

# Integrative Medicine in Breast Cancer Care

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# Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)

- ▶ Introduction and Definitions: medical products and practices that are not part of standard medical care.
- ▶ Reasons people use CAM:
  - ▶ To help cope with the side effects of cancer treatments such as nausea, pain, and fatigue
  - ▶ To create comfort and ease the worries of cancer, its treatment, and accompanying stress
  - ▶ To give a sense of empowerment over circumstances
  - ▶ To try to treat or cure the cancer.



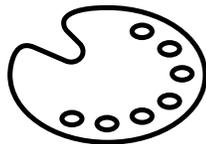
# Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)

- ▶ Conventional medicine: Medical Doctors (MDs) or Doctors of Osteopathy (DOs) treat symptoms and diseases using surgery, radiation or drugs. Also called allopathic medicine, biomedicine, Western medicine, mainstream medicine. Some conventional medicine doctors also practice CAM.
- ▶ Alternative medicine: the use of practices instead of standard medical care, usually with limited research proving efficacy.
- ▶ Integrative Medicine: combines conventional medicine with CAM practices that have been shown through science to be safe and effective. Primary focus is on the mental, physical, and spiritual aspects of health.
  - ▶ Supports healing of the whole person
  - ▶ Improves well-being, reduces side effects, and enhances quality of life



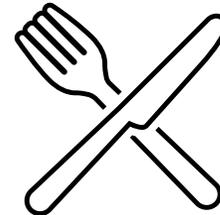
# Mind-Body Approaches

- ▶ Combine mental focus, breathing, and body movements to help relax the body and mind.
  - ▶ meditation
  - ▶ yoga
  - ▶ tai chi
  - ▶ guided imagery
  - ▶ creative outlets like creating art, music and dance
  - ▶ cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
- ▶ Strong evidence for each of these modalities to improve anxiety, depression, sleep, nausea, and fatigue



# Biologically-Based Practices

- ▶ vitamins
- ▶ dietary supplements, herbs, minerals
- ▶ botanicals such as turmeric, cinnamon, cannabis
- ▶ special foods or diets
- ▶ aromatherapy



# Special Considerations

- ▶ Fish oil has been shown to reduce fatigue, neuropathy, joint pain and mucositis associated with treatments. It may help maintain a healthy BMI and may increase hand grip strength.
- ▶ Vitamin D and calcium are part of bone health which can be impacted by treatments. Calcium should be taken cautiously as there are some contraindications.
- ▶ Vitamin C has shown mixed evidence; some reports show high dose IV Vitamin C improves QOL and reduces fatigue and neuropathy. There is a lack of consistent evidence of anti-tumor effects.
- ▶ St John's Wort often used for improving mood but may have significant drug interactions and may lower the blood levels of many chemotherapy drugs, leading to undertreatment.

# Special Considerations: Cannabis

- ▶ Cannabis may be beneficial for certain symptoms of cancer or cancer treatment such as:
  - ▶ Pain
  - ▶ Nausea and vomiting
  - ▶ Anorexia
  - ▶ Stress and anxiety
  - ▶ Sleep disturbances
- ▶ Risks of cannabis use include:
  - ▶ Feeling “high”, drowsy, confused, dizziness
  - ▶ Memory problems
  - ▶ Mood changes or paranoia
  - ▶ Legal issues
- ▶ There is insufficient evidence that cannabis stops or slows the growth of cancer cells. Cannabis should not be used as a treatment for cancer outside of a clinical trial at this time.

# Special Considerations: Ivermectin

- ▶ Some studies of ivermectin in lab animals and cell lines have shown anti-cancer effects but this has not translated into human studies.
- ▶ While social media has highlighted personal reports touting ivermectin's anticancer benefits, clinical trials in humans have not yet proven this to be true.
- ▶ May cause some toxicities and patients may forgo proven treatments. It should be considered investigational at this time.

# Assessing Safety of Supplements and Herbs

- ▶ Many breast cancer survivors use dietary supplements after diagnosis, but some supplements and herbs can have unintended effects. They may interfere with treatment due to antioxidant or estrogenic properties or interact with prescribed medications. Always review any supplement use with your oncology pharmacist or physician before beginning.
- ▶ MSKCC About Herbs Database - [mskcc.org/herbs](https://mskcc.org/herbs)

# Manipulative and Body-Based Practices

- ▶ Massage therapy
- ▶ Chiropractic therapy
- ▶ Acupuncture
- ▶ Robust evidence shows may reduce cancer-related pain, fatigue, nausea and vomiting. Even a single treatment may be beneficial, but effects build over several sessions.

# Energy Healing

- ▶ Reiki
- ▶ Therapeutic touch
- ▶ Some randomized trials have shows improvements in pain, fatigue, anxiety and overall wellbeing, although evidence is limited by various methodologies.

