



Information sheet: Acupuncture

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a treatment technique that involves placing very fine filiform needles into muscle points in the body. There are two predominant systems of guiding principles: those from Chinese medicine; and the more recent Western medical acupuncture, which is based on a modern understanding of the mechanisms of the technique. There is little to choose between these approaches in terms of results, but the language and concepts differ. Some patients may like the concepts of Chinese philosophy whereas others may prefer the language of modern medical science.

How do I find a practitioner?

Patients should seek qualified practitioners who are regulated healthcare professionals or who are on an accredited register held by the Professional Standards Authority ([PSA](#)).

Regulated healthcare professions (RHP) using Western medical acupuncture

Physiotherapists	AACP or BMAS
Doctors	BMAS
Nurses	BMAS
Osteopaths	BMAS
Midwives	BMAS
Other RHP	BMAS

Acupuncturists on an accredited register held by the PSA

Chinese medicine practitioners	BAcC
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What does the therapy do?

Acupuncture appears to be very effective in routine care for a number of chronic complaints and is associated with a very minimal risk of serious side effects.

It can have effects on general wellbeing and has a tendency to push a number of systems in the body towards their natural point of balance, sometimes referred to as homeostasis.

How is acupuncture regulated?

Acupuncture may be performed by a healthcare professional who is regulated, eg a doctor using Western medical acupuncture. In this case the regulation is as a doctor rather than as an acupuncturist.

A practitioner may call themselves an acupuncturist, and in this case it is advisable to check that they appear on an accredited register held by the [PSA](#).



Is there an evidence-base

There are over [40 000 research papers](#) on acupuncture listed on [PubMed](#) – the database of the National Library of Medicine in the US. The majority of these have been published in the last 20 years. A summary of the large clinical trials of acupuncture can be found on the BMAS website here: [Clinical evidence for acupuncture](#).



Information sheet: Alexander technique

What is the Alexander technique?

Many of us adopt poor postural habits, which we repeat over and over on a daily basis, affecting the way we function. The aim of the Alexander technique is to make us more aware of the way we hold and move our body as we carry out daily activities, so that we can recognise and 'un-learn' poor habits and replace these with more helpful ones.

Once you have learned the technique, you can apply it to any activity – from driving a car or playing an instrument, to picking up your little one or pushing a shopping trolley.

What does the technique do?

The Alexander technique is usually taught on a one-to-one basis. Simple, everyday movements such as sitting, standing, walking and bending are all explored over a series of lessons, with your teacher gently guiding you throughout, both verbally and physically, to help you create a new awareness of your body and more fluid way of moving.

Many people notice an improvement soon after starting the Alexander technique, but it is important to put into practice what you learn between lessons to see long-term benefits.

What are the training standards?

The Alexander technique is a Level 6 qualification that requires three's year training (minimum), across nine academic terms. This is a minimum practitioner level requirement.

Is there regulation?

Teachers of the Alexander technique are not regulated by statute. However, they can volunteer to be listed on an Accredited Register that has been independently approved by the Professional Standards Authority ([PSA](#)), as part of a government-backed programme. The [CNHC](#) is an accredited register.

How do I find a teacher?

It is important to find a teacher who is appropriately qualified and insured, and who belongs to a respected professional association.

The [CNHC](#) has a register that can be searched online to find a teacher who is on a register accredited by the [PSA](#).

The Federation of Holistic Therapists ([FHT](#)) also has a 'find a therapist' search function on their website, where teachers of the Alexander technique are listed.

Are there any safety concerns for the Alexander technique?

No, if carried out by a professional teacher. Alexander technique should always be used alongside standard medical care and not as an alternative. Other cautions and considerations also apply, which your teacher will discuss with you before your first session.

Is there an evidence base?

Research into the health benefits of the Alexander technique is not as readily available as it is for more conventional medical treatments. A study published in the BMJ ([Little P et al, 2008](#)) showed that one-to-one lessons in the Alexander technique from registered teachers have long term benefits for patients with chronic back pain, while another study that appeared in Clinical Rehabilitation ([Stallibrass C et al, 2002](#)) suggests the technique may benefit people with Parkinson's disease. For research abstracts, search for 'Alexander technique' at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>



Information sheet: Aromatherapy

What is aromatherapy?

Aromatherapy is the therapeutic use of aromatic plant essential oils, extracted from flowers, berries, grasses, roots, seeds, bark, fruits and herbs.

Each essential oil has a unique chemical composition, containing molecules that can have a stimulating, balancing or relaxing effect on the body and mind. These molecules are absorbed into the bloodstream through the lungs, when inhaled, or the skin, if applied as part of a massage blend or other product.

