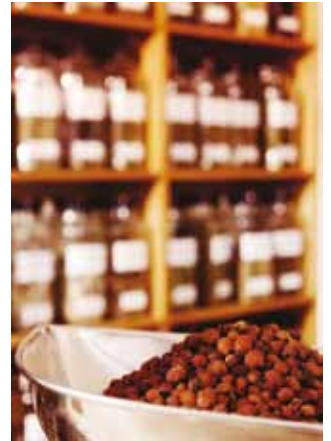


Complementary Therapies and Parkinson's Disease



About the Parkinson's Disease Society

The Parkinson's Disease Society (PDS) works with people with Parkinson's, their carers, families and friends, and health and social care professionals to provide support, information and advice. We are committed to investing in research, education and campaigning to improve the lives of people affected by the condition. The PDS has over 30,000 members, and more than 330 branches, support groups and special interest groups throughout the UK.

For more details on the friendly support, relevant information and expert advice that becoming a member can provide, including details of our membership magazine, *The Parkinson*, please call 020 7932 1344 or email membership@parkinsons.org.uk

How you can help us

We are totally dependent on voluntary donations so if you would like to make a contribution, it would be gratefully received. Any money received will help us support others affected by Parkinson's through information, care and research. To make a donation, please call 020 7932 1303, visit www.parkinsons.org.uk/donate or write to Parkinson's Disease Society, 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ. Thank you.

Parkinson's Disease Society

215 Vauxhall Bridge Road

London SW1V 1EJ

Helpline: 0808 800 0303 (The Helpline is a confidential service.

Calls are free from UK landlines and some mobile networks.)

Email: enquiries@parkinsons.org.uk

www.parkinsons.org.uk

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Foreword

During recent years, research into complementary medicine has been active, and we now know substantially more about its value than when this booklet was first published. It was therefore time to update it. Of course, a brief booklet like this one cannot provide in-depth knowledge and discussions of the very broad and diverse field of complementary medicine. For this purpose, I have recently co-written two books, one for health care professionals¹ and one for lay people².

This booklet is written specifically for people with Parkinson's disease, many of whom are tempted to try this or that complementary therapy. But which one? None of these therapies offer a cure but many promise symptomatic improvements of one sort or another. This booklet will give you a first impression of what to look out for.

Many people believe complementary therapies to be natural and thus free of risk. This is a dangerous misunderstanding. This booklet therefore informs people not only about the potential benefits of the most common treatments but also about their risks.

We live in a time where British medicine finally seems to acknowledge the importance of patient choice. But any reasonable choice crucially must depend on reliable information. Like no other medical field, complementary medicine is plagued by misinformation. If we 'google' "alternative medicine", the term commonly used on the internet, we obtain more than 50 million hits. This extraordinary flood of information is impossible to handle, all the more so as most of it is dangerously unreliable.

This booklet is a laudable attempt to cut through all of this and provide people with Parkinson's with reliable accounts of what the latest research tells us. It thus enables people to maximise the benefit and minimise the potential harm that complementary medicine may offer.

Edzard Ernst
Professor of Complementary Medicine
Peninsula Medical School, Exeter

The Parkinson's Disease Society would like to thank Professor Ernst for reviewing this publication.

¹ Ernst E, Pittler M, Wider B, Boddy K (2008) *Oxford Handbook of Complementary Medicine* Oxford University Press, Oxford

² Singh S, Ernst E (2008) *Trick or treatment? Alternative medicine on trial* Bentham, London

How to use this booklet

Benefits and drawbacks

Medical treatments for Parkinson's disease are improving all the time but, at present, scientists are still looking for a cure. Although you may hear claims, complementary therapies do not offer a cure, either. However, many people with Parkinson's find complementary therapy to be a very positive experience.

Complementary therapies have benefits and drawbacks. On the plus side, complementary practitioners claim to take a holistic look at your health, considering mind, body and spirit. People can find relief from symptoms and an increased sense of wellbeing. Some treatments can be quite relaxing and help lift your mood.

For people with Parkinson's, complementary therapies are likely to be most useful in the treatment of the whole body, including non-motor symptoms, rather than the motor or movement problems alone.

However, these therapies have not been rigorously tested in the way that medicines have. In addition, it is not always easy to find out whether your therapist is qualified.

To make the best decisions about complementary therapies, you need to have good information.

The introduction

This booklet gives you basic facts about complementary therapies. Inclusion in this guide does not mean an organisation is endorsed by the Parkinson's Disease Society (PDS).

The introduction opposite provides an overview and important safety information.

It tells you how to judge the evidence for a treatment and how to find a therapist. There is also advice about having medical and complementary therapies side by side. Carers can benefit from complementary therapies, too. Finally, there are useful contacts if you want to learn more.

A to Z of therapies

The rest of the booklet talks about some complementary therapies in more detail. Just because they are in this booklet does not mean these therapies are recommended by the PDS. They are simply some of the options most commonly offered to people with Parkinson's.

For each therapy, you will find answers to these questions: What is it? How might it help? What about safety? Where can I learn more?

References

This booklet is based on scientific evidence where it is available. The facts have been gathered from reputable sources, including research reports in medical journals. If you would like to read more, you will find a selected list of information sources at the end of this booklet.

