

TIME TO TALK. ASK your patients about their use of complementary and alternative medicine.

Ask

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 survey¹ 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 currently considered to be part of conventional medicine. CAM includes such products and practices as herbal supplements, meditation, chiropractic manipulation, and acupuncture.

Why should I ask my patients about their CAM use?

- Most patients do not proactively disclose use of CAM to their physicians.
- Patients with chronic and acute medical conditions—including cancer, diabetes, back pain, and depression—turn to CAM in large numbers.²
- As more patients use CAM therapies, you need a full picture of all conventional and CAM practices they are using so that you can effectively manage their care.

How can I find the time to discuss CAM with my patients?

- Include a question about CAM use on medical history forms.
- Ask your patients to bring a list of all therapies they use, including prescription, over-the-counter, herbal therapies, and other CAM practices.
- Have your nurse, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant initiate the conversation.

With so little information available about most CAM therapies, what can I tell my patients?

- You can refer your patients to credible, Federal resources to get evidence-based information and patient education materials. You do not need to know everything about all CAM treatments.
- Rigorous scientific research on CAM is taking place at major academic and medical institutions throughout the United States.

Federal Resources for Providers

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine
at the National Institutes of Health
nccam.nih.gov

CAM on PubMed

Journal citations specific to CAM:
nccam.nih.gov/camonpubmed/

Online Continuing Education Series

Video lectures available for CME/CEU credits:
nccam.nih.gov/videolectures

Resources for Patients

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine
nccam.nih.gov

Toll-free clearinghouse: 1-888-644-6226

MedlinePlus

medlineplus.gov

¹ Survey by AARP and NCCAM

² Barnes P, Powell-Griner E, McFann K, Nahin R. CDC Advance Data Report #343. Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use Among Adults: United States, 2002. May 27, 2004.



NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE
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