Once in the bloodstream, the molecules are carried around the whole body, where they then interact with cells and other molecules. If inhaled, they can also stimulate areas of the brain that are linked to emotion, memory and learning, as well as heart rate, blood pressure, breathing, stress and hormone balance.

What does the therapy do?

Aromatherapy can be used to support people with a wide range of health and wellbeing needs. The therapy is regularly used in hospitals, hospices, care homes and other healthcare settings to help reduce stress and anxiety, and improve sleep, symptom management and quality of life.

What are the training standards?

Aromatherapy sits on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) in England as a Level 3 Diploma and on the Welsh framework (CQFW) as a Level 5 Diploma. It can be learnt as a stand alone therapy or as part of a Level 3 Diploma in Complementary Therapies. This is a minimum practitioner level requirement, but extended learning up to degree level is possible.

Is there regulation?

Aromatherapists are not regulated by law, but they can volunteer to be listed on an Accredited Register that has been independently approved by the Professional Standards Authority ([PSA](#)). The [CNHC](#) is an accredited register.

How do I find an aromatherapist?

It is important to find a therapist who is appropriately qualified and insured.

The [CNHC](#) has a register that can be searched online to find a therapist who is on a register accredited by the [PSA](#).

The Federation of Holistic Therapists ([FHT](#)) also has a 'find a therapist' search function on their website, where therapists are listed.

Are there any safety concerns?

No, if carried out by a professional aromatherapist. Complementary therapies such as aromatherapy should always be used alongside standard medical care and not as an alternative. Never ingest essential oils or apply to the skin neat. Other cautions and considerations also apply, which your aromatherapist will discuss with you before treatment.

Is there an evidence base?

Research into the health benefits of aromatherapy is not as readily available as it is for more conventional medical treatments. However, there are a growing number of studies and clinical trials that suggest different essential oils can help to improve sleep and mood, reduce stress and anxiety, aid wound healing, and reduce the perception of pain in various population groups, including those with acute or long-term conditions. For research abstracts on aromatherapy visit: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>



Information sheet: Chiropractic

What is chiropractic?

Chiropractors are healthcare professionals who can assess, diagnose and manage a wide range of conditions, such as back and neck pain, minor sports injuries and sciatica. As well as relieving symptoms of pain and discomfort, chiropractors can also improve mobility and reduce disability associated with muscle and joint problems.

What do chiropractors do?

Before starting any treatment, and to determine the best plan of care, the chiropractor will undertake an assessment of your health. This will involve gathering information on your condition, relevant lifestyle aspects and your current and past health history. Following your initial assessment, the chiropractor will provide you with an explanation of their findings, what recommended treatment options are available, and the benefits and risks of care. They will also explain alternative treatment options and what happens if your condition does not improve as expected. This may include referring you to another healthcare professional. At all stages of care, you will be involved in shared decision making with the chiropractor.

Once the initial assessment visit is complete, the chiropractor will create a plan of care, which they will discuss with you and answer any questions. Only when you are happy to proceed

and understand the implications of treatment, including the cost, will the chiropractor ask for your consent to begin treatment.

Chiropractors are trained to use a range of techniques when treating their patients. They are best known for using manual methods of care, including spinal and joint manipulation (also referred to as 'adjustment') but may also use other hands-on or instrument-assisted approaches. Many chiropractors will also provide lifestyle advice and exercises to help you manage your condition. This may include dietary and nutritional advice as well as strategies to manage stress and discomfort.

What are the training standards?

Chiropractors have to complete a minimum four year Master's level programme to qualify and register in the UK. Overseas graduates may have other qualifications, but all must be registered with the General Chiropractic Council ([GCC](#)) to ensure they meet the standards of the UK profession.

How is chiropractic regulated?

Chiropractic is regulated by the [GCC](#), the statutory body responsible for maintaining the standards of education for entry to the register and the code of practice for safe and competent practice.

How do I find a chiropractor?

Chiropractors are located throughout the UK and can be found via a number of sources. All chiropractors are registered with the [GCC](#) and usually with a professional association. The [GCC](#) and the associations will hold a list of appropriately qualified practitioners on their websites.

Are there any safety concerns?

Using manual therapy, chiropractors provide safe, effective treatment and care that aims to promote the health and wellbeing of people. The reporting of adverse effects is rare.



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Information sheet: Chiropractic

Is there an evidence base?

Chiropractic is an evidence-based profession underpinned by a range of high quality published research both nationally and internationally. The strength of the evidence base led to the profession being regulated in the UK as well as around the world.



Information sheet: Herbal Medicine

What is Herbal Medicine?