Your experiences

Have you tried any of the complementary therapies in this booklet? If so, we'd like to hear from you so we can share your experiences with readers in future editions.

Please write to the PDS Information Resources team at the address on the inside of the front cover, or email publications@parkinsons.org.uk. Thank you.

Introduction



About complementary and alternative medicine

If you are reading this booklet, chances are you want to take more control of your own health. Maybe you have found that medical science does not have all the answers for you. Perhaps you want treatments that are gentle and natural.

In that case, you may be considering complementary therapies. To start with, let's look at some definitions:

Complementary medicine: This is the term we use in this booklet. It means therapies that can be used alongside your usual medical treatment.

Alternative medicine: This means a replacement for mainstream medicine. Both complementary and alternative medicine can have their own theories of disease and methods of diagnosis, as well as different treatments.

Integrated medicine: Some experts use the term 'integrated medicine' to emphasise that all therapies – conventional and complementary – are part of one process.

Some complementary therapies have been used for thousands of years. Others have been invented more recently. The therapies used in the UK come from cultural traditions around the world.

Safety

Just because a therapy is described as 'natural' does not automatically mean it is safe.

Some complementary therapies do have side effects, or can be harmful if provided by untrained practitioners. Sometimes they can clash with your prescribed medicines or treatment. Always check with your GP, specialist or Parkinson's Disease Nurse Specialist before you try any complementary therapy.

If you are taking anything by mouth or applying it to your skin, check that it is safe. This applies to tablets, pills, capsules, teas, creams and drops. Recently, the government issued safety warnings about contaminated 'natural' remedies. For the latest news you can visit the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency website: www.mhra.gov.uk. Better still, ask your GP, who receives official alerts.

Good hygiene is also important. Look around to see if the treatment environment seems clean. For some treatments, such as acupuncture, it is a good idea to ask about your therapist's infection control policy.

It can be confusing to know what is safe because there are so many organisations that sound official. The government regulates some complementary therapies, but not others. You will find more information in the A to Z of therapies.

Once you have found a good therapist, ask them about any risks from your treatment and what steps they take to prevent problems.

Some complementary therapies are not safe in pregnancy. Always tell your therapist if you are trying for or expecting a baby.

Your medical treatment

The PDS does not recommend stopping your usual medical treatment. Doing this is dangerous.

Before you start a complementary therapy, tell your doctor or nurse that you are considering it. That way you can discuss any benefits and risks. They may even be able to recommend a good therapist.

Bringing up the subject of complementary therapy may also alert your doctor or nurse to problems they did not know about. If they can adjust your medical treatment to improve your symptoms or quality of life, all the better.

Evidence

Your usual medicines have been tested in clinical studies. Before a medicine is available for doctors to prescribe, it must meet scientific standards to prove it is effective, safe and high quality.

There is not nearly as much evidence for complementary therapies. There are fewer studies and they do not always have the same scientific strength. Some therapies have been tested more than others. This situation is improving, though. Charities, including the PDS, and government are funding more research. Some healthcare professionals are starting to take complementary therapies more seriously, too.

If you come across a claim of scientific proof for a complementary therapy ask yourself these questions:

- Who carried out the research? Studies that come from hospitals, universities and government agencies are usually of a good standard.
- Where is the research published? Research should normally be reported in professional journals, where other experts review the study before it is released.
- How many patients did the study look at? Studies with just a few patients are not as reliable as larger ones.
- Is this a 'one off' result by one research group or has it been confirmed by other scientists?

Unfortunately, some companies and practitioners will make false claims. Be especially aware of this when you are searching the internet.

Costs

Sometimes you can get complementary therapy on the NHS. It depends on the type of therapy you want, and the local NHS policy in your area.

Some NHS hospitals or GP practices now offer a few complementary therapies, such as acupuncture, aromatherapy and massage. Osteopathy and chiropractic treatments are also sometimes available. Ask what is on offer for you locally.

There are also five NHS homeopathic hospitals, located in Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool, London and Tunbridge Wells.

Some GPs have training in complementary therapies. If they cannot provide the treatment themselves, your GP may be able to refer you to a therapist on the NHS.

Complementary therapy can be expensive.

The fees depend on the type of therapy and where you live. The first session often costs more because it takes longer. The therapist will want extra time to get to know you and hear your medical history. Practitioners usually recommend several treatment sessions. Before you commit, ask how much the whole course of treatment is going to cost. Also enquire about when to expect any improvement - and when to call it a day if you do not see the results you hoped for.

Private health insurance may pay for some types of complementary therapy. Before you book a treatment session, ask your insurer if it is covered by your policy and how payment is arranged.

Finding a therapist

Having a good therapist is essential to safe and successful treatment. However, it is not always straightforward to find someone who is qualified.

Many hospitals and GP surgeries now work together with complementary therapists. It makes sense to start by asking your GP, consultant/specialist, nurse or other healthcare professionals if they can recommend someone.

Always check your therapist's credentials. Some complementary therapists use a "Dr" title. This does not necessarily mean they have studied medicine. A reliable practitioner will not mind you asking and will be proud of their qualifications.

A few professions are regulated by the government, including osteopaths, chiropractors and arts therapists. There are official registers and you can find out about these in the A to Z of therapies.

