

COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS

Alternative and complementary are terms used to describe treatments that have not been approved by the government organisation responsible for the regulation of drugs. Concerns have been raised over the safety of some of the products used in these treatments. Without being able to identify the benefits, it would not be advisable to continue a potentially harmful treatment.

Listed below are some of the most commonly used products:-

Aloe Vera

- Claims to - Relieve constipation, heal wounds, and treat psoriasis, frostbite, ulcerative colitis, diabetes and heartburn.
- Avoid if - You are taking diabetic medications, diuretics or digoxin tablets – this only applies to Aloe Vera Juice / tablets.
- Why? - Although research supports the use of Aloe Vera based cream in the treatment of minor burns and in the inflammation linked with conditions such as cold sores, eczema, and pruritis there is NO clinical evidence to support its use in the treatment of cancer.

Antioxidants (Tablet form)

- Claims to - Prevent cancer.
- Avoid if - You are receiving chemotherapy or radiotherapy.
- Why? - May protect tumour cells.

CoEnzyme Q10

- Claims to - Act as a preventative agent for cardiovascular diseases, Parkinson's disease, infertility and cancer.
- Avoid if - You are receiving chemotherapy or radiotherapy.
- Why? - Has antioxidant properties and may protect tumour cells.

Echinacea

- Claims to - Lessen the symptoms of the common cold, flu and other lung problems.
Some cancer patients take it because they believe it might boost their immune system.
- Avoid if - If you are taking drugs to suppress your immune system.
- Why? - May work against immuno suppressive drugs.

Green Tea

- Claims to - To protect against cancer.
- Avoid if - You are receiving chemotherapy or radiotherapy.
- Why? - Has antioxidant properties and may protect tumour cells.

Life Mel Honey

- Claims to - Reduce the incidence of neutropenia and chemo induced anaemia.
- Avoid if - Pregnant or breastfeeding.
Less than one year old.
Have diabetes.
Allergic to beehive products.
You have a low white cell count.
- Why? - No clinical evidence to support use.

Manuka Honey

- Claims to Have antibacterial powers.
- Avoid if - If you have hypersensitivity to honey.

Noni Juice

- Claims to - Boost the immune system, help increase energy levels, lower blood cholesterol levels and have cancer fighting abilities.
- Avoid if - You have kidney disease.
You have diabetes.
You are having chemotherapy or radiotherapy.
Check with your GP if you are on medication for high blood pressure or diuretics.
- Why? - High in sugar, potassium and the antioxidants may protect the tumour cells

Reishi Mushroom

- Claims to - Boost the immune system and decrease the side effects of cancer treatments.
- Avoid if - On medications for high blood pressure or blood thinning products.
You have Thrombocytopenia.
You are having chemotherapy.
- Why? - No clinical evidence to support use.
Not enough evidence on its safety.
May affect the action of certain chemotherapy drugs.

St John's Wort

- Claims to - Treat mild to moderate depression.
- Avoid if - Taking birth control pills, some cancer drugs and some epilepsy drugs.
Taking blood thinning drugs such as Warfarin
Taking heart medications such as Digoxin.
Taking drugs to treat diarrhoea, such as Loperamide.
Taking an asthma medicine called Theophylline.
- Why? - Can interact with these medicines and affect how they work.

Always inform your doctor if you are taking any dietary supplement or complementary therapy in case it may interfere with the effect of your treatment.

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