Herbal medicine (phytotherapy) is the practice of using plant material for food, medicine and health promotion, and is the oldest form of healing. The actions of the herb are considered in terms of their unique chemical components. It is this specific combination of different chemical components within the herb which is directly responsible for the actions of that herb on the body. There are a number of different types of herbal medicine practised in the UK including Western, Chinese, Ayurvedic and Tibetan. Each of these is voluntarily regulated by different practitioner associations such as the CPP, URHP, RCHM, BATTM, NIMH and AMH.

What does the therapy do?

Herbal medicine is used to treat both the symptoms and underlying causes of different disease states, by aiding the body's fundamental self-healing response and helping to restore its normal equilibrium (homeostasis).

Is there an evidence base?

There is a large body of published research (including randomised clinical trials) that supports the use of various herbal medicines for a range of minor, self-limiting conditions

including:

- o back pain
- o depression
- o functional dyspepsia
- o irritable bowel syndrome
- o migraine
- o osteoarthritis
- o premenstrual syndrome
- o colds and 'flu'-like illnesses

Are there any safety concerns?

Herbal medicines can directly interact with some prescription medications in a negative way, so care must be taken before taking them. Some herbs can also be contraindicated for certain health conditions. THR licensed herbal medicines are available to buy over the counter from pharmacies and contain a patient information leaflet that will outline any potential interactions or contraindications – look for the THR logo on the product label (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/herbal-medicines-granted-a-traditional-herbal-registration-thr>).

If in any doubt, it is always worthwhile seeking a suitably qualified medical herbalist for a consultation before taking a herbal medicine. Herbalists are highly trained to recognise potential risks and will be able to prescribe a safe, alternative herbal medicine product if necessary.

What are the required standards of training?

A BSc (Hons) degree qualification or equivalent is needed to belong to a herbal medicine practitioner association.

Is Herbal Medicine under any regulatory process?

Following the findings of the Walker Report published in March 2015, Her Majesty's Government has regrettably decided not to proceed with the regulation of herbal medicine practitioners by the Health and Care Professions Council.

For more information please see:

<https://bhma.info/legislation-on-herbal-medicines/>



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Information sheet: Herbal Medicine

How do I find a medical herbalist (phytotherapist)?

There are currently a wide range of professional bodies in the UK who are responsible for voluntarily regulating herbal medicine practitioners. A list of suitably qualified practitioners can be found on their websites eg

<https://thecpp.uk/find-your-local-herbalist/>

<https://rchm.co.uk/find-a-practitioner>

https://www.urhp.com/find_herbalist.php

<https://nimh.org.uk/find-a-herbalist/>



Information sheet: Homeopathy

What is Homeopathy?

Homeopathy is a non-invasive, natural therapy based on a guided process of self-healing that can be used to treat any disease or complaint. It is best described as a therapy of using like to cure like, or the hair of the dog principle.

The patient's health is restored by administering a remedy specifically targeted to provoke their symptoms. The remedy is determined by interpreting the symptoms not as the disease itself, but rather as an indication of the underlying problem of which they represent the natural response.

The homeopathic remedy promotes rather than suppresses this natural healing process by driving the symptoms along the direction of cure. In this way homeopathy uses like to cure like and differs from therapies that interpret the symptoms alone as the problem or disease and aim solely to abolish or suppress them.

Homeopathic remedies are presented in ultra dilute doses that act as gentle signals to provoke this natural response. They are more akin to prompts to promote the natural response and are have no side effects.

You may have heard that such infinitesimal doses are too minute to do anything but this is a misunderstanding of the therapy. The critical factor is the match of the remedy to the patient not the concentration of the remedy.

What does the therapy do?

A homeopathic consultation is an interview in which the patient expresses their symptoms very thoroughly in the manner in which they affect them at a unique and individual level. This allows the homeopath to select a remedy that most closely matches the symptom picture described. The remedy is then prescribed in an oral dose that is taken until the symptoms change.

Homeopathy is therefore a general healing art and can be used for almost any condition either alone or in a complementary manner.

What are the training standards?

Homeopathy is practiced both by medical and non-medically qualified practitioners (NMQP).

Those subject to statutory regulation (eg doctors, pharmacists, vets, dentists, nurses and midwives) may be trained by the [Faculty of Homeopathy](#), which was established by an Act of Parliament in 1950. The Faculty confers licentiate (LFHom), diploma (DFHom) and membership (MFHom) qualifications.

NMQPs are educated in one of a number of homeopathic colleges to either diploma or undergraduate degree level. They may then register with one of several professional bodies: the Society of Homeopaths ([SoH](#)), the Alliance of Registered Homeopaths ([ARH](#)) or the Homeopathic Medical Association ([HMA](#)).