# What Can Movement Do for You?

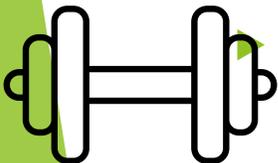


- ▶ Studies show that regular exercise:
  - ▶ Can help prevent breast cancer
  - ▶ Improves treatment tolerance
  - ▶ Enhances survivorship outcomes
- ▶ Pooled data from over 6,100 breast cancer patients presented at the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium showed that meeting physical activity guidelines before, during, or after treatment was associated with:
  - ▶ A 31 percent reduction in recurrence risk, and
  - ▶ A 48.5 percent lower mortality rate compared to inactive patients
- ▶ A 2007 British Medical Journal study showed that women in supervised group exercise programs during breast cancer therapy had improved mood, mobility, and fewer doctor visits.
- ▶ University of Michigan research demonstrated that women receiving radiation who exercised had higher oxygen capacity and red blood cell levels, improving energy and resilience.

# More Data on the Benefits of Movement



- ▶ A 2005 Harvard study showed that women exercising three to five hours weekly had a 92 percent 10-year survival after breast cancer diagnosis
  - ▶ compared to 86 percent for those exercising less than one hour weekly.
- ▶ Prevention Studies:
- ▶ In the 2008 Nurses' Health Study of 65,000 women aged 24-42:
  - ▶ those with regular moderate activity from ages 12-22 had a 23 percent lower risk of developing premenopausal breast cancer.
- ▶ The 2006 Iowa Women's Health Study followed 41,000 postmenopausal women for 17 years
  - ▶ and found a 14 percent lower incidence of breast cancer overall among regular exercisers, and
  - ▶ a 34 percent reduction in the more aggressive ER-negative and PR-negative subtype.



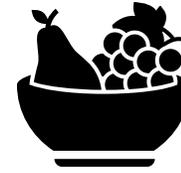
These findings reinforce the importance of maintaining metabolic and physical health for the prevention and treatment of breast cancer.

# What About Nutrition?



- ▶ Evidence supports a low-fat, plant-forward diet
  - ▶ fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- ▶ The 2006 Women's International Nutrition Study (WINS) showed that women following a low-fat diet had a 24 percent lower risk of recurrence or new primary breast cancer.
  - ▶ For those with estrogen receptor-negative disease, the reduction was 42 percent.
- ▶ The 2007 Women's Healthy Eating and Living (WHEL) study demonstrated that patients exercising 30 minutes daily and eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables had a 50 percent lower mortality rate.
- ▶ The 2005 Journal of Clinical Oncology reported that women with the highest plasma carotenoid levels had a 43 percent reduction in recurrence risk.

# What About Nutrition?



- ▶ The Pathways Study, presented at the 2024 San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium, confirmed that women with breast cancer who followed healthier dietary patterns experienced lower overall and breast cancer-specific mortality.
- ▶ A practical goal is at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily, with modest fat intake and emphasis on natural, plant-based nutrition.
- ▶ Recent data also show that women treated with GLP-1 receptor agonists for weight control had an 8 percent lower risk of obesity-related cancers and a 20 percent reduction in overall mortality.

# Keep In Mind...

- ▶ Healing also involves emotional and spiritual health.
  - ▶ Counseling
  - ▶ Peer support—[imermansangels.org](http://imermansangels.org); [thrivewell.org](http://thrivewell.org)
  - ▶ Journaling
  - ▶ Prayer
  - ▶ Gratitude practices
- ▶ Help patients find peace and purpose through treatment and beyond.



# ThriveWell and the Diva Program



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You can **THRIVE!**

[Join the DIVA program](#)

DIVA is a program solely for female cancer patients and survivors.



Central to the mission of ThriveWell Cancer Foundation is the development of **FREE community-based programs** that directly enhance the quality of life for cancer patients and survivors. Our programs are designed to improve the health and welfare of families facing the challenge of a cancer diagnosis. We offer support beyond treatment and focus on prevention and survivorship.

**Div**a provides exercise, nutrition and artful healing programs for cancer patients and survivors. This program was created to offer life-saving opportunities to increase the rate of cancer prevention and survivorship. Diva focuses on the positive aspects of life, providing the necessary tools to have a renewed journey full of hope for tomorrow while celebrating the moment and milestones together.

**Sign up to become a DIVA for FREE!**



## Exercise Classes

Our free Exercise programs are offered in various locations in San Antonio, each location offers a variety of classes.

- Tai Chi
- Aerobics
- Yoga
- Spin
- Zumba
- Strength Training
- Boundless
- Belly Dancing
- Nia
- Bootcamp
- Aqua Zumba
- Crossfit

[Learn More About This Program!](#)

## Nutrition Education

The DIVA Nutrition Program's monthly gatherings provide an opportunity for women to share, exchange information, learn, stay current, and, of course experience a connection with others.

[Learn More About This Program!](#)



## Artful Healing

Artful Healing is a program that provides a connection between the creative and healing process. Each participant is encouraged to explore their creative spirit.

[Learn More About This Program!](#)

# Resources

- ▶ Society for Integrative Oncology - [integrativeonc.org](http://integrativeonc.org)
- ▶ MSKCC About Herbs Database - [mskcc.org/herbs](http://mskcc.org/herbs)
- ▶ National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health - [nccih.nih.gov](http://nccih.nih.gov)
- ▶ American Cancer Society - Integrative Care Resources



▶ “A woman is like a tea bag – you never know how strong she is until she gets in hot water.

▶ - *Eleanor Roosevelt*

Thank you