

# Hep C factsheets..

## Complementary medicines



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- Is the practitioner a member of a recognised natural therapy organisation ?
- How much experience have they had of working with people with hep C ?
- How have they measured the health outcomes of their therapy ?
- How do they aim to help you ?

Remember, you have the right to ask any reasonable question of any health practitioner and expect a satisfactory answer. If you're not satisfied, shop around until you feel comfortable with your practitioner.

## Introduction

Complementary therapies have been used to treat hep C and its possible symptoms but, to date, there have been few research trials in Australia to check their effectiveness. Certainly though, many people report positive benefits.

Natural therapists using acupuncture, homoeopathy, herbs or other methods, aim to improve the overall health of their patients.

Good results have been reported by some people using complementary therapies but others have found no observable benefits - and, as with any treatment, it's important to remember that wrongly prescribed medicines can be harmful.

Some people choose complementary therapies as a first or a last resort. Others may not use them at all. Some may use them in conjunction with pharmaceutical drug treatments. Whichever way you choose, you should be fully informed.

Ask the following questions of whichever practitioner you go to:

- Is the treatment dangerous if you get the prescription wrong ?
- How have complementary or natural therapies helped people with hep C ?
- What are the side-effects ?

## Costs

You cannot claim a rebate from Medicare when you attend a natural therapist. Some private health insurance schemes cover some complementary therapies. It pays to ask your natural therapist about money before you visit them. Many will come to arrangements about payment, particularly for health care card holders.

## Choosing a practitioner

If you decide to use complementary therapies, it's vital that you see a practitioner who is properly qualified, knowledgeable and well-experienced in working with people who have hep C.

It's also advisable to continue seeing your regular doctor and/or specialist. Talk to them and your natural therapist about the

treatment options that you are considering and continue to have your liver function tests done.

It's best if your doctor, specialist and natural therapist are able to consult directly with one another. If a natural therapist suggests that you stop seeing your medical specialist or doctor, or stop a course of pharmaceutical medicine, you may want to consider changing your natural therapist.

## Healthy herbs?

Many people worldwide have found an increase in wellbeing through using complementary treatments, whether they have hep C or not.

Although specific natural therapies have been used for chronic hep C infection and the associated symptoms, there haven't been many scientific trials to investigate their effectiveness. With the currently limited information available, it is difficult to make any formal recommendations about which kinds of complementary treatments that would be most beneficial.

CH100 - a Chinese herbal preparation - is available for hep C. Although it does not clear the virus, in some cases, the treatment has been shown to decrease hep C symptoms and normalise elevated liver function test results.

A six-month randomised trial of CH100 was conducted at the John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle. Overall, the patients who received the herbal treatment had an improvement in liver function tests and symptoms. This was not seen in the patients who did not receive the herbs.

## Also see

*Complementary and Alternative Therapies for Hep C* (booklet)

*The Guide to Healthy Eating for People with Hep C* (booklet)

## Contacts

Association of Remedial Masseurs  
02 9807 4769

Aust. Acupuncture & Chinese Medicine Association  
1800 025 334

Australian College of Acupuncturists  
02 4677 2358

Australian Homoeopathic Association  
02 9713 2793

Australian Medical Acupuncture College  
03 9816 3455

Australian Natural Therapists Association  
1800 817 577

Australian Traditional Chinese Medicine Assoc.  
02 9699 1090

Australian Traditional Medicine Society  
02 9809 6800

Dietitians Association of Australia  
02 6282 9798

Homoeopathic Association of NSW  
02 9247 8500

National Herbalists Association of Australia  
02 9560 7077

NSW Association of Chinese Medicine  
02 9212 2498

Register of Traditional Chinese Medicine  
02 9660 7708

Sydney Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine  
02 9550 9906

- This factsheet was developed by the Hepatitis C Council of NSW.