Is Homeopathy under any regulatory process?

Medically qualified homeopaths are governed by the regulations of their professional bodies ie GMC, GPhC, RCVS as well as those of the [Faculty of Homeopathy](#). NMQPs are regulated by their registering body ([SoH](#), [ARH](#), [HMA](#)); however, none of these sit within the Professional Standards Authority ([PSA](#)). Each professional body has a set of standards and regulations of which their members agree to abide.



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Information sheet: Homeopathy

How do I find a Homeopath?

Homeopaths are located around the UK and can be contacted by searching on the websites of their professional bodies. The Faculty of Homeopathy, Society of Homeopaths, and Alliance of Registered Homeopaths are all listed on the [Homeopath UK website](#). Members of the Homeopathic Medical Association are listed on the [HMA website](#). Alternatively you can find practitioners listed in the local telephone directory, or by recommendation and their name will be followed by the initials of their registering body above.

Are there any safety concerns for Homeopathy?

Homeopathy employs the use of remedies prepared in infinitely diluted medicines for which there are no side effects and as such there are no safety concerns or contraindications for being treated by a homeopath, either as a primary therapist or as a complementary therapy to conventional medical treatment. Homeopathy primarily requires presenting your symptoms in great detail to the practitioner and it is therefore essential to have both trust and a good communication with them.

Is there an evidence base for Homeopathy?

Homeopathy was discovered in 1790 and has been practiced along the same principles by millions of practitioners around the globe since then. A large corpus of scientific evidence has been accumulated which stands the most robust tests of modern science. Research material is freely accessible online at both the Faculty of Homeopathy and the Homeopathic Research Council. The Faculty of Homeopathy publishes a prestigious quarterly journal that is the only Medline recognized publication of homeopathy in the world.



Information sheet: Hypnotherapy

What is Hypnotherapy?

Hypnotherapy is the process through which an individual is guided to a heightened state of awareness, using relaxation, intense concentration and focused imagination that is sometimes referred to as trance. In this state, the individual is more suggestible, that is to say their mind is more open to absorbing information and suggestions.

Hypnosis or trance, is a natural phenomenon in which an individual can achieve a heightened learning state and has been used in some form for thousands of years.

Most of us go in and out of the trance state regularly. If you've ever zoned out on your daily commute, fell into a reverie while listening to music, or found yourself immersed in the world of a book or movie, you've been in the trance state.

What does Hypnotherapy do?

Anyone can be hypnotised. The hypnotherapist guides the client through the process into the state by giving appropriate suggestions to facilitate change. Hypnosis can be learned and used by anyone as a self improvement psychological tool.

Hypnotherapy, gives the individual access to their own inner resources, strengths, knowledge and abilities. It also facilitates the reframing of traumatic or emotionally painful experiences to bring a state of calm relief.

Contrary to how hypnosis is sometimes portrayed in movies or on television, you don't lose control over your behaviour while under hypnosis. In reality, no-one can be hypnotised against their will and even when hypnotised, a person can still reject any suggestion. Thus hypnotherapy is a state of purposeful co-operation. Also, you generally remain aware of and remember everything of the hypnosis session.

There are many conditions that can be helped with hypnotherapy including:

- o anxiety
- o depression
- o panic attacks
- o phobias
- o insomnia
- o stress
- o work or study effectiveness
- o sporting performance
- o self-confidence
- o IBS
- o smoking cessation
- o chronic pain
- o and many more.

What are the training standards?

Clinical Hypnotherapy training is now available as degree courses in many countries. In the UK there are no regulated standards of training however, there are many training courses available.

Is there regulation?

Hypnotherapists are not subject to statutory regulation. The UK voluntary regulator for hypnotherapy is the Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council ([CNHC](#)) and hypnotherapists can volunteer to be listed on this Accredited Register that has been independently approved by the Professional Standards Authority, if they meet relevant criteria.



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Information sheet: Hypnotherapy

How do I find an Hypnotherapist?

It is important to find a Hypnotherapist who is appropriately qualified and insured. The best recommendation is referral, ask your friends and family, failing that check the Therapists website and social media, to see what they have done previously. Ask to speak to the Hypnotherapist first before booking an appointment. Trust is the most important factor when working with a therapist and be guided by your instinct on meeting with them.

Are there any safety concerns for Hypnotherapy?

Not, if carried out by a professional Hypnotherapist. The professional Hypnotherapist only uses words, the clients imagination and the clients own inner, unconscious abilities to help them change. As such the Hypnotherapist acts as the catalyst not the cure. As stated above the client should trust and be guided by their instincts on meeting the therapist.

