

COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE



Complementary medicine is becoming more and more popular in Britain. Experts seem to agree that, while more research is needed, some types of complementary medicine can be really useful.

People will want to use complementary medicine for many different reasons and there are many medical conditions that they may help. Some will have tried conventional medicine but be unhappy at the side effects. Others will be unhappy with their progress with conventional medicine and feel that a different therapy may prove more beneficial. Still others will want to try complementary treatment because they have heard of good results for others. TBF is here to make life simpler for you - not to place obstacles in the way

For this reason, we do not insist on you getting your GP's agreement before we help you obtain complementary treatment - though we strongly suggest you heed any views your GP may have on its suitability for you. We also suggest you tell your GP that you are having complementary treatment - especially if you are already receiving treatment for any other condition (not necessarily the one for which you are seeking complementary medicine). We do not generally limit the types of treatment you may seek - we will help with most, as long as you follow the points in this document (especially if you are seeking hypnotherapy - in which case you must read the page on this subject). Nor do we ask why you want the treatment - we work on the assumption that you know what you want for your body and that you would not seek help if there was no reason.

We do not insist you take treatment from any particular practitioner - though we make available some facilities that avoid you having to pay first and reclaim and we insist that you make sure your practitioner is a member of a body which regulates, controls or otherwise supervises the administration of that therapy. This should not be necessary with osteopaths and chiropractors - both of whom now have to register to carry on their profession.

One final point at this stage. It would seem unlikely that complementary medicine would be able to deal effectively with the most serious medical conditions and members will almost certainly need and wish to consult their GP in relation to these. We are sorry that we cannot offer any advice as to what might be a suitable treatment for you.

Some of the treatments available are:

Osteopathy and Chiropractic

These are both forms of manipulative therapy and can be useful for injuries or damage to bones, muscles or surrounding tissues. Different techniques are involved, but both involve manipulation of the body to correct the physical stresses, misalignments and strains. Chiropractors often specialize in problems with the spine, while some osteopaths treat 'internal' problems as well as those mentioned earlier.

Acupuncture

This was invented in China a very long time ago and is still in widespread use there. It is often used to relieve pain or to give help with fighting addictions. Part of the treatment involves use of very fine needles at appropriate places on the body, but some practitioners of traditional acupuncture adopt a far more 'holistic' approach, involving exploration of the underlying causes of the medical condition.

Homeopathy

There are five homeopathic hospitals within the NHS (in London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Bristol and Tunbridge Wells) but also private practitioners in almost every town. Unlike conventional medicine, the principle underlying homeopathy is that 'like cures like': so the remedies chosen may provoke the symptoms. Remedies chosen by the practitioner are prepared from natural sources and are successively diluted and shaken.

Reflexology

As with some forms of acupuncture, reflexology should be considered an holistic therapy. It involves stimulation of specific points in the feet in order to relieve pain at another point in the body, based on the meridians or channels that are said to flow through the body. No instruments are used other than the practitioner's hands.

Chinese medicine

Involves use of natural products which have been found to help the sick in China over many years. Some of the base products may be considered unusual by many in Britain, but others will say that they are at least natural and not made synthetically in a laboratory. Some people may be allergic to some products, as is the case with conventional (Western) medicines.

Aromatherapy

An ancient treatment used in Greece and Egypt some 4,000 years ago, involving the use of pure natural oils derived from plants. As with some forms of acupuncture, aromatherapy should be considered an holistic therapy. It involves application of the oils direct to the skin (diluted by carrier oil), use in the bath or a compress or burned or vaporized. The principle is that different oils excite different emotions and that the correct ones will relieve symptoms.

Counselling and hypnotherapy

TBF is normally able to help with the cost of any of these treatments and also with the cost of counselling where this is not available from any other source. This includes help with the cost of hypnotherapy, but it is essential that you read the page about that subject before you embark on a course involving hypnotherapy.

Physiotherapy and chiropody for working members

For working beneficiaries we can also help with the cost of physiotherapy or chiropody where these are not readily available free of charge under the NHS. We are able to provide this assistance because it helps to keep working beneficiaries productive and at work. We are sorry that help with these cannot be extended to retired beneficiaries. Beneficiaries may be aware of other complementary (or 'alternative') therapies and we are always happy to consider helping with these.

And finally...

TBF makes complementary treatments available to beneficiaries because they may provide relief which is simply not available from conventional medicine. We do not, however, recommend any of them in relation to any specific medical condition. Beneficiaries use them at their own discretion and after weighing up the pros and cons. We ask them to sign a form to confirm to us that they understand we are not liable for any consequences of using complementary (or any other) medicine.