

## COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES

### THE FACTS

- Many people use complementary therapies to **support medical treatment**.
- Complementary therapies **are not a replacement for adequate medical treatment**.
- Many substances or therapies labelled 'complementary', 'alternative' or 'natural' are **not required to undergo the same safety testing** as prescribed medications.
- Complementary therapies have **varying degrees of effectiveness**. Consult with your doctor before using them, especially about how they with prescribed medications.

### PHYSICAL THERAPIES

Being physically active has many physical, mental and emotional benefits.

- **Exercise** is shown by research to have a definite effect in reducing the symptoms of depression and anxiety disorders. You don't have to join a gym – it's enough to get brisk exercise at least three times a week, for a minimum of 30 minutes. This could include running, walking fast, or cycling, for example. Consult your doctor before starting, if you have not exercised for a while.
- **Yoga** can reduce stress and worry, and this in turn can have a beneficial effect on symptoms of depression. Yoga does not suit everyone, but can be helpful for some people, such as those with anxiety disorders.
- **Massage** can relax people in a similar way to yoga, and lead to reduced symptoms of depression. It should be performed by a trained professional, and only if you are comfortable with a stranger touching your body.

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### NUTRITIONAL AND HERBAL THERAPIES

Eating fresh, healthy food is important for our mental as well as physical health. Evidence is poor, however, that consuming herbs or other substances makes a significant difference to the symptoms of mental illnesses.

- **Omega 3 oils** (found in some nuts and fish) are important for our general health and

maintaining good brain function. There is no evidence that they reduce the symptoms of depression, but it is speculated they may possibly be helpful in reducing the risk of developing psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia.

- **St John's Wort** can be effective in reducing symptoms for people with mild to moderate depression. However, it should not be taken at the same time as antidepressant medication prescribed by a doctor. St John's Wort can interact with other medications to cause a range of problems – increasing the effects of some, while decreasing the effects of others.
- **SAMe** may be helpful for some people with mild to moderate depression. People with bipolar disorder should not take SAMe, however, as it may induce a manic episode. It should not be taken at the same time as a prescribed antidepressant, because of the danger of interactions.
- **Ginkgo biloba and ginseng** have no effect on symptoms of depression. There is no evidence to support its use for this purpose.

#### OTHER THERAPIES

- **Light therapy** can be helpful for some people affected by Seasonal Affective Disorder. Discuss this with your doctor.
- **Homeopathy** has no effect on the symptoms of mental illness. There is no evidence to support its use for this purpose.
- **Meditation** can be helpful in reducing stress for some people. It is not recommended for people severely affected by Depression or those at risk of experiencing psychotic symptoms.

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