The government is considering future plans to regulate therapists in acupuncture, herbal medicine and traditional Chinese medicine.

However, these arrangements are not likely to be in place for a while.

Most other complementary therapists are not currently controlled by law. However, complementary therapies are gradually moving towards a system of stricter self-regulation.

Many therapists choose to join professional organisations and these can be useful sources of information but other organisations make claims that are not backed up by good evidence.

A high-quality professional association requires its members to:

- complete some kind of formal qualification: A training programme or an exam
- stay up to date in their field with continuing professional development and training
- follow a code of ethics and professional conduct
- have insurance
- report side effects when they occur

You can find contact details for some larger professional organisations in the A to Z section.

Complementary therapy for carers

Carers have a high risk of mental and physical health problems. So when you are caring for someone with a long-term illness, it's important to look after yourself, too.

Complementary therapies such as massage can be relaxing. In some areas of the country the NHS, local councils and charities offer free or low-cost therapies to carers.

Ask the hospital team or your own GP what is available where you live. You can also get in touch with local organisations that support carers. The Princess Royal Trust for Carers has a network of local centres. You can find

your nearest one at www.carers.org or by phoning 0844 800 4361.

Further information

If you want to explore complementary therapies, the organisations listed here can provide more information.

NHS Direct (England and Wales)

Tel: 0845 4647

You can phone NHS Direct any time, day or night, 365 days a year. You will speak to a trained nurse who can help you find out more about a particular complementary therapy.

NHS 24 (Scotland)

You can contact the Health Information Service from 8am to 10pm, seven days a week through the NHS Helpline on 0800 22 44 88.

An adviser will tell you where to find more information about complementary therapies with some scientific evidence behind them.

You can also find information about some complementary therapies on the NHS 24 website at www.nhs24.com.

NHS Choices website

www.nhs.uk

There is a good library of online information about complementary therapies. There are also links to professional organisations, so you can learn more and find a qualified therapist.

NHS Health Information Resources

www.library.nhs.uk

This is one place to go for the latest research evidence. The site is designed for NHS health professionals but it is also freely available to the public.

Focus on Alternative and Complementary Therapies (FACT)

www.pharmpress.com/fact

This is a source of reliable information on the latest research findings.

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (USA)

www.nccam.nih.gov

This American website is a rich source of high-quality information on many different complementary therapies.

The Prince's Foundation for Integrated Health

www.fih.org.uk

Here you will find an online guide about various complementary therapies. There are also links to other websites.

The Research Council for Complementary Medicine

www.rccm.org.uk

If you are interested in the scientific evidence for complementary therapies, visit this website based at the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital (part of the NHS).

Your public library

Increasingly, health information is available on the internet. If you do not have access to the internet, you may be able to use it free of charge at your local public library. Your library may also offer training on how to use the internet. Sometimes the librarian can help you find information online.

Many public libraries now have links to the NHS and other services, so feel free to ask for local information.

If you want to read up on complementary therapies, your library probably has some good books on the topic.

A to Z of complementary therapies

Acupuncture

What is it?

Acupuncture is part of traditional Chinese medicine and has been used for thousands of years.

The theory is that a life force called Qi (pronounced 'chee') travels around the body, along lines called meridians. Acupuncture works by correcting imbalances in Qi.

Researchers are looking for medical reasons why acupuncture may work, for example by acting on the nervous system.

The acupuncturist inserts thin needles at certain points on the skin. They might also use heat, pressure, electrical currents or laser light.

How might it help?

Many research studies on acupuncture have been published. Some of these did report benefits for a wide range of conditions but the quality of the available evidence is mixed.

One of acupuncture's main uses is to control pain. It is also used for nausea, women's problems, and addictions. In Parkinson's, it may be helpful mostly for pain control. However, more studies with a better design are needed, before we can say for sure.

What about safety?

Currently, acupuncturists are not regulated by law (unless they also practise in a mainstream health profession). This situation is likely to change soon as acupuncturists will be regulated in a similar way to doctors or nurses.

Some healthcare professionals, such as doctors and physiotherapists, use acupuncture alongside regular medical treatment.

Infection is a possibility so your acupuncturist should use disposable needles. It's important for your acupuncturist to be qualified so they don't damage any inner organs. You might feel faint after a treatment and some people have bruising.

Where can I learn more?

Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists

www.aacp.uk.com

Members must be qualified physiotherapists with additional training in acupuncture. You can search online for a therapist. You will also see information about acupuncture on the website.



British Acupuncture Council (BAcC)

63 Jeddo Road
London W12 9HQ
Tel: 020 8735 0400

www.acupuncture.org.uk

To join this professional organisation, members must complete three years of training and follow the code of practice. You can find an acupuncturist by looking online or writing to the address below.

British Medical Acupuncture Society (BMAS)

BMAS House
3 Winnington Court
Northwich
Cheshire CW8 1AQ
Tel: 01606 786782

www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk

Members must be registered healthcare professionals with additional training in acupuncture. You can search online or call the number above to find an acupuncturist in your area. You can also visit the website or call the number below for more information about acupuncture.

BMAS

Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital
60 Great Ormond St
London WC1N 3HR
Tel: 020 7713 9437

Alexander technique

What is it?

Alexander technique was invented by an actor, Frederick Alexander (1869–1955). He developed the method to treat himself when he developed problems with his voice. Later, he taught the system to others.

