Complementary and integrative health can be used in combination with other treatments for managing psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis (together called psoriatic disease). There are many different complementary and integrative health approaches that include natural products, mind and body practices and other treatment methods.

You may have heard words such as “alternative,” “complementary” and “integrative” used to describe other treatment approaches that are not considered to be part of allopathic (“conventional” or “Western”) medicine. These treatments focused on preventative care and symptom management.

While there is scientific evidence supporting some complementary and integrative health approaches, further research is necessary to better understand the effectiveness and safety of these therapies and whether they interact with other medicines. Like other psoriatic treatment options, these approaches may not work for everyone.

You should always speak with your health care provider before adding any complementary and integrative health approaches to your treatment plan. We recommend speaking with a licensed complementary and integrative health care provider. This can be a naturopathic doctor (N.D.), doctor of osteopathic medicine (D.O.) or functional medicine physician. Licensing, accreditation and regulatory laws for complementary and integrative health practices are becoming more commonplace. However, they do differ from state to state. Ask about a practitioner’s education, training and any licensing or certification.

What do the different names mean?

- **Complementary medicine** is used together with conventional medicine.
- **Alternative medicine** is used in place of conventional medicine.
- **Integrative medicine** is a combination of conventional medicine with complementary health approaches. This can include nutrition, herbal medicine, acupuncture, massage, biofeedback, yoga or stress reduction techniques. While similar to alternative medicine, integrative medicine depends on a partnership between the patient and the health care provider. Both work together to treat the mind, body and spirit.
What are some natural products and therapies?

**Natural products** include herbs, vitamins and minerals, probiotics and specific dietary methods.

- **Diet and nutrition** have been reported to help with psoriatic symptoms. Can changing your diet or cutting out certain foods improve your symptoms? There is no clear answer. However, there is consistent evidence supporting the efficacy of fish oil supplements. The goal in changing your diet is to get to and stay at a healthy weight. This will help to reduce the severity of your symptoms and lower your risk for comorbidities (related diseases). We recommend speaking with a registered dietitian or nutritionist to help create a dietary plan that fits your needs.

- **Physical activity** is important for overall health, and may be beneficial for psoriatic disease specifically. This can also help you reach a healthy weight and lower your risk for comorbidities such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Activities as simple as walking or stretching can have benefits. Talk with your health care provider or a physical therapist about how to start a plan for physical activity for your psoriatic disease.

**Natural therapies** for treating psoriasis also include balneotherapy, climatotherapy and sunlight.

- **Balneotherapy** involves soaking in mineral water baths or pools. Mineral waters have been reported to have therapeutic benefits. It also can help hydrate and soften the skin to help break down plaques.

- **Climatotherapy** combines natural sunlight and bodies of water to treat psoriasis. Versions of climatotherapy exist in the Canary Islands, the Black Sea, the Dead Sea, the Blue Lagoon in Iceland, and the Kangal Hot Springs in Turkey. Black Sea climatotherapy, in particular, has overwhelming evidence supporting its effectiveness.

- **Sunlight** exposure in small amounts on affected skin can help reduce psoriasis symptoms. Your health care provider may be able to recommend the best time and duration for your psoriasis.

What are some mind and body practices?

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy** is based on the idea that your thoughts cause your feelings and behaviors. Changing the way you think can change how you act or feel. For example, if you focus on thinking positively about your disease, it might help you feel better.

- **Massage therapy** is a group of methods that includes Swedish massage, deep tissue, reflexology, shiatsu and acupressure. It is commonly used to relieve muscle tension, reduce stress and help increase relaxation.

- **Meditation** helps you focus your attention and stop anxious thinking. This results in relaxation, mental calmness and balance for your mind and emotions. Mindfulness is a key part to meditation. Being mindful is becoming and remaining aware of what is going on with you inside and out to better treat your symptoms. You can benefit from as little as 5 to 10 minutes of meditation per day.

What should I do next?

Contact our Patient Navigation Center to find providers, prepare for appointments, discuss treatments and get help with accessing treatments [find contact information below].

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