones ending in the hands and feet. Later, a physiotherapist called Eunice Ingham developed these ideas to show that tension in certain parts of the feet reflected tension in a related part of the body. By treating this area of the foot with finger pressure it is thought that the related part of the body can be healed.

A reflexologist will take your medical history before the treatment begins and will also ask about your lifestyle and emotional health. After this you will usually be asked to sit in a reclining chair or lie on a treatment couch.

The reflexologist will work on your feet and ankles with cream, talcum powder or oil, using special finger techniques on the various zones. Close attention will be paid to the zones in the feet that relate to a body area where you might be having problems.

People often report some form of reaction to the first few treatments such as needing the toilet more often, feeling very relaxed and/or tired, or very occasionally developing a rash. These are usually all signs that the treatment is working. Up to six weekly sessions followed by several fortnightly ones will normally be recommended to achieve good results.

Reflexology may be helpful in treating a range of conditions, including nausea and breathlessness, and emotional issues such as anxiety. Some people with breast cancer who try reflexology say they find it calming and comforting, and feel it helps to increase a sense of wellbeing.

**'Whilst I have only had 15-20 minute taster sessions, I found these very relaxing and energising and would definitely have it regularly if I could afford it.'** Jean

**'Reflexology leaves me energised, sort of "cleansed", relaxed.'** Kye

## Yoga, Tai Chi and Chi Gung



Yoga began in India and has developed over several thousands of years. There are various types of yoga, which mainly involve physical poses, or exercises, that aim to help the body maintain or regain emotional, physical and spiritual balance and wellbeing. Breathing exercises and meditation may also be used, either alongside exercises or on their own.

Yoga can be practised in classes or one-to-one with a yoga teacher. Depending on the type you do, yoga can be energetic or gentle and you may feel full of energy or very relaxed afterwards.

Yoga may help people who have had breast cancer in several ways. The breathing exercises and meditation can relieve worry while having medical treatment and the gentle stretching can help to ease out muscles and scarring after surgery.

After medical treatment has finished more physical yoga can be tried to help tone the body and keep a healthy body weight. This, combined with breathing exercises, meditation and relaxation, can help to create a calm and balanced outlook on life.

Tai Chi is an ancient form of Chinese exercise. It involves slow and controlled movements, which stretch and tone the body's muscles and joints. Deep breathing is done during the movements, which is thought to improve circulation and digestion, exercise the stomach muscles and help with complaints such as constipation. It is also suggested that the focusing of the mind involved in Tai Chi, as with yoga, can be very calming.

Chi Gung (also spelled Qi Gong) is related to Tai Chi and comes from a similar background. It also involves breathing exercises and poses aimed to help the flow of energy, called qi, around the body. It is thought that Chi Gung may be beneficial to health by lowering stress levels, promoting activity and improving both emotional and physical balance.

It is important to remember that yoga, Tai Chi and Chi Gung involve stretching the arms and shoulders. Therefore anyone who has had surgery to the lymph glands should be careful not to do any exercises that could affect the area.

**'I found the Chi Gung breathing exercises wonderfully calming and meditative and I used them while lying on the trolley waiting, for what seemed like an eternity, to go into surgery. I was so relaxed that the surgeon had to ask if I was asleep!' Shirley**

**'With yoga I can concentrate solely on breathing and the given movement. I can think of nothing else, not my scar, not my weight, not my chance of "C" coming back.'** Kye

# A final word on complementary therapies

**'On numerous occasions I have sung the praises of complementary therapies to my friends, urging them to treat themselves to some kind of therapy.'**

**Yvonne**

Finding the right complementary therapy for you will depend on what you personally need. If you are hoping to relieve a specific problem relating to breast cancer, such as hot flushes or nausea, you may find herbal medicine, acupuncture or homeopathy useful. Or, if you are looking to improve your general health and sense of wellbeing, you may find yoga, massage or healing more suitable.

It is a good idea to find out as much as possible about what complementary therapies are available before committing to a course of treatment. And remember, what suits one person may not suit another, so if you find a particular therapy is not working for you, don't worry. There are plenty of complementary therapies available and you may find another therapy that suits you much better.

If you are having conventional medical treatment for breast cancer, it is important to let your specialist team know about any complementary therapies you are thinking about trying, including food supplements. It is just as important to let any complementary therapist you visit know about your breast cancer history.

