

COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE

■ Important information for you

The University Hospitals of Geneva offer scientifically proven treatments that are effective against cancer. Other approaches, known as alternative or complementary medicine, exist and are often sought out by patients. Their effectiveness in treating cancer has not been proven, but they do contribute to alleviating certain symptoms and improving the quality of life.

What is known as 'integrative' or holistic cancer treatment takes account of the benefits that may be obtained from complementary approaches. However, some caution is to be recommended. Interactions may lessen or, to the contrary, increase the effect of your chemotherapy, putting your health at risk. For example, plant-based remedies or those containing essential oils are not harmless: they have powerful effects on your metabolism. And other products may affect how you absorb the medication into your blood.

Tell your doctor about any complements you use. Whether they are pills, drops or preparations applied to the body, he will check whether they are compatible with your state of health and will not trigger interactions with the chemotherapy or radiotherapy.



INFO

Complementary therapies

St John's wort and grapefruit trigger severe interactions with medication. Liquorice has a considerable hypertensive effect (it raises your blood pressure). Plants like soya have similar effects on your hormones and should be avoided if your cancer is hormone-dependent, that is, if its evolution is influenced by hormones.

Some advice

- ▶ Buy your complementary therapies at the pharmacy or drugstore. If you buy online the composition of the medicines is not guaranteed.
- ▶ Keep the information that comes with the packaging and show it to your doctor.
- ▶ Beware of people who offer you miracle cures. They are not always impartial and you are more vulnerable when you are living through a difficult time.
- ▶ By way of examples, here are some recognized complementary techniques:
 - Acupuncture
 - Sophrology
 - Relaxation
 - Hypnosis
 - Chinese medicine
 - Phytotherapy
 - Homeopathy
 - Aromatherapy
 - Musicotherapy
 - Tai Chi.



INFO

The leaflets entitled *Mieux vivre les traitements contre le cancer: informations et conseils pratiques* [Practical information and advice for a better experience of cancer treatment] will inform you of those complementary approaches whose benefits have been scientifically proven to date.



N. B.

Ligue Suisse contre le cancer brochure, Parallèles? Complémentaires? [Parallel or complementary?]

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