

# StChristopher's

## Complementary therapies

**INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS,  
CARERS AND FAMILIES**



## 1 What are complementary therapies?

Complementary therapies are not an alternative to conventional medical treatments; they work alongside them to promote feelings of relaxation and wellbeing. They can also help with emotional and physical symptoms.

They may also:

- reduce stress and tension
- ease aches and pains
- help lift mood and reduce anxiety
- help improve sleep.

All our therapies are adapted for use in palliative care and are gentle and safe.

## 2 What is massage?

Massage is the gentle manipulation of the body's soft tissue using specific techniques. The therapist will discuss with you what area of the body may benefit most from this treatment, for example back, neck and shoulders or legs and feet.

## 3 What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture was developed in the Far East over 3,000 years ago. A treatment involves the insertion of very fine, sterile needles, into specific points on the body. To further enhance effects pressure, heat, or electrical stimulation may be used. The practitioner will assess each patient's case and treatment will be tailored to the individual.

## 4 What is reflexology?

Reflexology is a specialised form of foot massage. It involves the application of gentle pressure to specific points on the feet known as reflexes.

## 5 What is aromatherapy?

Aromatherapy uses essential oils extracted from flowers, herbs, fruits and plants. These oils can be used in several ways, most often in combination with massage or through inhalation.

## 6 What is Shiatsu?

Shiatsu is a body therapy based on the Chinese Medicine tradition. It combines the gentle use of acupressure points, sustained touch and, where needed, careful passive movement.

## 7 What is relaxation?

Relaxation and meditation techniques may be used to help relax your body and mind. Relaxation groups are offered as part of our group programme. We also offer one-to-one sessions. If appropriate the therapist may also implement techniques during a complementary therapy treatment.

## 8 Are your Complementary Therapy Team qualified?

All our complementary therapists are experienced practitioners. They have all met the training requirements to be a member of an accredited register recognised by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (namely the National Healthcare Council or the British Acupuncture Council) and all have appropriate professional membership and insurance.

## 9 What can I expect at my first appointment?

At the first appointment your therapist will explain the treatment to you, and make sure it

is adapted to your particular needs. The therapy will only be given with your consent and may be stopped at any time should you wish. It is important to tell your therapist of any changes or new problems that may occur in the course of treatment.

## **10** How often will I be seen?

You can be seen as an outpatient or when you visit the Anniversary or Caritas Centres. Therapies are offered as a programme of up to six sessions, though this will be agreed with your therapist during your first assessment. Length of sessions may vary, dependent on the therapy you are receiving, but can last up to an hour. If you are unable to be seen as an outpatient we can offer treatments in people's homes, as well as on the wards at St Christopher's for inpatients.

## **11** Is there any help available for carers?

Our therapists are also able to offer a course of treatments to carers. If you think you would benefit, please contact a member of the clinical team to request a referral.

## **12** How can I try a complementary therapy?

Please ask a member of staff involved in your care if you would like to be referred for complementary therapy. A member of the team will then contact you and arrange an appointment.

It is really important for your care that the information you give us is as full and accurate as possible.

If you would like this information in a different format, such as audio tape, braille or large print, or in another language, please speak to the Communications Team on **020 8768 4500** or email **[communications@stchristophers.org.uk](mailto:communications@stchristophers.org.uk)**

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