Remember to ask the therapist about their qualifications and experience and check they have insurance (any professional therapist will have). It is very important to choose a therapist

who is registered with a regulatory body as these bodies specify training and codes of conduct. A qualified, registered and experienced complementary therapist may be more likely to understand how to treat someone with breast cancer, and as a result you may feel more confident that you are in safe hands.

Complementary therapies can be a real source of comfort and relief when coming to terms with the physical and the emotional issues that a diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer may raise.

So with the right therapy and therapist you may find, as many people do, that complementary therapies can offer some much needed extra support – before, during and after your conventional medical treatment for breast cancer.

**'I feel more confident, more balanced and more healthy! I also feel that complementary therapies enabled me to discuss everything with my conventional medicine practitioners on an equal basis. I felt empowered to make decisions with them, rather than being simply told what to do.'** Shirley

# Beyond this booklet

## Further support from Breast Cancer Care

### Free telephone helpline 0808 800 6000 (for Typetalk prefix 18001)

Our helpline provides information and support for anyone affected by breast cancer. Everyone on our helpline either has personal experience of breast cancer or is a breast care nurse. The team comes from a variety of backgrounds, so callers get to talk to someone who understands the issues they're facing.

The team is able to talk about clinical, medical and emotional issues surrounding breast cancer and breast health. Everyone on the helpline has an excellent knowledge of breast cancer issues and receives daily information on new developments. They can talk through the complexities of different treatments to help you understand your options and explain the best way for you to get treatment.

### Volunteer support

Many people who have breast cancer find it helpful to talk to someone who has been in a similar situation. Breast Cancer Care's peer support service puts you in touch with someone who has personal experience of breast cancer and has been trained to listen and offer emotional support. You can talk to someone at any stage – whenever you feel it would help. Call our helpline or visit our website for more information about

this free service. You can also contact our centres to access these services (contact details on the inside back cover of this booklet).

### Online discussion forums and Live chat

The Breast Cancer Care website hosts discussion forums covering all aspects of the disease and its treatment. This service is available 24 hours a day and allows you to talk to people in a similar situation to you and to share your thoughts and feelings.

All forum users post their messages and responses at any time. However, the regular Live chat sessions take place among users who are all logged on at the same time. They are hosted by Breast Cancer Care staff or a clinical specialist and give you the opportunity to discuss anything related to your diagnosis. Visit [www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk) for more details.

### Ask the nurse

This is another service on the Breast Cancer Care website. You can email a question on any breast cancer or breast health issue and our team of specialist nurses will reply within two working days. The service is strictly confidential.

### Publications

Breast Cancer Care produces a wide range of publications providing information for anyone affected by breast cancer. All of our publications are regularly reviewed by healthcare professionals and people affected by breast cancer. You can order our publications by using our order form, which can be requested from our helpline. All our publications can also be downloaded from our website.

## Courses and activities

We run courses and activities for people with breast cancer, which aim to provide information and support and give people the chance to meet others in a similar situation. These include Healthy Living Days, Younger Women's Forums, Living with Breast Cancer courses and informal talks on specific topics. For more information about these events, contact your nearest Breast Cancer Care centre or call our helpline.

'I found the treatments I had on the Healthy Living Day very relaxing and would consider doing them again.' Pam

### Healthy Living Days

If you are having treatment or have recently finished treatment for breast cancer and would like to try out some complementary therapies, you may be interested in our Healthy Living Days. These one-day programmes offer workshops that look at different approaches to improving health through complementary therapies, and wellbeing techniques.

Throughout the day you will learn practical tips and gain hands-on experience of various complementary therapies in a friendly and informal setting, and each session is led by a fully qualified complementary therapist. In addition, there will be other sessions such as healthy eating and exercise, which can also help you manage the side effects of treatment.

Healthy Living Days are available throughout the UK and offer a safe place to learn, share your experiences, relax and meet other people in a similar situation to you. To find out more or

to register, please contact your nearest Breast Cancer Care centre using the details listed at the back of this booklet.

'I went on two Healthy Living Days. They are wonderful. Go on one if there is one near you.'

Kye

## Useful addresses

### Cancer organisations

#### Cancerbackup

3 Bath Place, Rivington Street, London EC2A 3JR

Office: 020 7696 9003

Freephone helpline: 0808 800 1234 (Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm)

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

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

Cancerbackup is a national information and support charity for people affected by cancer. Services include a helpline, staffed by specialist cancer information nurses, a website, cancer information booklets and local information centres. All Cancerbackup services are free to people affected by cancer.

