



Complementary therapies

Complementary therapies can be gentle, pleasant, relaxing or stimulating; each therapy has different aims and methods. They range from acupuncture, a traditional Chinese medicine using fine needles to free energy channels, through to yoga, a combination of meditation and breathing exercises.



scope

About cerebral palsy.
For disabled people achieving equality.

Always use a qualified therapist and remember to tell them how your impairment specifically affects you and about any special needs you may have. Costs will vary according to the length of treatment and your local area. Your first appointment will be more expensive and will last longer as the therapist will need to take details of your medical history. Many doctors will prescribe alternative therapies on the NHS; it is always advisable to ask them before you begin.

Acupuncture

Probably the most well-known of the traditional Chinese medicines, acupuncture involves the insertion of extremely fine needles into the skin at specific points to free energy channels and balance the body to stimulate healing. Check beforehand that the therapist uses new needles for every client; if not you should look for another therapist. It is commonly assumed that acupuncture hurts but most people report little or no discomfort.

Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of acupuncture, and it is often incorporated with traditional medicines and treatments. Some people have found it improves muscle tone or aids pain relief.

Aromatherapy

This involves the use of essential oils distilled from plants. The oils are used in the treatment of many conditions and can be used through massage, burning or in the bath. It is extremely important to consult a qualified aromatherapist, as each oil has different properties and only a qualified person will understand how they should be mixed. Many oils cannot be used with a number of conditions, for children, during pregnancy or for people with sensitivity to sunlight or high blood pressure and taking certain medications. It is important you take a list of any medication or supplements you take to your first appointment.

Herbal medicine

Herbal medicine is the use of herbs in tablet or liquid form to treat illness or disease. With some remedies you may be given a selection of herbs to boil at home and drink the liquid. Again, always go to a qualified practitioner and take a list of any medication you are on. It is important to tell your doctor if you begin a course of herbal medicine as it may affect future prescriptions.

Homeopathy

This is the use of substances (often of a plant origin) in minute doses administered in pill form. Homeopathy is becoming increasingly popular and many people find it very effective. Research studies have also indicated its effectiveness although there is still little understanding of how it works. Again, always go to a qualified practitioner and take a list of any medication you are on. It is important to tell your doctor if you begin a course of herbal medicine as it may affect future prescriptions.

Massage

Many disabled people find massage beneficial for easing muscle pain and relaxation. If you want to explore massage therapy, again ensure you find a qualified therapist, and then discuss your needs with them. If your muscles are very tight due to spasticity, massaging over these areas may be painful but the therapist may be able to massage other areas of the body.

Osteopathy and chiropractic

Practitioners relieve pain and stiffness and improve mobility through massaging muscles, soft tissues and manipulating joints in a specific way. It differs from massage in that these disciplines work on the skeletal areas of the body and the treatments can be more physical as the practitioner will be moving and manipulating the body and joints. Cranial osteopathy involves locating and treating trauma to the body through gently handling the bones of the skull.

Reflexology

This is a specific type of massage to the feet based on the theory that the body channels energy (chi) around the body and that each organ and part of the body is linked to a certain point in the feet. Blockages in these pathways can lead to illness and dysfunction. Through massage of the foot, the therapist can identify blockages and problems in certain areas and will try to promote healing and the free flow of energy.

Most people find the treatment relaxing and if you have cerebral palsy you may see an improvement in muscle tone. Unfortunately these effects do not seem to be long-lasting, especially in adults.

Shiatsu

This is a form of massage using acupressure. As with acupuncture and reflexology, the energy points are worked on but in this case via massage not needles. The shiatsu practitioner will generally cover the whole body though a particular area may be given special attention. Generally you will not need to undress for shiatsu massage.

Yoga

Yoga combines meditation and breathing exercises with exercises and posture to improve the function of the body. There are different types of yoga, and it is best to speak to practitioners to define which type is best for you. Once you have learnt a few exercises, it is easily practised at home and is very relaxing. You need to tell your practitioner how your impairment affects your movement and if you have epilepsy or other medical conditions.



Further information and support

British Acupuncture Council

www.acupuncture.org.uk

Email: info@acupuncture.org.uk

Tel: 020 8735 0400

National register of practitioners costs £4.50.

Local list free.

International Federation of Aromatherapists

www.ifaroma.org

Tel: 020 8742 2605

The IFA keeps a register of qualified British aromatherapists.

British Chiropractic Association

www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk

Email: enquiries@chiropractic-uk.co.uk

Tel: 0118 950 5950

Professional association. Register of members costs £8.50.

Institute for Complementary Medicine

www.i-c-m.org.uk

The ICM can supply names of reliable practitioners of various kinds of complementary medicine, such as homeopathy, relaxation techniques and osteopathy to those who write enclosing a sae or visit the website.

British Homeopathic Association

Email: info@trusthomeopathy.org

Tel: 020 7566 7800 – 9am – 5pm

Monday-Friday

Medical Advisory Service

Tel: 020 8994 9874 – 6pm – 10pm

Monday-Friday and Sunday

This telephone service run by nurses offers information on medical and health care matters. It puts people in touch with the right organisation.

National Institute of Medical Herbalists

www.nimh.org.uk

Email: nimh@ukexeter.freeserve.co.uk

Tel: 01392 426022

A list of qualified practitioners sent on receipt of sae

General Council and Register of Osteopaths

www.osteopathy.org.uk

Email: info@osteopathy.org.uk

Tel: 020 7357 6655

List of registered osteopaths. They give advice to the public.

Association of Reflexologists

www.aor.org.uk

Email: info@aor.org.uk

Tel: 0870 567 3320

The Association can provide information on qualified practitioners to those who send a C5 sae or visit the website.

Yoga Biomedical Trust

www.yogatherapy.org

Yoga for Health Foundation

www.yogaforhealthfoundation.co.uk

Tel: 01767 627271

The YHF specialises in teaching yoga to disabled people.

Please note that any mention of a product or weblink does not constitute a recommendation by Scope.

As with any therapy or treatment, Scope would advise people to consult their GP, consultant or health professional before starting or paying for any treatment.

Due to the individual nature of all impairments, some people will benefit from specific treatments and therapies, others will not. Assessment of individual needs is very important.

This leaflet is for information purposes only and is not intended to be a recommendation.

For further information about cerebral palsy and Scope services:

Call 0808 800 3333

Email: cphelpline@scope.org.uk

Or log on to www.scope.org.uk

This information can be made available in other formats if required, eg large print or tape.