Is there an evidence base?

Research into the health benefits of Hypnotherapy is now widely available. There are a growing number of studies and clinical trials that show the benefits of hypnosis as a therapeutic tool. Studies have shown that hypnosis can help to improve sleep and mood, reduce stress and anxiety, and reduce the perception of pain, including those with acute or long-term conditions.



Information sheet: Massage

What is massage?

Massage is a hands-on therapy that works on the skin and soft tissue. It comes in a variety of forms and can be applied to the whole body or target specific areas, such as the head, face, back or feet. Popular types of massage include body or Swedish massage, sports massage, remedial massage, Indian head massage, and Ayurvedic massage.

What does the therapy do?

Many find massage particularly effective at relieving tension that has built up in the muscle and other soft tissue, which, if left unchecked, can take its toll on our general health and wellbeing. However, it is used by people for a variety of reasons. Some use it to simply relax and unwind, while others have regular massage to manage or cope with a specific physical, mental or emotional problem. Many aspiring and professional athletes also have massage before and after training and competing, in order to stay in optimum condition and aid recovery.

Is massage regulated?

Massage therapists are not regulated by statute. However, they can volunteer to be listed on an Accredited Register that has been independently approved by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care ([PSA](#)), as part of a government-backed programme, if they meet relevant criteria.

What are the training standards?

Massage sits on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) in England as a Level 3 Diploma and on the Welsh framework (CQFW) as a Level 5 Diploma. It can be learnt as a stand alone therapy or as part of a Level 3 Diploma in Complementary Therapies. This is a minimum practitioner level requirement, but extended learning up to degree level is possible.

How do I find a massage therapist?

It is important to find a therapist who is appropriately qualified and insured, and who belongs to a respected professional association.

The [CNHC](#) has a register that can be searched online to find a massage therapist who is on a register accredited by the [PSA](#).

The Federation of Holistic Therapists ([FHT](#)) also has a 'find a therapist' search function on their website, where a large variety of massage therapists are listed.

Are there any safety concerns?

No, if carried out by a professional therapist.

Complementary therapies such as massage should always be used alongside standard medical care and not as an alternative.

Some cautions and considerations may apply, for example, if you are pregnant or have recently had surgery. Your therapist will discuss any issues that are relevant to the treatment with you beforehand.

Is there an evidence base?

Research into the health benefits of massage is not as readily available as it is for more conventional medical treatments. However, there are a growing number of studies and clinical trials that suggest massage can help to improve sleep and mood, reduce stress and anxiety, improve mobility and function, and reduce the perception of pain in various population groups.

For research abstracts, visit:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>



Information sheet: Osteopathy

What is Osteopathy?

Osteopaths provide a package of care relevant to the individual patient. That may include one or more of gentle manual therapy, general health information, self-management advice and exercise therapy. When visiting an osteopath, a patient can expect a full medical case history to be conducted, taking into account factors such as occupation, previous injury, posture and the patient's goals of treatment as well as red and yellow flag questioning.

What does the therapy do?

Osteopaths are allied health professionals and musculoskeletal (MSK) experts, who through complex interventions involving multiple components, take a patient-centred approach to support optimal health and self-management. People commonly visit osteopaths for a range of MSK conditions as well as to aid other health conditions. There is a well-deserved, evidence-based reputation for expertise in the treatment of neck and lower back pain.

Are there any safety concerns?

Using manual therapy, osteopaths provide safe, effective treatment and care that aims to promote the health and wellbeing of people. The reporting of adverse effects is rare.

What are the training standards?

Training is to degree level and includes over 1000 hours of clinical placements (direct patient contact time) prior to graduation. This intensive medical training equips osteopaths with an in-depth knowledge of anatomy, physiology and robust clinical methods and examination techniques for the musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, respiratory, neurological systems and the abdomen.

Is Osteopathy regulated?

Osteopaths are regulated by law and recognised as one of the Allied Health Professions by NHS England. This gives osteopaths similar status to a dentist or physiotherapist and guarantees patients the equivalent high level of care. They must be registered with the General Osteopathic Council (a statutory regulator reporting to the Professional Standards Authority), promoting patient safety by setting and monitoring standards of osteopathic education and conduct. The term 'osteopath' is a protected title.

How do I find an osteopath?

The General Osteopathic Council, the statutory regulator, has a search facility of registered practitioners on which you can search for an osteopath either by name or by area:

www.osteopathy.org.uk

Is there an evidence base?

