

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) in Thyroid Disease

FAQ

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WHAT IS THE THYROID GLAND?

The thyroid gland located in the neck produces thyroid hormones which help the body use energy, stay warm and keep the brain, heart, muscles, and other organs working normally.

1 WHAT IS CAM?

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is defined as a medical system, practice or product that is not usually thought of as standard care. Standard medical care is based on evidence that a treatment is effective and is safe or has acceptable risks. Patients may be interested in CAM for many reasons, including to try to treat or cure a condition, or to help with side effects from standard treatments.

CAN I TALK TO MY DOCTOR ABOUT COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (CAM)?

Some patients worry that their doctor won't understand or approve of using CAM. Some doctors may not be familiar with CAM or approve of their use, but physicians know that their patients want to take an active role in their treatment. Doctors want the best for patients and would prefer an open line of communication. There is a lot of information available and it can be hard to tell what might be more beneficial. Some CAM that may seem safe could have risks or interfere with other treatments. The most important message is to talk with your doctor about what you are already using and before you try anything new.

2 TYPES OF CAM

WHAT ARE TYPES OF COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (CAM)?

CAM may encompass many physical and mental practices, and biological-based therapies. Some examples include: Yoga, Meditation, Hypnosis, massage, chiropraxy, Tai Chi, Reiki, naturopathy, homeopathy, vitamins, Eastern medicine.

Biologically-based practices are especially important to consider. These include products made from things in nature, often sold as dietary supplements and herbal products. Examples include: Vitamins; Minerals; Herbs; Diets; Probiotics. These are not a part of standard care *because evidence has not shown that they are effective or safe*. Because of possible risks, it is important to talk with the doctor managing your treatment about any diets or supplements you are thinking about using. In addition, please talk with your doctor before stopping prescribed medication (or altering the dose) or cancelling any scheduled procedures.

ARE ALL "NATURAL" PRODUCTS SAFE?

Most CAM practices do not have to be approved by the Federal Government before being sold to the public, and a prescription is not needed to buy them. Exciting or exaggerated claims do not need to be proven and do not guarantee that an approach is safe or effective. It is important for you to decide what is best for you, but you should be careful. Tell your physician if you are using any form of CAM, no matter how safe you think it is.

3 MORE INFORMATION

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION AND HOW CAN I TRUST IT?

It is important to be cautious about CAM information. Claims may seem very impressive, but are often not required to be proven. CAM practitioners should have training and experience in CAM treatment, and you should choose one as carefully as you choose your physician. Consider asking your physician or treatment center if they have or can recommend a CAM practitioner. When reading/hearing about CAM consider: is it being promoted or sold? Is it supported by a well-known and reliable organization? Is the information from an independent source, expert or published study? Is the information addressing your specific condition? Please refer to the CAM brochure for a list of resources that might provide additional helpful information.



FURTHER READING

Further details on this and other thyroid-related topics are available in the patient information section on the American Thyroid Association® website at www.thyroid.org.

