

# Complementary and Alternative Therapies: Lymphoma



## OVERVIEW

After you receive a diagnosis of lymphoma or chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL), you will most likely read, hear or become interested in various complementary or alternative treatments. A quick Google search of 'lymphoma treatment' will bring up pages and pages of recommended creams, tablets and therapies promising relief of symptoms associated with treatment or even a cure. It can be very confusing to know what or who is telling the truth.

The following fact sheet will go over some of the most common complementary and alternative treatments and hopefully assist you to make safe and informed choices about your treatment and care.

## WHAT ARE COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES?

Complementary therapies are therapies or activities which can be used alongside your conventional cancer treatment. Complementary therapies are not offered as alternatives to conventional cancer treatment (chemotherapy or radiation) but may help to manage side effects and increase quality of life during and following treatment.

Some complementary therapies such as massage may be recommended during your cancer experience to relieve stress, anxiety and enhance relaxation. Other complementary therapies such as acupuncture may be suggested to help control some of the side effects from treatment or disease including nausea or fatigue.

Examples of complementary therapies:

- Massage
- Acupuncture
- Reflexology
- Meditation and mindfulness
- Thai Chi and Qi Gong
- Art therapy and music therapy
- Aromatherapy
- Counselling and psychotherapy

There is evidence that supports the effectiveness of some complementary therapies at different stages in your cancer

experience, but some therapies may interfere with your treatment or may even worsen side effects. Any decision to try complementary therapies must be made in consultation with your treating team.

## WHAT ARE ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES?

Alternative therapies are different to complementary therapies in that they completely replace conventional cancer treatment options. There is very little evidence that any alternative therapies are effective in treating cancer, some may even directly cause harm or suffering.

Examples of alternative therapies:

- Naturopathy
- Vitamin infusions
- Homeopathy
- Chinese herbal medicine
- Detoxes
- Ayurveda
- Bioelectromagnetics
- Very restrictive diets (eg. ketogenic, no sugar, vegan)

It is strongly encouraged that you be open and honest with your treating team about what treatments or therapies you are considering and the reasons behind them. Health professionals working in cancer care are very used to answering questions relating to complementary and alternative treatments, and you should never be made to feel ashamed or embarrassed about your questions. If you feel uncomfortable asking your haematologist directly, another member of your treating team should be able to help you or at least point you in the right direction for advice or support.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR:

- I have been looking into (*insert therapy/treatment here*), could you tell me what you know about it? Or refer me to someone who can give me more information?
- What are the side effects of (*insert therapy/treatment here*)?
- Will (*insert therapy here*) have any effect on my conventional cancer treatment?
- Who will deliver the therapy and what are their qualifications?

# FACT SHEET

- What are the costs involved, and can it be covered by my private health cover?
- How long should I try this therapy before I can know if it is working?
- Are there any contraindications to this therapy that I need to be aware of?

## RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

Organisation	How can they help?
Lymphoma Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lymphoma Australia offers a wide variety of resources and support for people with lymphoma or CLL and their carers. Please visit our website <a href="http://lymphoma.org.au">lymphoma.org.au</a> for further information</li> <li>• Lymphoma Australia fact sheets on a variety of subtypes, management and supportive care <a href="http://lymphoma.org.au/page/1218/fact-sheets">lymphoma.org.au/page/1218/fact-sheets</a></li> <li>• Lymphoma Australia YouTube Channel to watch presentations about a variety of topics including lymphoma subtypes, management and supportive care: <a href="http://youtube.com/user/LymphomaAustralia">youtube.com/user/LymphomaAustralia</a></li> <li>• Lymphoma Nurse Support Line: 1800 953 081 or email: <a href="mailto:nurse@lymphoma.org.au">nurse@lymphoma.org.au</a></li> <li>• Online private Facebook support group: <b>"Lymphoma Down Under"</b> a group that you can connect with other patients and carers: <a href="https://facebook.com/groups/471933462984263">facebook.com/groups/471933462984263</a></li> </ul>
The Australian Cancer Survivorship Centre (ACSC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ACSC is a unique service based at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Victoria. It provides a comprehensive collection of resources and information for cancer survivors and their carers: <a href="http://petermac.org/services/support-services/australian-cancer-survivorship-centre">petermac.org/services/support-services/australian-cancer-survivorship-centre</a></li> </ul>
Avaana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avaana is Australia's dedicated wellbeing marketplace. Created for Australians with cancer to find, connect, and book, in real-time, appointments with expert health, fitness and wellbeing practitioners who can support them on their cancer journey. Visit the website for more information: <a href="http://avaana.com.au">avaana.com.au</a></li> </ul>

Organisation	How can they help?
Cancer Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cancer Council offers a range of services to support people affected by cancer, their families and friends. Services may vary depending on where you live. Visit: <a href="http://cancer.org.au">cancer.org.au</a> or call 13 11 20</li> </ul>
CanTeen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CanTeen is an organisation working with young people affected by cancer 12-25 years. They have resources, online support chat rooms, phone and face to face counselling as well as fun events and camps: <a href="http://canteen.org.au">canteen.org.au</a> or email <a href="mailto:support@canteen.org.au">support@canteen.org.au</a> or call 1800 835 932</li> </ul>
Leukaemia Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leukaemia Foundation provide support groups, accommodation and transport assistance for people living with blood cancers and their carers: <a href="http://leukaemia.org.au">leukaemia.org.au</a></li> </ul>
Redkite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RedKite provides essential support to children, young people and their family/friends from cancer diagnosis, treatment and after treatment aged 0-25 years <a href="http://redkite.org.au">redkite.org.au</a> or email <a href="mailto:support@redkite.org.au">support@redkite.org.au</a> or call 1800 REDKITE (1800 733 548)</li> </ul>
WeCan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WeCan is an Australian supportive care website to help find the information, resources and support services they may need following a diagnosis of cancer. Visit <a href="http://wecan.org.au">wecan.org.au</a></li> </ul>

This resource was last reviewed and updated December 2019