There is good evidence for expertise in the treatment of neck and lower back pain. Osteopaths can also deliver packages of care recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence for several other MSK conditions (Bronfort *et al*, 2010 and www.iosteopathy.org/research-and-reports).

The Institute of Osteopathy invests in research such as the implementation of a standardised MSK Patient Reported Outcome Measure tool for the profession. Preliminary findings (over 2500 completed data sets) show that over 50% of patients reported and improvement in symptoms after one week of treatment and 73% reported an improvement at six weeks post treatment.

Research also shows that 96% of patients expressed confidence in the treatment and advice from their osteopaths and 93% felt that their experience of osteopathic care was very good.



Information sheet: Naturopathy

What is Naturopathy?

The principles of Naturopathy were first used by the Hippocratic School of Medicine in about 400BCE. The Greek physician and philosopher Hippocrates believed in viewing the whole person to find the root cause of the disease, rather than treating the symptoms. It was from this original school of thought that Naturopathy takes its principles:

- o the healing power of nature – nature has the innate ability to heal
- o identify and treat the cause – there is always an underlying cause, be it physical or emotional
- o do no harm – never use treatments that may create other conditions
- o treat the whole person – when preparing a treatment plan, all aspects of an individual are taken into consideration
- o the Naturopath as a teacher – a Naturopath empowers the patient to take responsibility for his/her own health by teaching self-care
- o prevention is better than cure – a Naturopath may remove toxic substances and situations from a patient's lifestyle to prevent the onset of further disease.

Naturopathy, or Nature Cure, is underpinned by a fundamental principle – *vis medicatrix naturae* – the healing power of nature. This was made clear twenty-five centuries ago when Hippocrates said Health is the expression of a harmonious balance between various components of man's nature, the environment and ways of life – nature is the physician of disease.

What does the therapy do?

The modalities and practices of Naturopathy can be broad. The main aim is to restore the body back to balance and empower clients to take control of their own health. Naturopaths apply a range of natural therapies, such as Homeopathy, Acupuncture, Nutrition and Herbal Medicine, as well as the use of modern methods such as Bio-Resonance, Ozone-Therapy, and Colon Hydrotherapy (this list is not an exhaustive list).

What are the training standards?

The General Naturopathic Council ([GNC](#)), has established core elements for naturopathic education reflecting the National Occupational Standards CNH10. Individuals who are entitled to become members of the [GNC](#) will have trained and will practice to a minimum of the levels set out in the core elements.

Membership is solely via one of their professional associations: Association of Master Herbalists (AMH), Association of Naturopathic Practitioners ([ANP](#)), Association of Registered Colon Hydrotherapists (ARCH), Guild of Naturopathic Iridologists International (GNI), Institute of Clinically Applied Hijama Therapy (ICAHT), Incorporated Society of Registered Naturopaths (ISRN), or the Naturopathic Nutrition Association (NNA)

The GNC has a two-tier Register for Naturopaths. All registrants are required to comply with the GNC's Code of Ethics for Professional Practice and must work within the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for the practice of naturopathy.

Is Naturopathy under any regulatory process?

There is no legal regulation of Naturopathy; however, there are various professional associations in the UK that have been established to protect the public from practitioners and ensure an adequate level of training and competence. The [ANP](#) is one such professional organisation, and is a member of the IMA.



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These professional associations are a safe and effective resource for members of the public who are in search of a practitioner. They require practitioners to maintain levels of professional standards, comply with a code of ethics and complaints procedure as well as hold appropriate insurance.

How do I find a Naturopath?

Most accredited associations will have practitioner directories. Both the Association of Naturopathic Practitioners ([ANP](#)) and the General Naturopathic Council ([GNC](#)) have find a therapist searches on their website. All searchable therapists will be insured, agreed to abide by a code of conduct and continue to develop professionally.

Are there any safety concerns for Naturopathy?

Naturopathic treatment is perfectly safe however there may be specific contraindications relating to each modality e.g. there are some herbs that cannot be prescribed with certain pharmaceutical medication. These will be taken into consideration and explained by the accredited practitioner prior to and during treatment.

Is there an evidence base?

There is a plethora of research and evidence to support the benefits of Naturopathy. For research abstracts visit:

[Search PubMed](#)

or

[Search naturopathy on PubMed](#)



Information sheet: Reflexology

What is Reflexology?

Reflexology is a non-invasive complementary health therapy that can be effective in promoting deep relaxation and wellbeing. By reducing stress in people's lives reflexology can optimise good health and build resilience.

Reflexology is a touch therapy that is based on the theory that different points on the feet, lower leg, hands, face or ears correspond with different areas of the body and reflexologists apply pressure to those areas to rebalance the body. It provides a period of time for relaxation where the client has one to one attention and supportive touch in an empathetic listening environment.