Alexander technique trains you to think carefully about the way you use your muscles, recognising and releasing muscle tension.

The emphasis is on posture, balance and ease of movement. The alignment of the skull and spine are considered crucial.

If you try Alexander technique, your teacher will probably recommend a series of one-to-one classes. You will need to be committed to the process.

How might it help?

In general, Alexander technique promises to help people who have problems with many aspects of wellbeing, including muscular pain, the voice, confidence and stress.

There are only a few good scientific studies of Alexander technique. In one of these, it helped people suffering from back pain.

In Parkinson's, it might help with co-ordination, balance, pain, fatigue and tremor. However, more studies will be needed, with larger numbers of patients, before we can know for sure whether it really works.

What about safety?

Teachers in the Alexander technique are not regulated by law. You will need to check that your teacher has a valid qualification. The organisations listed below can help with this.

Where can I learn more?

You can find a teacher through the following organisations. You can also find information about the Alexander technique on these websites:

Alexander Technique International

www.ati-net.com

Interactive Teaching Method Association

www.alexandertechnique-itm.org

Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT)

www.stat.org.uk

Aromatherapy

What is it?

Aromatherapy uses oils made from a huge variety of flowers and plants. These 'essential oils' are usually massaged into your skin. They can also be inhaled or used in creams or in the bath.

The theory is that essential oils have chemical properties that can have all sorts of effects on both mind and body.

How might it help?

People use aromatherapy for stress, pain, insomnia and depression and many other ailments. Some people see it more as a relaxing treat.

It is one of the more commonly offered therapies in hospitals with complementary medicine programmes.

There is some research evidence that aromatherapy has a temporary calming effect. Some oils may also fight infections.

There are very few studies on aromatherapy to treat Parkinson's, so we cannot be certain about its effectiveness.

What about safety?

Currently, aromatherapists are not regulated by law. You will need to check that your therapist has a valid qualification. You should not swallow essential oils and they should be diluted before they are applied to your skin. Some people have an allergic reaction.

Check with your doctor first, especially if you are pregnant or if you have epilepsy, heart problems, high blood pressure, asthma or diabetes. Aromatherapy oils might interact with some medicines.

Where can I learn more?

Aromatherapy Council

www.aromatherapycouncil.co.uk

This organisation is a gateway to the profession. The website explains what credentials to look for and provides information about aromatherapy. You will also find links to several aromatherapy organisations.

Ayurveda

What is it?

Ayurveda is a system of traditional Indian medicine, which is thousands of years old. Practitioners claim to treat the whole person: body, mind and spirit. Ayurveda seeks to restore harmony within the individual, and in relation to the world around.

The aims are to cleanse the body, reduce symptoms, increase resistance to disease and promote mental calm. The therapist may use a combination of techniques, such as diet, purges, herbs, massage and exercise.

How might it help?

People turn to Ayurveda for a range of problems and also to promote good health.

There has been interest in some of the herbal remedies used in Ayurveda, which may have properties similar to those of Levodopa.

Larger, well-designed studies of Ayurveda are needed before we know how effective it is.

What about safety?

Because some of the therapies used could have an effect on your condition or your medication, talk to your doctor before you start treatment.

Currently, Ayurveda practitioners are not regulated by law. You will need to check that your therapist has a valid qualification.

The UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has issued warnings about dangerous or contaminated supplies of Ayurvedic medicines. Your GP will know about any recent alerts and it's best to ask them about this. You can also look online at www.mhra.gov.uk.

Where can I learn more?

Ayurvedic Practitioners Association

www.apa.uk.com

You can find a therapist online. The website also has information about Ayurveda.

Bowen technique

What is it it?

The Bowen technique was developed by an Australian, Tom Bowen. It aims to restore balance to the body through gentle manipulation of the soft tissues. The approach allows frequent pauses so you can adjust.

How might it help?

People use the Bowen technique for a range of problems. It is also popular with athletes seeking to stay in peak condition. It promises to help with mobility, pain, stress and general wellbeing.

There have been no scientific studies on Bowen therapy in Parkinson's.

What about safety?

Bowen therapists are not currently regulated by law. You will need to check that your therapist has a valid qualification.

Where can I learn more?

Bowen Therapists' European Register

www.bowentherapists.com

You can find a local therapist on the website, and information about the technique.

Bowen Therapists Federation of Australia

www.bowen.asn.au

This website from the home country of Bowen provides background information.

Chiropractic

What is it it?

Chiropractic was founded near the end of the 1800s by an American healer, Daniel David Palmer.

Chiropractors believe that the spine influences all aspects of your health. They seek to bring your bones, joints, muscles and nervous system into balance.

The main focus is on manipulation of the spine. The chiropractor may also work on joints, muscles and soft tissues. You may also get advice on health, diet, exercise and lifestyle.

A chiropractor does a physical examination and can order X-rays.

How might it help?

Most people use chiropractic to relieve pain, especially back and neck pain and headaches.

Chiropractors also seek to improve mobility and promote overall health.

There is evidence that chiropractic can help with low back pain.

There are no studies on the effects of chiropractic on people with Parkinson's.

What about safety?

Chiropractors are closely regulated - all UK chiropractors must be qualified and registered with the General Chiropractic Council.

