

GLOSSARY - COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

Acupuncture - The term acupuncture describes a family of procedures involving stimulation of anatomical points on the body by a variety of techniques. American practices of acupuncture incorporate medical traditions from China, Japan, Korea, and other countries. The acupuncture technique that has been most studied scientifically involves penetrating the skin with thin, solid, metallic needles that are manipulated by the hands or by electrical stimulation.

Acupuncturist - Acupuncturist is someone knowledgeable of acupuncture, who provides care or gives advice about its use, and who usually receives payment for his or her services.

Alexander technique - A practice that uses guidance and education on ways to improve posture and movement. The intent is to teach a person how to use muscles more efficiently in order to improve the overall functioning of the body. Examples of the Alexander technique as CAM are using it to treat low-back pain and the symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

Alternative Medicine – “refers to use of CAM in place of conventional medicine.”

Alternative provider or practitioner - A provider or practitioner is someone knowledgeable of a specific practice, who provides care or gives advice about its use, and who usually receives payment for his or her services.

Atkins diet - The Atkins diet emphasizes a drastic reduction in the daily intake of carbohydrates (40 grams or less), countered by an increase in protein and fat.

Ayurveda - Ayurvedic medicine is a system of medicine that originated in India several thousand years ago. In the United States, Ayurveda is considered a type of CAM and a whole medical system. As with other such systems, it is based on theories of health and illness and on ways to prevent, manage, or treat health problems. Ayurveda aims to integrate and balance the body, mind, and spirit (thus, some view it as “holistic”). This balance is believed to lead to contentment and health, and to help prevent illness. However, Ayurveda also proposes treatments for specific health problems, whether they are physical or mental. A chief aim of Ayurvedic practices is to cleanse the body of substances that can cause disease, and this is believed to help reestablish harmony and balance.

Biofeedback - B uses simple electronic devices to teach clients how to consciously regulate bodily functions, such as breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure, in order to improve overall health. Biofeedback is used to reduce stress, eliminate headaches, recondition injured muscles, control asthmatic attacks, and relieve pain.

Botanica - A Botanica is a traditional healer who supplies healing products, sometimes associated with spiritual interventions.

Breathing exercise - Breathing exercises are an active process that involved conscious control over breathing in and out. This may involve controlling the way in which air is drawn in (e.g. through the mouth or nostrils), the rate (e.g. quickly or over a specified length of time), the depth (e.g., shallow or deep), and the control of other body parts (e.g., relaxation of the stomach).

Chelation therapy - Chelation therapy is a chemical process in which a substance is used to bind molecules, such as metals or minerals, and hold them tightly so that they can be removed from a system, such as the body. In medicine, chelation has been scientifically proven to rid the body of excess or toxic metals. For example, a person who has lead poisoning may be given chelation therapy in order to bind and remove excess lead from the body before it can cause damage.

Chiropractic care - This care involves the adjustment of the spine and joints to influence the body's nervous system and natural defense mechanisms to alleviate pain and improve general health. It is primarily used to treat back problems, headaches, nerve inflammation, muscle spasms, and other injuries and traumas.

Chiropractor - Chiropractor is someone knowledgeable of chiropractic therapy, who provides care or gives advice about its use, and who usually receives payment for his or her services.

Chiropractic manipulation - Chiropractic manipulation is a form of health care that focuses on the relationship between the body's structure, primarily of the spine, and function. Doctors of chiropractic, who are also called chiropractors or chiropractic physicians, use a type of hands-on therapy called manipulation (or adjustment) as their core clinical procedure.

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) - The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine defined as a "A group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not generally considered part of [conventional medicine](#). Conventional medicine (also called Western or allopathic medicine) is medicine as practiced by holders of M.D. (medical doctor) and D.O. ([doctor of osteopathic medicine](#)) degrees and by allied health professionals, such as physical therapists, psychologists, and registered nurses. The boundaries between CAM and conventional medicine are not absolute, and specific CAM practices may, over time, become widely accepted."

Complementary medicine – "refers to use of CAM together with conventional medicine, such as using acupuncture in addition to usual care to help lessen pain."

Craniosacral therapy - A body-based practice. Practitioners use light touch and manipulation focused on the skull and spine, with the intent of sensing and removing what they refer to as blockages or imbalances that may be contributing to a health condition.

