Alternative Medicine

1. What is alternative medicine?

Alternative medicine is a term used to describe many different kinds of health care including herbs, supplements, acupuncture, and relaxation exercises. People use alternative medicine for lots of reasons, such as to control pain, de-stress, or help make difficult changes, like quitting smoking.

2. What are some examples?

- Acupuncture
- Chiropractic and Osteopathic manipulation
- Homeopathy
- Naturopathy
- Tai Chi and Qi Gong
- Traditional Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine
- Yoga
- Dietary supplements, such as vitamins, minerals, amino acids, fish oils, herbs and other plants

3. How can I use alternative medicine safely?

It's important to be careful when using alternative medicine and dietary supplements because they could be dangerous, or make other medicines not work.

1. Talk to your doctor
2. Check for FDA safety warnings and recalls at: [https://www.fda.gov/Safety/Recalls/default.htm](https://www.fda.gov/Safety/Recalls/default.htm)
3. Be on the alert for scams – if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
4. Select a reliable practitioner, and check the status of their license at: [http://www.dca.ca.gov/consumer/wll.shtml](http://www.dca.ca.gov/consumer/wll.shtml)

CAUTION: Do not give dietary supplements to children, or take supplements if you are pregnant or nursing, without talking with your doctor first.

4. What else can I do to protect my health?

Engage in a healthy lifestyle. Regular exercise and healthy eating affects our health, body, and mind.

Ask your doctor:
- Is this safe for me to take?
- Will it interfere with my other treatments or medicines?
- Are there any dietary changes I can make instead of taking supplements?
- Are there any dietary changes I can make along with taking supplements?

Resources:

The Wellness Center Los Angeles provides free fitness classes and acupuncture for pain management. (213) 784-9191 [www.thewellnesscenterla.org](http://www.thewellnesscenterla.org)

Los Angeles County, Department of Public Health, Health Care Consumer Protection Unit [publichealth.lacounty.gov/hccp/](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/hccp/)

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
www.publichealth.lacounty.gov