#### Cavendish Cancer Care

The Cavendish Centre, 27 Wilkinson Street, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S10 2GB

Reception telephone: 0114 2784600

Email: [enquiries@cavcare.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cavcare.org.uk)

Offers free supportive care, assessment, counselling and a range of complementary therapies to anyone who has a diagnosis of cancer, as well as to their carers and families whose lives are affected by cancer.

#### Macmillan Cancer Support

89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UQ

Telephone: 020 7840 7840

Macmillan CancerLine: 0808 808 2020

Textphone: 0808 808 0121

Email: [cancerline@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:cancerline@macmillan.org.uk)

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

Macmillan Cancer Support is helping people who are living with cancer through the provision of immediate practical and emotional support. Specialist services include Macmillan nurses and doctors, cancer centres, a range of cancer information and direct financial help. The Macmillan CancerLine provides information and emotional support. Textphone available.

#### **New Approaches to Cancer**

PO Box 194, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 0WJ  
Telephone: 0800 389 2662  
Email: [help@anac.org.uk](mailto:help@anac.org.uk)  
Website: [www.anac.org.uk](http://www.anac.org.uk)

Information and referral service directing people to their nearest sources of help through a network of support groups and practitioners.

#### **Penny Brohn Cancer Care**

**(formerly Bristol Cancer Help Centre)**

Chapel Pill Lane, Pill, Bristol BS20 0HH  
Helpline: 0845 123 23 10  
Email: [info@pennybrohn.org](mailto:info@pennybrohn.org)  
Website: [www.pennybrohncancercare.org](http://www.pennybrohncancercare.org)

Offers two- and five-day residential courses (led by doctors and therapists) for people with cancer and their supporters offering counselling, relaxation, guided imagery, meditation, art and music therapy, healing and advice on nutrition. Helpline offers emotional support, and information on finding complementary therapists and support in your area.

## **Other organisations**

#### **Association of Reflexologists**

5 Fore St, Taunton, Somerset TA1 1HX  
Telephone: 0870 5673320  
Email: [info@aor.org.uk](mailto:info@aor.org.uk)  
Website: [www.aor.org.uk](http://www.aor.org.uk)

Provides information, news, training and a register of qualified practitioners.

#### **British Acupuncture Council (BAcC)**

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

Provides information on acupuncture and a list of professional practitioners.

#### **British Complementary Medicine Association (BCMA)**

PO Box 5122, Bournemouth BH8 0WG  
Telephone: 0845 345 5977  
Email: [info@bcma.co.uk](mailto:info@bcma.co.uk)  
Website: [www.bcma.co.uk](http://www.bcma.co.uk)

Umbrella organisation. Produces a guide and a code of conduct for practitioners, and holds a register of practitioners.

#### **British Herbal Medicine Association**

1 Wickham Road, Bournemouth BH7 6JX  
Telephone: 01202 433691  
Email: [secretary@bhma.info](mailto:secretary@bhma.info)  
Website: [www.bhma.info](http://www.bhma.info)

Provides an information service and publications on herbal medicine.

**British Holistic Medical Association**

PO Box 371, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 9BG  
Telephone: 01278 722 000  
Email: admin@bhma.org  
Website: www.bhma.org

Provides information and produces self-help tapes, booklets and a quarterly magazine.

**British Homeopathic Association**

Hahnemann House, 29 Park Street West, Luton LU1 3BE  
Telephone: 0870 444 3950  
Email: info@trusthomeopathy.org  
Website: www.trusthomeopathy.org

Provides information and a directory of homeopaths. Produces a booklet called 'How to get homeopathic treatment on the NHS' and a quarterly magazine.

**British Medical Acupuncture Society (BMAS)**

House, 3 Winnington Court, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1AQ  
Telephone: 01606 786782  
Email: admin@medical-acupuncture.org.uk  
Website: www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk

Provides acupuncture information and news, and a list of members who are all registered medical practitioners.

**British Society of Clinical and Academic Hypnosis**

28 Dale Park Gardens, Cookridge, Leeds LS16 7PT  
Telephone: 07000 560309  
Email: natoffice@bscah.org  
Website: www.bsmdh.plus.com/BSCAH/

Provides a referral list. All practitioners are from medical, psychological, dental or nursing backgrounds.