Curandero - A Curandero is a type of traditional folk healer. Originally found in Latin America, Curanderos specialize in treating illness through the use of supernatural forces, herbal remedies, and other natural medicines.

Deep breathing - Deep breathing involves slow and deep inhalation through the nose, usually to a count of 10, followed by slow and complete exhalation for a similar count. The process may be repeated 5 to 10 times, several times a day.

Energy healing therapy - Energy Healing Therapy involves the channeling of healing energy through the hands of a practitioner into the client's body to restore a normal energy balance and, therefore, health. Energy healing therapy has been used to treat a wide variety of ailments and health problems, and is often used in conjunction with other medical treatments.

Espiritista - An Espiritista is a traditional healer who assesses a patient's condition and recommends herbs or religious amulets in order to improve physical or mental health or to help overcome a personal problem.

Feldenkrais - A method of education in physical coordination and movement. Practitioners use verbal guidance and light touch to teach the method through one-on-one lessons and group classes. The intent is to help the person become more aware of how the body moves through space and to improve physical functioning.

Guided imagery - Guided imagery involves a series of relaxation techniques followed by the visualization of detailed images, usually calm and peaceful in nature. If used for treatment, the individual will visualize their body free of the specific problem or condition. Sessions are typically 20 to 30 minutes in length, and may be practiced several times a week.

Hierbero - A Hierbero or Yerbera is a practitioner with knowledge of the medicinal qualities of plants.

Homeopathy – Homeopathy is a system of medical practice based on the theory that any substance that can produce symptoms of disease or illness in a healthy person can cure those symptoms in a sick person. For example, someone suffering from insomnia may be given a homeopathic dose of coffee. Administered in diluted form, homeopathic remedies are derived from many natural sources, including plants, metals, and minerals.

Huesero - “bone setter” (in Hispanic folk healing): specializes in bone ailments, mainly lesions and fractures.

Hypnosis - Hypnosis is an altered state of consciousness characterized by increased responsiveness to suggestion. The hypnotic state is attained by first relaxing the body, then shifting attention toward a narrow range of objects or ideas as suggested by the hypnotist or hypnotherapist. The procedure is used to effect positive changes and to treat numerous health conditions including ulcers, chronic pain, respiratory ailments, stress, and headaches.

Macrobiotic diet - A macrobiotic diet is low in fat, emphasizes whole grains and vegetables, and restricts the intake of fluids. Of particular importance is the consumption of fresh, non-processed foods.

Massage - Massage therapists manipulate muscle and connective tissue to enhance function of those tissues and promote relaxation and well-being.

Meditation - Refers to a group of techniques, most of which started in Eastern religious or spiritual traditions. In meditation, a person learns to focus his attention and suspend the stream of thoughts that normally occupy the mind. This practice is believed to result in a state of greater physical relaxation, mental calmness, and psychological balance. Practicing meditation can change how a person relates to the flow of emotions and thoughts in the mind.

Mantra Meditation – In mantra meditation, the meditator focuses on a mantra (a specially chosen word, sound, or phrase repeated silently).

Mindfulness Meditation - A type of meditation based on the concept of being mindful, or having increased awareness, of the present. It uses breathing methods, guided imagery, and other practices to relax the body and mind and help reduce stress. It is also known as mindfulness relaxation and mindfulness-based stress reduction.

Native American Healer or Medicine Man - Native American Healers/Medicine Men use information from the “spirit world” in order to benefit the community. People see Native American healers for a variety of reasons, especially to find relief or a cure from illness or to find spiritual guidance.

Naturopathy - Naturopathic medicine proposes that there is a healing power in the body that establishes, maintains, and restores health. Practitioners work with the patient with a goal of supporting this power, through treatments such as nutrition and lifestyle counseling, dietary supplements, medicinal plants, exercise, homeopathy, and treatments from traditional Chinese medicine.

Nonvitamin, nonmineral, natural products - Nonvitamin, nonmineral, natural products are taken by mouth and contain a dietary ingredient intended to supplement the diet other than vitamins and minerals. Examples include herbs or herbal medicine (as single herbs or mixtures), other botanical products such as soy or flax products, and dietary substances such as enzymes and glandulars. Among the most popular are echinacea, ginkgo biloba, ginseng, feverfew, garlic, kava kava, and saw palmetto. Garlic, for example, has been used to treat fevers, sore throats, digestive ailments, hardening of the arteries, and other health problems and conditions.