About 50% of all patients experience mild adverse effects after chiropractic treatments.

There is also concern that some manipulation techniques could cause serious complications, such as spinal injury or stroke.

People with weak bones or fractures should not have chiropractic treatment. It is also unsuitable for people with some spinal problems, or for those taking anti-clotting or steroid medications.

Where can I learn more?

General Chiropractic Council (GCC)

Tel: 020 7713 5155

www.gcc-uk.org

The website has information about chiropractic. You can also use the website to find a chiropractor near you, or phone to see if a chiropractor is registered with the GCC.

Conductive education

What is it it?

Conductive education is a rehabilitation system that started in Hungary in the 1950s. It is sometimes known as the Petö system after its founder, András Petö. The emphasis is on education rather than therapy. Practitioners are called 'conductors'.

How might it help?

The system aims to teach adults and children with motor disorders to overcome problems associated with neurological damage.

A focus is placed on improving the symmetry of the body and posture in order to provide a stable starting point for all movements. This in turn helps to improve balance, transferring weight and fine hand movements needed for writing, buttoning, etc.

Additional tasks which relate to breathing, speech and facial expression are seen as an important part of the programme. These focus on intonation, articulation and volume, as well as clarity of speech and expression. This work can be at a preventative level, as well as dealing with any individual problems which may have arisen.

There have been some studies in children with cerebral palsy. One study of conductive education for Parkinson's was found in the evidence search for this booklet. It was carried out by a UK research team and found some benefits.

What about safety?

Conductive education teachers are not currently regulated by law. You will need to check that your conductor has a valid qualification.

Where can I learn more?

The Foundation for Conductive Education

www.conductive-education.org.uk

This group is a registered charity that provides services and promotes research. You can also read about conductive education on the website.

Feldenkrais method

What is it?

This is an educational method that aims to increase awareness of movement. You can have lessons on your own or in a group.

It was developed by Moshe Feldenkrais, an engineer, physicist and judo teacher.

How might it help?

People use this method to find relief from tension and pain, to improve breathing and performance in sport and the arts, and for general wellbeing.

There have been no studies of the Feldenkrais method in Parkinson's.

What about safety?

Currently, Feldenkrais practitioners are not regulated by law. You will need to check that your teacher has a valid qualification.

Where can I learn more?

The Feldenkrais Guild UK

www.feldenkrais.co.uk

On this website, you can find a practitioner or teacher, plus information about the method.

Herbal medicine

What is it?

Herbal medicines can be quite powerful. Many of today's common drugs come from plants or are based on chemicals found in them.

A herbalist will build up a complete picture of your health, lifestyle and medical treatments. They then usually prescribe complex herbal mixtures to be taken as drops, capsules or tea.



The herbalist may also recommend diet, exercise and lifestyle measures.

How might it help?

Herbs are used for a wide variety of conditions. There is some evidence that certain herbs can help with depression, digestive problems, dementia and memory problems, and some skin conditions. However there is no good evidence that the complex mixtures prescribed by traditional herbalists are effective.

Small trials have been carried out with plants commonly used in Ayurvedic medicine to relieve Parkinson's symptoms (see the section on Ayurveda on page 13).

There have also been some studies of Chinese herbal remedies for Parkinson's but the findings have not been consistent.

What about safety?

Talk to your doctor before you take any herbal medicines. Some of these can have serious side effects or interfere with your usual medication.

Some herbal medicines should not be taken in pregnancy so, again, check with your doctor.

It's important to make sure your herbal medicine comes from a reliable source. The UK Medicines and Healthcare products

Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has repeatedly found supplies of contaminated herbs. Your GP will know about any recent alerts and it's best to ask them about this. You can also look online at www.mhra.gov.uk Currently, herbalists are not regulated by law. This situation is likely to change and the government is looking at different options for tighter controls.

You will need to check that your herbalist has a valid qualification.

Where can I learn more?

You can find a herbalist through the organisations below. Members must have training, follow a code of practice and have insurance. You can also find information about herbal medicine on these websites:

Association of Master Herbalists

www.associationofmasterherbalists.co.uk

International Register of Consultant Herbalists and Homeopaths

www.irch.org

National Institute of Medical Herbalists

www.nimh.org.uk

Register of Chinese Herbal Medicine

www.rchm.co.uk

Unified Register of Herbal Practitioners

www.urhp.com

Homeopathy

What is it?

Homeopathy is a system developed over 200 years ago by Samuel Hahnemann, a German physician.

It works on the principle that ailments can be cured by giving a person extremely diluted doses of a remedy that matches the symptoms they have.

Homeopaths believe that this stimulates the body's own healing power so that it clears itself of any imbalance. The remedies come from various sources: plant, animal and mineral.

Homeopaths will take a careful history. They will prescribe a homeopathic remedy, usually taken as a pill. They may also recommend lifestyle and dietary changes.

How might it help?

Homeopathy is used to treat a wide range of conditions and is a hot topic for scientific debate. There have been many studies of homeopathy but, overall, the evidence for it remains unconvincing. There have been no recent studies on homeopathy for Parkinson's.

What about safety?

Homeopaths are not currently regulated by law. Some health professionals are trained in homeopathy and use it alongside medical treatment.

You will need to check that your homeopath has a valid qualification.



