

## Complementary and Alternative Medicine

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) describes health products and practices that are not part of standard of care. Standard of care is what doctors, physical therapists, and nurses' practice.

**Complementary medicine** is used **together with** standard of care.

An example is using acupuncture to reduce some side effects of cancer treatment. This treatment tries to help relieve pain in some cancer patients.



**Alternative medicine** is used **in place of** standard care.

An example is exercising to lower stress. Exercise is a safe and easy way to improve your health.

The claims about CAM treatment can sound promising. Yet, experts do not know how safe many of these treatments are or how well they work. Studies are being done to find out their safety and value.



To **reduce the health risks** of a CAM treatment:

- Discuss CAM options with your doctor.
- Find out what the research says about it.
- Choose CAM providers carefully.
- Tell **ALL** of your doctors about the CAM treatments that you use.

To **learn more**, go to:

<https://medlineplus.gov/complementaryandintegrativemedicine.html>

Adapted from “Complementary and Integrative Medicine” by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).