Ornish diet - The Ornish diet is a high fiber, low-fat vegetarian diet that promotes weight loss and health by controlling what one eats, not by restricting the intake of calories. Fruits, beans, grains, and vegetables can be eaten at all meals, while non-fat dairy products such as skim milk, non-fat cheeses, and egg whites are to be consumed in moderation. Products such as oils, avocados, nuts and seeds, and meats of all kind are avoided.

Osteopathic manipulation - Osteopathic manipulation is a full-body system of hands-on techniques to alleviate pain, restore function, and promote health and well-being.

Pilates - Pilates is a method of physical exercise used to strengthen and build control of muscles, especially those used for posture. Awareness of breathing and precise control of movements are integral components of Pilates. Special equipment, if available, is often used.

Pritikin diet - While meat is allowed, the Pritikin diet (or Pritikin Principle) is low-fat and emphasizes the consumption of foods with a large volume of fiber and water, including many vegetables, fruits, beans, and natural, unprocessed grains.

Progressive relaxation - Progressive relaxation is used to relieve tension and stress by systematically tensing and relaxing successive muscle groups.

Qi gong (chee-kung, also chee-goong) - Qi gong is an ancient Chinese discipline combining the use of gentle physical movements, mental focus, and deep breathing directed toward specific parts of the body. Performed in repetitions, the exercises are normally performed two or more times a week for 30 minutes at a time.

Shaman - Shamans are said to act as mediums between the invisible spiritual world and the physical world. Most gain knowledge through contact with the spiritual world and use the information to perform tasks such as divination, influencing natural events, and healing the sick or injured.

Sobador - A Sobador uses massage and rub techniques in order to treat patients.

South Beach diet - South Beach diet distinguishes between “good” and “bad” carbohydrates and fats. “Good” carbohydrates are those that are digested relatively slowly, and “bad” fats include saturated and trans fats. Although the program does not require one to count calories or limit portions, dieters are encouraged to eat whole grain foods and an abundant amount of vegetables.

Spiritual meditation – Spiritual meditation may be performed according to the practices of one of the major religions, or within a spiritual tradition. The techniques used may be the same as in other types of meditation (e.g., transcendental meditation), but the focus is on spirituality (such as repeating a spiritual meditative phrase).

Tai chi - A mind-body practice that originated in China as a martial art. A person doing tai chi moves his body slowly and gently, while breathing deeply and meditating (tai chi is sometimes called "moving meditation"). Many practitioners believe that tai chi helps the flow throughout the body of a proposed vital energy called qi...A person practicing tai chi moves her body in a slow, relaxed, and graceful series of movements. One can practice on one's own or in a group. The movements make up what are called forms (or routines).

Traditional healer - A Traditional healer is someone who employs any one of a number of ancient medical practices that are based on indigenous theories, beliefs, and experiences handed down from generation to generation. The methods employed by each type of Traditional healer have evolved to reflect the different philosophical backgrounds and cultural origins of the healer.

Trager Psychophysical Integration - A therapy in which practitioners apply a series of gentle, rhythmic rocking movements to the joints. They also teach physical and mental self-care exercises to reinforce the proper movement of the body. The intent is to release physical tension and increase the body's range of motion. An example of the Trager approach as CAM is using it to treat chronic headaches.

Vegetarian diets - vegetarian diets are those totally devoid of meat, red or white. A vegan diet is a type of vegetarian diet that excludes all animal products, including eggs and dairy products.

Yerbera - A Yerbera or Hierbero is a practitioner with knowledge of the medicinal qualities of plants.

Yoga - Yoga combines breathing exercises, physical postures, and meditation to calm the nervous system and balance body, mind, and spirit. Usually performed in classes, sessions are conducted once a week or more and roughly last 45 minutes.

Zone diet - With the Zone diet, each meal consists of a small amount of low-fat protein, fats, and fiber-rich fruits and vegetables. The basic goal is to alter the body's metabolism by controlling the production of key hormones.