Where can I learn more?

British Homeopathic Association

Tel: 0870 444 3950

www.britishhomeopathic.org

On this website you will find information about homeopathy, and reports on the evidence. Call the number above to request a directory of qualified members by post.

Members must have training, follow a code of practice and have insurance. You can also find information about homeopathy on these websites:

Alliance of Registered Homeopaths

www.a-r-h.org

Homeopathic Medical Association

www.the-hma.org

International Register of Consultant Herbalists and Homeopaths

www.irch.org

Scottish Association of Professional Homoeopaths

www.saph.org.uk

Society of Homeopaths

www.homeopathy-soh.org

Kinesiology

What is it?

Kinesiology was developed by an American chiropractor, George Goodheart. Kinesiology literally means 'the study of body movement'. It is an approach to balancing the movement and interaction of a person's energy systems.

The therapist applies pressure to different parts of the body to identify trouble spots. This is sometimes known as 'muscle-testing'. They also often use a variety of other complementary therapies.

How might it help?

People use kinesiology to diagnose and treat all sorts of health problems.

There are numerous studies but collectively they fail to demonstrate that kinesiology is effective.

What about safety?

Because kinesiology may involve changing your diet, it is a good idea to talk to your doctor first. Kinesiologists are not currently regulated by law. You will need to check that your therapist has a valid qualification.

Where can I learn more?

Kinesiology Federation

www.kinesiologyfederation.org

Members must meet training requirements. You can search online for a practitioner near you.

Magnet therapy

What is it?

The use of magnets for health stretches back over centuries. Magnets generate a type of energy (magnetic fields). There are many theories about how these fields might affect the human body.

Magnets to promote health are commonly sold as shoe insoles, jewellery and mattresses.

How might it help?

Magnet therapy is used to treat various problems, especially pain. It is sometimes used to help heal bone fractures. There have been several studies of magnets for pain but, overall, the research so far does not show that they work.

What about safety?

Currently, magnet therapy is not regulated by law. There are no credible qualifications in magnet therapy.

Some healthcare professionals, such as physiotherapists, may use magnets as part of a medical treatment programme. Magnets are not suitable if you have a pacemaker.

Where can I learn more?

No professional organisations specifically for magnet therapy were found in the research for this booklet.

You can read some of the articles listed in the References section at the end of this booklet.

Massage therapy

What is it it?

People have used massage since ancient times. There are many different types of massage, from traditions around the world.

Usually, a therapist will ask you to lie on a massage table. Techniques include rubbing, stroking, kneading or pressing.

How might it help?

Many people use massage just to relax. Athletes also rely on massage to stay in shape.



Massage is often used to ease pain. There is a theory that it could help with depression and constipation but more evidence is needed.

Small studies in Parkinson's suggested an improvement in motor symptoms. Again, larger studies are needed before we can say for sure.

What about safety?

Massage is not suitable if you have certain problems. Some of these include varicose veins, a history of blood clots or bleeding disorders, or weak or broken bones.

People with cancer should only receive treatment from a specially trained massage therapist, with the approval of their doctor. If you have wounds or bruises you should wait until these are healed.

Massage therapists are not currently regulated by law. You will need to check that your therapist has a valid qualification.

Where can I learn more?

General Council for Massage Therapies

www.gcmt.org.uk

This organisation is a gateway to the profession. You can search online for a nearby therapist. You will also find website links to several other professional organisations for massage therapy.

Meditation

What is it it?

People have used meditation for thousands of years in cultures around the world. It is often associated with religion and spirituality. In modern times, more people have started using meditation simply for health reasons.

There are many forms of meditation but they all aim to create a sense of calm. During meditation, the mind is in a state of restful alertness while the body becomes more relaxed. You can do it in a group or alone.

A related technique is guided imagery or visualisation (forming pictures in your mind). This is sometimes combined with muscle relaxation. Tai chi and yoga are two kinds of exercise that also have elements of meditation. Please see the entries in this A to Z.

How might it help?

People use meditation to relieve pain, stress, depression and insomnia, and to achieve a general sense of wellbeing.

Studies of meditation have often not been well designed. However, there is some evidence that meditation or related techniques can help with pain and anxiety. Meditation may also create a sense of wellbeing in people with chronic illnesses.

Some studies included people with Parkinson's, as well as other neurological problems.

What about safety?

People with mental health problems should take professional advice before starting meditation. Currently, meditation teachers are not regulated. You will need to check that your teacher has a valid qualification.

Where can I learn more?

There are many different people offering meditation classes. It is not possible to list them all here, or suggest which type would be best for you.

In hospitals or community centres that provide complementary therapies, relaxation and meditation are frequently offered. Ask your GP or hospital team if they know where you could take a class. Your local council or library may also be able to tell you about nearby classes.

Music therapy

What is it?

Music can be used by trained professionals as a treatment for certain physical and mental illnesses. One aim can be to improve mobility and speech. Music therapy is also supposed to help you relax and express yourself. You don't need musical ability or training to have music therapy.

How might it help?

Some people with Parkinson's find that listening to strong rhythmic music can improve their walking, prevent hesitations and overcome freezing episodes.

There are several small studies of music therapy in Parkinson's. Some of these studies had promising results. In general, research indicates that music seems to help people with serious illnesses to relax.

