

**TIME TO TALK.** TELL your doctor about your use of complementary and alternative medicine.



**Tell**

Did you know that almost two-thirds of people aged 50 and older are using some form of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)? According to a recent survey<sup>1</sup> less than one-third of those people talk with their providers about CAM use.

### What is complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)?

CAM is a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not presently considered to be part of conventional medicine. CAM includes such products and practices as herbal supplements, meditation, chiropractic manipulation, and acupuncture.

### Why tell your health care providers about CAM use?

- Giving your health care providers a full picture of what you do to manage your health helps **you** stay in control.
- Some CAM approaches can have an effect on conventional medicine. Talking to your health care providers about CAM use will help ensure coordinated and safe care.
- Talking to your providers about CAM use helps them to be fully informed and your partners in health care.

### Tips for talking to your health care providers about CAM

- When completing patient history forms, be sure to include all therapies and treatments you use. Make a list in advance.
- Tell your health care providers about all therapies or treatments—including over-the-counter and prescription medicines, as well as herbal and dietary supplements.
- Don't wait for your providers to ask about your CAM use. Be proactive.
- If you are considering a new CAM therapy, ask your health care providers about its safety, effectiveness, and possible interactions with medications (both prescription and nonprescription).

<sup>1</sup> Survey by AARP and NCCAM

### CAM Resources from the National Institutes of Health

**National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine**  
nccam.nih.gov or 1-888-644-6226  
**MedlinePlus**  
medlineplus.gov

**NIH Office of Dietary Supplements**  
www.ods.od.nih.gov  
**National Cancer Institute Office of Cancer Complementary and Alternative Medicine**  
www.cancer.gov/cam



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