**Federation of Holistic Therapists (FHT)**

18 Shakespeare Business Centre, Hathaway Close, Eastleigh, Hampshire SO50 4SR  
Telephone: 0870 420 20 22  
Email: info@fht.org.uk  
Website: www.fht.org.uk

Represents professional therapists who are qualified in a diverse range of therapies, including massage, aromatherapy, reflexology and Reiki. Holds a register of therapists.

**Institute for Complementary Medicine**

PO Box 194, London SE16 7QZ  
Telephone: 020 7237 5165  
Email: info@i-c-m.org.uk  
Website: www.i-c-m.org.uk

Provides information, training and a register of professional practitioners.

**International Federation of Professional Aromatherapists (IFPA)**

82 Ashby Road, Hinckley, Leicestershire LE10 1SN  
Telephone: 01455 637987  
Email: admin@ifparoma.org  
Website: www.ifparoma.org

Provides information and a register of professional aromatherapists.

**National Institute of Medical Herbalists**

Elm House, 54 Mary Arches Street, Exeter EX4 3BA  
Telephone: 01392 426022  
Email: nimh@ukexeter.freeserve.co.uk  
Website: www.nimh.org.uk

Produces information, training and a register of qualified medical herbalists.

### **Natural Health Advisory Service**

PO Box 268, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1QN  
Telephone: 01273 609 699  
Email: [enquiries@naturalhealthas.com](mailto:enquiries@naturalhealthas.com)  
Website: [www.naturalhealthas.com](http://www.naturalhealthas.com)

Offers specific dietary, nutrition and exercise advice for women about pre-menstrual syndrome, menopausal symptoms, prevention of osteoporosis and other hormone-related problems.

### **Therapies United**

35 Balgreen Avenue, The Courtyard, Edinburgh EH12 5SX  
Telephone: 0131 337 1890  
Email: [info@therapiesunited.com](mailto:info@therapiesunited.com)  
Website: [www.therapiesunited.com](http://www.therapiesunited.com)

Information and free register of complementary therapists who are screened for credentials and have experience of working with people with cancer. Discounted rates for people with breast cancer. Low income sessions also available.

### **The Register of Chinese Herbal Medicine**

Office 5, 1 Exeter Street, Norwich NR2 4QB  
Telephone: 01603 623994  
Email: [herbmed@rchm.co.uk](mailto:herbmed@rchm.co.uk)  
Website: [www.rchm.co.uk](http://www.rchm.co.uk)

Provides information, news and a list of member practitioners.

### **The Society of Homeopaths**

11 Brookfield, Duncan Close, Moulton Park,  
Northampton NN3 6WL  
Telephone: 0845 450 6611  
Email: [info@homeopathy-soh.org](mailto:info@homeopathy-soh.org)  
Website: [www.homeopathy-soh.org](http://www.homeopathy-soh.org)

Provides information leaflets, news, a register of members and a newsletter.

### **Central Office**

#### **Breast Cancer Care**

Breast Cancer Care  
5-13 Great Suffolk Street  
London SE1 0NS  
Telephone 0845 092 0800  
Fax 0845 092 0820  
Email [info@breastcancercare.org.uk](mailto:info@breastcancercare.org.uk)

### **Centres**

#### **Breast Cancer Care Scotland**

Telephone 0845 077 1892  
Email [sco@breastcancercare.org.uk](mailto:sco@breastcancercare.org.uk)

#### **Breast Cancer Care Cymru/Wales**

Telephone 0845 077 1894  
Email [cym@breastcancercare.org.uk](mailto:cym@breastcancercare.org.uk)

#### **Breast Cancer Care North & Midlands**

Telephone 0845 077 1893  
Email [nrc@breastcancercare.org.uk](mailto:nrc@breastcancercare.org.uk)

#### **Breast Cancer Care London & South**

Telephone 0845 077 1895  
Email [src@breastcancercare.org.uk](mailto:src@breastcancercare.org.uk)

For all breast cancer or breast health concerns, call our free, national helpline on 0808 800 6000 (for Typetalk prefix 18001) or visit [www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk).

Breast Cancer Care relies on donations from the public to provide its services free to clients. If you would like to make a donation, please send your cheque to: Breast Cancer Care, RRKZ-ARZY-YCKG, 5-13 Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0NS. Or donate via our website at [www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk).

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This booklet has been produced by Breast Cancer Care's clinical specialists and reviewed by healthcare professionals and people affected by breast cancer. Breast Cancer Care is committed to equal opportunities and access for all.

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