What about safety?

Music therapists are regulated by the government's Health Professions Council (HPC) and they must be registered to practise. A high level of education and supervision is required.

You can check a music therapist's registration on the HPC website: www.hpc-uk.org

Where can I learn more?

Some hospitals and NHS services have music therapy so, to start with, ask your GP clinic team.

Association of Professional Music Therapists

Tel/fax: 020 7837 6100

www.apmt.org

You can read about music therapy on the website, and locate a therapist by phoning the Association.

Osteopathy

What is it?

Osteopathy was founded in the late 1800s by an American, Andrew Taylor Still.

Osteopaths detect and treat damaged ligaments, nerves and joints. They believe that a balanced body suffers less wear and tear, and leaves you more energetic.

Osteopaths use questions, observation and touch to identify problems. They treat you by mobilising and manipulating the body. An osteopath may also recommend exercises and lifestyle measures.

How might it help?

People turn to osteopathy for help with pain, sports injuries, posture and mobility problems. Osteopaths also offer to treat other conditions, such as insomnia and digestive problems.

There is some evidence that osteopathy can help back pain. One small study showed improvement in gait for people with Parkinson's.

What about safety?

It is very important to check that your osteopath is qualified. An untrained person could injure you.

All UK osteopaths must be qualified and registered with the General Osteopathic Council.

There is concern that some manipulation techniques could rarely cause serious complications such as spinal injury or a stroke.

Some osteopathic manipulations are not suitable for people with bone problems, bleeding disorders or other conditions. Let your osteopath know about any health problems and medications. After a treatment, you may feel some mild side effects, such as stiffness, discomfort or tiredness.

Where can I learn more?

Some GPs work alongside an osteopath or can refer you on the NHS, so ask what is available in your area.

General Osteopathic Council

Tel: 020 7357 6655

www.osteopathy.org.uk

The website provides basic information about osteopathy. You can also check an osteopath's registration online or by phone.

Reflexology

What is it?

Reflexology was developed in the 1930s in the USA. It is based on the idea that areas on the feet – and sometimes the hand – match up to other parts of the body. One way of thinking about reflexology is to see the feet as a miniature map of the entire body.



A reflexologist uses their hands to apply pressure to the feet, concentrating on the zones that are relevant to your health problem.

How might it help?

Reflexology is thought to promote relaxation, improve circulation, stimulate vital organs and encourage the body's natural healing abilities.

Unfortunately there is no good evidence that reflexology works for any medical condition.

What about safety?

Reflexologists are not currently regulated by law. You will need to check that your therapist has a valid qualification.

Reflexology may not be suitable if you have diabetes, foot problems, epilepsy, thyroid problems, a blood disorder or depression. People with cancer should see a specially trained reflexologist.

Some people experience a reaction to the first treatment, such as increased bowel movements, cold-like symptoms or skin problems. During treatment, some areas of the foot may feel tender.

Where can I learn more?

Reflexology Forum

www.reflexologyforum.org/index.htm

This organisation is a gateway to the profession. You will find information about reflexology on the website.

You will also find website links to several professional associations, which can help you locate a therapist.

Reiki

What is it?

Reiki was developed in Japan, early in the 20th century, by Dr Mikao Usui. In Japanese, 'reiki' means universal life energy.

Reiki aims to promote healing by bringing you into harmony and balance. The therapist claims to act as a channel for healing energy. If you have reiki, the therapist will gently lay their hands over or on different parts of your body.

How might it help?

Reiki practitioners claim to bring comfort and to support healing for a range of conditions. It does not promise a cure and therapists are not trained to make a diagnosis.

Scientists recently looked at results from hundreds of studies on reiki. They concluded that the evidence is still unconvincing.

There are no studies on reiki and Parkinson's.

What about safety?

Reiki therapists are not currently regulated by law. You will need to check that your therapist has a valid qualification.

Where can I learn more?

Reiki Council

www.reikiregulation.org.uk

This organisation is a gateway to the profession. Here you will find website links to several professional associations, which provide more information about reiki. These groups can also help you locate a therapist.

Shiatsu

What is it?

Shiatsu is a Japanese system based on the flow of vital energy (Chi). The theory is that Chi travels through the body along lines called meridians. In illness, therapists believe these channels are blocked. A shiatsu therapist presses your body at certain points with their hands, to restore the energy flow.

How might it help?

People use shiatsu to help with a range of conditions, including digestive troubles and depression. It is especially popular for the treatment of pain and muscle stiffness.

However, there is no good evidence that shiatsu is effective for any medical condition, including Parkinson's.

What about safety?

Shiatsu should be avoided if you have weak bones or certain blood conditions. Care is required in early pregnancy.

Shiatsu therapists are not currently regulated by law. You will need to check that your therapist has a valid qualification.

Where can I learn more?

You can find out more about shiatsu, and locate a therapist, on these websites:

Shiatsu Society

www.shiatusociety.org

Zen Shiatsu Society

www.zen-shiatsu-society.co.uk

Tai chi

What is it?

Tai chi (pronounced 'tie chee') is an ancient practice that started in China as a martial art. You can do it as a combination of exercise and meditation.

When you do tai chi, you move your body slowly and gently. Concentration on breathing is important.