Reflexology can be used safely alongside standard healthcare to promote better health.

What does the therapy do?

Reflexology aims to bring deep relaxation to all systems of the body allowing it to naturally restore and rebalance to become as efficient as possible.

What are the training standards?

Reflexology is on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) in England at a level 3 diploma, and on Welsh framework (CQFW) as a level 5. It can be learnt as a stand alone therapy or as part of the complementary therapies diploma. This is a minimum practitioner level requirement, but extended learning up to degree level is possible.

Is Reflexology regulated?

Reflexology sits within the Professional Standards Authority ([PSA](#)) voluntary Accredited Register scheme via the Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council ([CNHC](#)). Voluntary regulation provides an extra level of protection of the public as the therapist is listed on a register that is under independent regulatory oversight. The process of voluntary regulation is a choice and not all reflexologists will choose to be regulated.

How do I find a Reflexologist?

Finding a reflexologist who is of high training and who follows a supportive code of ethics is easy if you know where to look.

The [CNHC](#) has a register that can be searched online to find a reflexologist who is on a register accredited by the [PSA](#).

Also, both the Association of Reflexologists ([AoR](#)) and the Federation of Holistic Therapists ([FHT](#)) have 'find a therapist' searches on their website. All therapists on these registers will be insured, and they will have agreed to abide by a code of conduct and continue to develop professionally.

Are there any safety concerns?

There are no indicators from any condition-based research so far that reflexology is unsafe in any tested situation. There are however recognised industry contraindications where it is advisable to not receive treatment.

Is there an evidence base?

There are some small published research studies on reflexology but the evidence base is not extensive. These studies can be accessed through:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>



Information sheet: Reiki

What is Reiki?

Reiki, meaning 'universal life energy', works on the principle that energy or 'chi' flows through every living thing, including the human body. When this energy is free flowing, the body is believed to be in harmony and good health. Where energy has become interrupted or blocked, reiki is said to help restore balance to the body by reinforcing its natural ability to self-heal. This process is facilitated by the reiki practitioner, who channels universal energy through their hands to help rebalance each of the body's energy centres, known as chakras.

What does the therapy do?

Reiki, also referred to as reiki healing, is often described as a very relaxing and peaceful treatment, which helps to restore a sense of balance and wellbeing within the mind, body, emotions and spirit. Due to the very gentle nature of this treatment, it is often used to support those receiving conventional medical care in hospitals, hospices or at home.

What are the training standards?

Reiki sits on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) in England as a Level 3 Diploma and on the Welsh framework (CQFW) as a Level 5 Diploma. This is minimum requirement to reach practitioner level.

Is Reiki regulated?

Reiki practitioners are not regulated by statute. However, they can volunteer to be listed on an Accredited Register that has been independently approved by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care ([PSA](#)), as part of a government-backed programme, if they meet relevant criteria.

How do I find a Reiki practitioner?

It is important to find a reiki practitioner who is appropriately qualified and insured, and who belongs to a respected professional association, so that you can be confident that they meet industry standards and abide by a strict code of conduct.

The [CNHC](#) has a register that can be searched online to find a reiki practitioner who is on a register accredited by the [PSA](#).

The Federation of Holistic Therapists ([FHT](#)) also has a 'find a therapist' search function on their website, where reiki practitioners are listed.

Are there any safety concerns?

No. It is an incredibly gentle, non-invasive therapy that involves the practitioner gently placing their hands on or just above the body. It is considered to be safe for all age groups.

Is there an evidence base?

Research into the health benefits of reiki is not as readily available as it is for more conventional medical treatments. However, there are a growing number of studies and clinical trials that suggest reiki can help to reduce stress and anxiety, and improve mood and quality of life.

For research abstracts, visit:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>



Information sheet: Tai Chi

What is Tai Chi?

Tai chi, also known as tai chi chuan, is believed to have originated in China in the 13th century, as a form of martial art. Now widely practised throughout the world, tai chi combines relaxation, deep breathing and postures that gently flow into one another. It is a very slow and graceful discipline, and is kind on the joints and muscles.

There are different types of tai chi – including yang, chen and wu. The main differences are the speed of moving from one posture to the other, and how the different postures are held.

What does the therapy do?

Tai chi has many potential health benefits, from helping to reduce stress, to improving muscle strength in the legs (many of the movements are executed with a bend at the knees). As a very gentle form of exercise, it can be particularly beneficial for older people, helping to improve posture and joint mobility. Studies have also indicated that it can improve balance and potentially prevent falls among older people.

