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5 TIPS FOR FINDING AN ALTERNATIVE PROVIDER

You've been going to the same M.D. for more than a decade. Lately you've decided to seek more help in treating a medical problem. But alternative medicine is a whole new world for you. How does someone find a trustworthy provider among so many options?

You're not alone in seeking alternative care options. The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) reports that nearly 40 percent of American adults use some form of alternative medicine. The collective out-of-pocket price tag tops \$33 billion per year.

This month's newsletter looks at ways to help you find a reliable provider of alternative medicine. We've also included a glossary of terms to help you navigate this growing world of health care professionals.

CREATE A LIST OF ALTERNATIVE PRACTITIONERS IN YOUR AREA. A Google search is a good place to start. Crosscheck your list with recommendations from your regular health care provider. Your health insurance provider might be helpful too.

FIND OUT AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ABOUT POTENTIAL PROVIDERS. Seek out information on their training, licensing and certifications. The credentials required for alternative health providers vary from state to state. Verify that the potential provider has experience in working with patients who share your condition. Don't hesitate to call the provider's office for answers to your questions.

CO-OPERATION IS KEY. Once you narrow down your list, make sure the alternative provider and your regular doctor are willing to work together. Patients and their providers need to establish open communication to ensure safe, coordinated care.

CALL YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANY and ask if they will cover the alternative provider's services. Chiropractic, massage therapy and acupuncture are the three most-covered therapies. Even when your treatment is covered, you may have to pay part of the cost. The number of covered treatments may be limited.

BE SURE TO ASK HOW MUCH THE VISITS WILL COST. Find out how many appointments are typical for someone with your condition. Don't forget to ask if there are added costs for tests and supplements.

Preparing for a first appointment with an alternative provider is no different than preparing to see an M.D. Try to give your new provider a full picture of everything you do to manage your health. Be sure to:

- Make a list of therapies you use or have used in the past for your condition.
- Be honest about your diet, exercise, alcohol and smoking patterns.
- Bring a list of all the drugs (prescription or over-the-counter) and supplements you take.

Evaluate your experience after your first visit and decide if the alternative therapy is right for you.

QUICKTAKES



Alternative medicine includes medical treatments that are not part of traditional Western medicine. These therapies can be used to help prevent or treat many health issues. Alternative treatments have become much more accepted by patients and mainstream health care providers.

- Alternative medicine can be used alone or along with standard care.
- Popular therapies include acupuncture, massage, and Ayurvedic and traditional Chinese medicine.
- Thoughts, feelings and beliefs may have a positive or negative effect on the body. This connection between thoughts and physical health is called the "mind-body connection."
- Alternative treatments should not be used in place of conventional treatment without talking to your health care provider.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

COMMON TERMS IN COMPLEMENTARY, ALTERNATIVE AND INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE — If a non-mainstream practice is used in place of conventional medicine, it's considered "alternative."

AYURVEDIC MEDICINE — Ayurvedic medicine (also called Ayurveda) is one of the world's oldest medical systems. It originated in India. It promotes the use of herbal compounds, special diets and other unique health practices.

CAM — Complementary medicine and alternative medicine therapies are often grouped under the acronym "CAM."

COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE — When a non-mainstream practice is used together with conventional medicine, it's considered "complementary" medicine.

HOLISTIC MEDICINE — The word "holistic" is based on the Greek root "holos," which means "whole." Holistic medicine looks at the whole person, including mental, spiritual, physical and environmental factors. Rather than focusing on a single symptom, holistic practitioners look at all aspects of the person's life and try to help them achieve a healthy balance.

HOMEOPATHY — Homeopathy, also known as homeopathic medicine, is an alternative medical system developed in Germany more than 200 years ago. Homeopathic remedies are derived from substances that come from plants, minerals or animals. Many homeopathic remedies are so diluted that no molecules of the original substance remain.

INTEGRATIVE HEALTHCARE — There are many definitions of "integrative" health care. They all involve bringing conventional and complementary approaches together in a coordinated way.

NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE — Prevention, self-healing and overall well-being are key to naturopathic medicine. A naturopathic doctor (ND) studies the same basic sciences as an MD, but also learns holistic approaches. NDs are licensed in about one-third of the states. Check naturopathic.org to learn if your state is one of them.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE — Traditional Chinese medicine is rooted in Taoism and dates back more than 2,500 years. TCM practitioners use herbs, acupuncture and other methods to treat a wide range of conditions.

Resources: For information about specific alternative therapies, explore the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health's extensive website at nccih.nih.gov.

FATTOUSH MAKES 6 SERVINGS

Make this traditional Lebanese bread salad in late summer when tomatoes are at their sweetest and juiciest. Feel free to turn this side salad into a refreshing main dish by adding flaked tuna or crumbled feta cheese.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 whole-wheat pita breads
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Ground sumac or sweet paprika, for sprinkling
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, preferably lemon thyme, or fresh oregano leaves
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 medium head romaine, sliced
- 3 vine-ripened tomatoes, sliced into thin wedges
- 1 cucumber, peeled, seeded and sliced
- 1/2 red onion, very thinly sliced
- 1 big handful fresh mint leaves, sliced

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°F. Stack pitas and cut into thin wedges. Spread 1 tablespoon oil in a baking pan. Add the pita wedges, sprinkle with ground sumac or paprika. Shake the pan to distribute the oil. Bake for 10-12 minutes, until the wedges are lightly toasted.

In a wide, shallow salad bowl, whisk together lemon juice, thyme or oregano, salt, black pepper and the remaining 1 tablespoon oil. Add sliced lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, onion and mint. Toss to coat with the dressing and let sit for 10-15 minutes. Add the toasted pita wedges, toss again and serve.



NUTRITIONAL INFO PER SERVING

171 Calories
 7g Fat
 2g Saturated fat
 0g Trans fat
 5g Protein
 24g Carbohydrate
 5g Fiber
 265mg Sodium
 61mg Calcium

Source:
 Healthy Living Kitchens