It is claimed that tai chi helps a vital energy called qi (pronounced 'chee') flow freely through the body, thus promoting health.

How might it help?

Tai chi is meant to improve the functioning of internal organs, including the lungs and digestive system. People say it brings them a sense of calm and helps them sleep.

It also aims to improve balance, muscle strength, flexibility and co-ordination.

When scientists looked at several studies of tai chi, they found many of them were not well designed. However, there is some evidence that tai chi might improve balance, flexibility and heart fitness in older people. It may also have psychological benefits. Other scientists who looked at studies of tai chi for various health conditions found less evidence of health benefits.

A recent scientific review of numerous studies on tai chi for Parkinson's found mixed results. Larger and more rigorous studies are needed.

What about safety?

Tai chi may not be safe for you if you have weak bones or joints, or a hernia. You also have to be careful if you are pregnant.

Your instructor may advise a temporary break if you have any sort of infection.

Tai chi instructors are not currently regulated by law. You will need to check that your teacher has a valid qualification.

Where can I learn more?

Tai chi classes may be offered at your local leisure or community centre so it is worth checking what's available.

Tai Chi Union for Great Britain

www.taichiunion.com

You can learn more about tai chi on this website, and find an instructor.

Yoga therapy

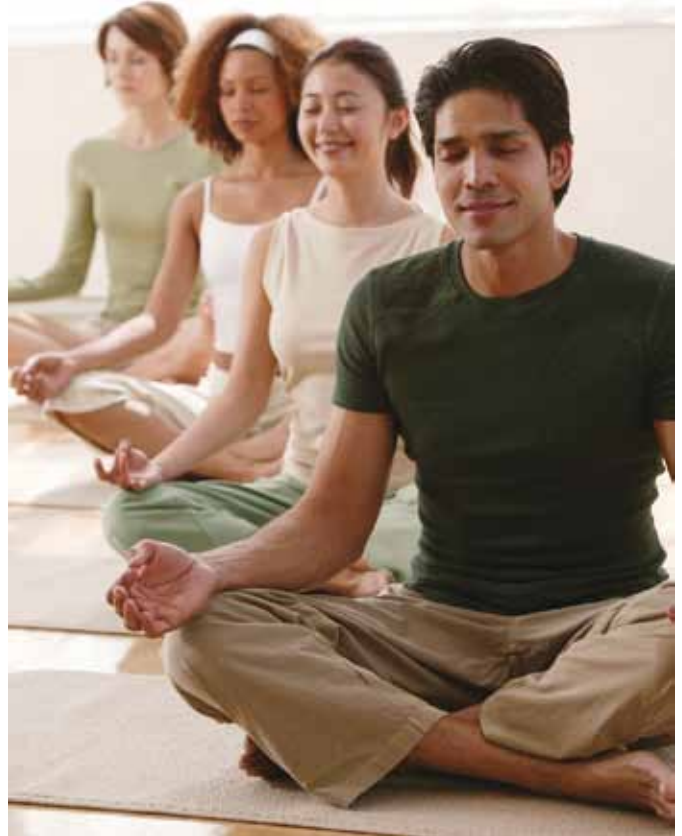
What is it?

Yoga is an ancient form of meditation, diet, life-style, breathing and exercise. In recent years, it has become very popular in Britain. There are different styles of yoga and some are gentler than others.

When you do yoga, you place your body into certain positions. Concentration on breathing is important. You can study yoga one-to-one or in a class.

How might it help?

People use yoga to stay fit and well, and to encourage a feeling of calm.



There have been several studies of yoga for a variety of conditions. However, the studies have often been small or poorly designed, so it's difficult to know how well it works.

There is some evidence that yoga could help with anxiety and stress, diabetes and heart health.

There are no large studies on yoga for Parkinson's.

What about safety?

You can hurt yourself if you don't do the yoga exercises properly. Make sure you learn them from an instructor before you try yoga exercises at home.

Some yoga exercises are not suitable if you are pregnant, so extra care is needed. Yoga instructors are not currently regulated by law. You will need to check that your teacher has a valid qualification.

Where can I learn more?

Yoga is one of the complementary therapies more commonly offered on the NHS, so ask your GP or clinic team what is available.

You will probably find classes at local leisure and community centres, although these may not be tailored for people with health problems.

British Council for Yoga Therapy

www.britishcouncilforyogatherapy.org.uk

This organisation is a gateway to the profession. Here you will find website links to several professional associations, which provide more information about yoga. These groups can also help you locate a yoga teacher or therapist.

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Information Resources, Parkinson's Disease Society
215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ

Thank you for your help.

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Are you: (please circle/highlight)

- Someone with Parkinson's: I have had Parkinson's for.....years
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How useful did you find this publication?

- Very useful
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Which section did you find most helpful?

.....

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What action did you take as a result of reading this booklet?

- I sought further assistance from my healthcare professional
- I contacted the PDS Helpline for more information
- I contacted a drug company for more information
- I acted on the information provided (please write details below)

.....

- I didn't take any action



Was the amount of detail given in this guide appropriate?

- Yes, about right No, more detail needed No, less detail needed

What else do you need information about?

.....
.....

Do you have any other comments?

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If you would like to help us further develop our resources please complete the following.

This section is optional.

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Parkinson's
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March 2009 Code B102