What are the training standards?

Unlike other complementary therapies, such as massage and reiki, tai chi does not sit on a regulated qualification framework (RQF). Instructors are typically graded according to their level of experience, with those new to the discipline learning from someone who has

many years of experience in practising Chinese internal martial arts.

Is Tai Chi regulated?

Tai chi instructors are not regulated by statute. However, they can volunteer to belong to an association that represents health and wellbeing practitioners and instructors, if they meet relevant criteria.

How do I find a Tai Chi instructor?

It is important to find a tai chi instructor who is certified and insured, and who belongs to a respected professional association.

The [CNHC](#) has a register that can be searched online to find a tai chi instructor who is on a register accredited by the [PSA](#).

The Federation of Holistic Therapists ([FHT](#)) also has a 'find a therapist' search function on their website, where tai chi instructors are listed.

The NHS also suggest looking for classes on the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain [website](#).

Are there any safety concerns?

No, if carried out by a professional therapist. Tai chi should always be used alongside standard medical care and not as an alternative. Some cautions and considerations may apply – for example, if you are pregnant or have recently had surgery – which your therapist will discuss with you before you start practicing.

Is there an evidence base?

Research into the health benefits of tai chi is not as readily available as it is for more conventional medical treatments. However, there are a growing number of studies that suggest tai chi can help to improve balance, prevent falls in those at risk, and improve general physical function and wellbeing. For research abstracts, visit:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>



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Information sheet: Yoga therapy

What is yoga therapy?

Originating thousand of years ago in India, yoga is a mind body practice that includes postures, breathing techniques, meditation, and adoption of wholesome action and thought all in the service of personal cultivation. Yoga therapy, a more recent discipline, is the therapeutic application of yoga to mental and physical health conditions. Melding an understanding of the psycho-physiological effects of yoga practices with ancient wisdom and unique client needs, yoga therapists work towards a whole person approach the healing.

Yoga therapy espouses an integrative model of health empowerment to investigate the root cause of suffering, not simply a diagnosed health issue; helping clients in both short and long-term management and transformation of their health.

What does the therapy do?

Yoga therapy, a biopsychosocial approach to well-being, works in a comprehensive way to help the client develop greater health. In some instances yoga therapy may help to alleviate a health condition, where in other situations it may help to mitigate symptoms and support better disease management.

Generally yoga therapy is employed with life style conditions or non-communicable diseases and with a broad range of applications including everything from depression, PTSD, and anxiety disorders, as well as a host of other mental health issues, to cardiovascular conditions, musculoskeletal conditions, chronic

pain, neurodegenerative conditions, respiratory disorders, cancer, type II diabetes, immune disorders, and many more.

What are the training standards?

Yoga therapists undergo additional training after graduating as yoga teachers. The British Council of Yoga Therapy ([BCYT](#)) is the UK forum for yoga therapy organisations, promoting standards in yoga therapy and the provision of this therapy. The [BCYT](#) proposes committee members to the Complementary and Natural Health Care Council ([CNHC](#)), The independent UK regulator for complementary healthcare practitioners to act as their Profession Specific Body evaluating appropriate standards for Yoga Therapists.

Is yoga therapy regulated?

The [BCYT](#) accredits yoga therapy courses that meet their core curriculum requirements.

How do I find a yoga therapist?

The [CNHC](#) holds a register of recognised yoga therapists. Generally clients find yoga therapists by going on the website of yoga therapy training schools, recommendations from health professionals, or via internet search.

It is important to find a yoga therapist who is appropriately qualified and insured, and who belongs to a respected professional association, so that you can be confident that they meet industry standards and abide by a strict code of conduct.

Are there any safety concerns for yoga therapy?

As yoga therapy is tailored to your unique needs and ability it is generally safe. However as with any movement based practice there is the possibility that injury can occur. If you have any concerns speak with your doctor before seeking a yoga therapist.



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Information sheet: Yoga therapy

Is there an evidence base?

A growing collection of clinical trials and reviews find psychological and physical health benefits associated with the therapeutic application of yoga. Previously research was criticised for small groups sizes and lack of rigour, however this is changing. Studies are becoming more rigorous and remain encouraging enough for health systems to consider the integration of yoga. The most common reported psychological research findings include improved mood, stress reduction, better emotion regulation, improved distress tolerance, and body awareness. Physiological research reveals greater brain functioning and connectivity, positive changes in neurochemicals, improved regulation of the autonomic nervous system, reduced blood pressure, improved respiratory markers, and reductions in inflammatory markers. For more information on research please visit:

[Search PubMed](#)

[or](#)

[Search yoga therapy on PubMed](#)