Chronic Liver Disease Treatment: Alternative or Complementary Approaches
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Many people are exploring alternative treatments for help with their health problems. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of scientific research to find out if the treatments really help people with chronic liver disease. Some alternative treatments can be very dangerous.

If you want to explore and try alternative treatments, these 5 points may be helpful:

1. Tell all members of your health care team.
   - Many health care providers have knowledge of alternative treatments. They can tell you more about the alternative treatment you are interested in.

2. See an expert in alternative treatments.
   - It may be harmful for you to use any treatment without getting advice from an expert.
   - Talking with people who have met with an alternative medicine expert in the past can be good. You can learn more about the person’s reputation. When meeting with any expert, ask about his or her education, licenses, and certificates.
3. Listen for promises that sound too good to be true.
   › Be wary of alternative treatments that promise to cure your liver disease.
   › Alternatives often cost large amounts of money and in most cases do not help.

4. Many herbs, supplements, and “mega vitamins” can be very dangerous for people with liver disease. Your liver plays an important role in breaking down these medicines after you take them into your body. If your liver is not working well, many herbs, supplements, and “mega vitamins” can damage it even more.

5. Be sure to ask a member of your health care team before taking any herbs, supplements, or “mega vitamins”. **Just because a medicine says it is “natural” does not mean it is safe.**

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**Important warning:**

Use herbal remedies, supplements, vitamins, and other “natural” medicines carefully.
While the previous warnings we mentioned apply in every case, here are some ways people with liver disease use alternative treatments to help them cope with their liver disease:

Talk with a member of your health care team if you would like more information about any of these alternatives. You may need a referral from your doctor to access these types of treatments, or for insurance purposes.

**Aromatherapy**

Aromatherapy is based on the idea that certain smells can change the way you feel.

People use aromatherapy to help with stress, or fatigue (tiredness). Aromatherapy might help you cope with side effects of your liver disease treatment.

The essential oils used in aromatherapy are very strong. They can be harmful. Always talk with an expert aromatherapist before buying or using these oils yourself.
Massage therapy
There are many different types of massage. Massage helps people relax.

Massage can also help relieve:

- Muscle pain
- Back pain
- Headaches
- Soreness

Massage therapists are licensed in many provinces. Ask your doctor to recommend someone if you want to try massage therapy.

Meditation and visualization
Meditation and visualization are common tools people use to deal with pain and stress.

Some people say that meditation helps them cope with the side effects of their liver disease treatment.

If you are interested in meditation, there are many books and tapes that can help. You may also be able to take a meditation class for free or at a low cost. Ask a member of your health care team for more information.
Yoga

Yoga is an ancient set of stretching exercises that is often combined with meditation. Yoga helps many people improve their fitness, relieve stress, and increase their flexibility.

Some kinds of yoga are gentle enough for people with liver disease and other illnesses. Talk with a member of your health care team if you are interested in yoga.

Also, be sure to tell your yoga teacher that you have liver disease. While most yoga is safe, some exercises may be dangerous if your liver is swollen.

If you have any questions, please ask.

We are here to help you.