

About Integrative Medicine

A Guide to Self-Care and Support | Winter 2025

CHIEF'S NOTE



Jun J. Mao, MD, MSCE
Chief, Integrative Medicine Service

Happy New Year! As we enter the winter months, we're reminded of the importance of self-care, resilience, and community. This season can be a time for reflection, renewal, and finding ways to nourish both body and mind.

In this issue, you will learn about a new clinical trial that aims to help breast cancer survivors manage joint pain with innovative treatment approaches and discover practical tips for using Integrative Medicine at Home (IM@Home) to maintain physical activity and emotional well-being during the colder months. We will explore Ayurveda's role in cancer care, investigate the latest research on psilocybin, and share our upcoming workshops and series that provide a space for learning, connection, and self-care.

We hope this issue serves as a reminder that, despite the challenges winter can bring, there are many ways to stay connected to your wellness journey. We're here to help you navigate the season with strength, support, and a sense of community.

Thank you for being part of our integrative oncology family. Wishing you a warm and healthy winter!

Be well,
Jun

Practical Tips for Using Integrative Medicine at Home in the New Year

By Christina Seluzicki, MBE



In the new year, many of us feel renewed energy to improve self-care and increase our physical activity. Our Integrative Medicine at Home (IM@Home) membership program offers daily virtual mind-body and fitness classes whether you are looking for a quiet meditative moment or a more intense workout, and everything in between. We asked our instructors to share their advice for how to best use IM@Home in the new year. Here are their tips!

Robin Hardbattle, martial arts instructor

- Do the things that make you feel joy. Then you'll look forward to the doing and do it as often as you can.
- Mood and energy levels change from day to day, and so does our interest. Try a new class to mix things up or stick with the classes you know when you want comfort and reassurance.

Christine Trastevere, fitness instructor

- Never compare yourself to anyone else.
- Listen to your body and work within your limits. The intensity is up to you.
- Modification is not a weakness; it's body awareness!

Tina Paul, yoga therapist

- Treat your IM@Home sessions like an appointment for self-care.
- Pair an active class with something mellow to alleviate stress.
- Find connection and community in your weekly classes. Many of my participants will stay after and swap life happenings.

Jennifer Whitley, dance/movement therapist

- This time of year may remind you of someone you're missing or that things are different now that you have cancer. Dancing can help us feel joy again as we return to playfulness and move freely.



- Dancing is a way to help us feel more grounded. It also gives us an expressive outlet to move through our feelings and physically express what can be hard to say in words.

Clare Patterson, yoga therapist

- Set up an area in your home that becomes your designated “practice space” for every class. This is a great way to build consistency.
- Yoga is more than poses; it’s about finding ease and peace from within.

As you embrace the new year, IM@Home can be a valuable partner in your self-care journey, offering flexible, diverse, and expert-led practices to support your physical and mental well-being. Here’s to a balanced and fulfilling 2025!

Learn more and become a member of Integrative Medicine at Home at msk.org/athome.

New Study Explores Mindfulness to Reduce Joint Pain in Breast Cancer Survivors

By Karolina Bryl, PhD

People impacted by cancer often experience chronic pain as a result of the disease and its treatment. Many breast cancer survivors take aromatase inhibitors (AI), a class of medications, to prevent recurrence. A common side effect of these medications is persistent joint pain, known as aromatase inhibitor-induced arthralgia (AIA), which can lead to early discontinuation and negatively impact survival outcomes. Enhanced Pain Coping in Cancer (EPIC), a new study now

open at MSK, aims to help breast cancer survivors manage AIA pain and improve overall well-being.

Study participants will be randomly enrolled in one of two different treatments: Mindfulness Oriented Recovery Enhancement (MORE) or supportive psychotherapy. In prior research, both approaches were shown to help with pain management. Participants will join eight virtual weekly group sessions with a healthcare professional where they will learn pain coping strategies and receive support for managing chronic pain. Dr. Jun Mao, Chief of MSK’s Integrative Medicine Service, says, “Pain from AI use can be very difficult to treat. The EPIC study’s mindfulness-based treatment approach

shows promise for tackling this challenging side effect and the emotional distress that many breast cancer survivors must navigate as a result.”

If you have a history of stage I, II, or III breast cancer, are taking an aromatase inhibitor (anastrozole, letrozole, or exemestane), and have been experiencing joint pain or stiffness for at least one month, you may be eligible to participate. You can learn more about the EPIC study by contacting the study team at 646-449-1074 or EPICstudy@mskcc.org.

Integrative Medicine at Home Membership Program



Start your membership online today! Visit msk.org/athome.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

- Monthly membership: **\$25**
- Three-month membership: **\$60**
- Six-month membership: **\$120** (plus one free workshop)

AS A MEMBER, YOU CAN ENJOY:

- › Connecting with your cancer community
- › Staying active, with guidance from MSK experts
- › Learning new skills to increase resilience and decrease stress
- › Unlimited access to daily fitness and mind-body classes
- › Dedicated website with on-demand videos to help keep you moving on your schedule
- › Discounts on our small group workshops and mind-body series

Ayurveda, the Science of Life, for Cancer Care

By Krupali Desai, MD (Ayurveda), MPH



Krupali Desai is an Ayurvedic doctor with an MD in Ayurvedic Medicine from India. She offers educational workshops and series on Ayurvedic diet and lifestyle to people with cancer and their caregivers at MSK.

What is Ayurveda?

Ayurveda is an ancient healing system of India. Translated as “The Science of Life,” Ayurveda offers profound insight into our connection with mother nature and provides guidance on maintaining body-mind harmony by following the rhythms of nature. Discovering how Ayurveda views the relationship between life energies, known as doshas, and our unique body constitutions can help support health and well-being through proper choices in diet, lifestyle, exercise, and yoga practices.

How can Ayurveda help patients with cancer?

Ayurveda can play an important role in addressing symptom burden in patients with cancer during their cancer journey. Understanding symptoms from the Ayurvedic perspective of imbalance of doshas, and incorporating the fundamental principles of diet, lifestyle, and

treatment approaches to restore balance may provide a personalized approach for improving symptoms and quality of life.

Digestion, absorption, and metabolism (called agni) are key concepts in Ayurvedic nutrition. According to Ayurvedic philosophy, cancer treatments may create a state of imbalance and cause issues in the digestive system. Patients may benefit from an Ayurvedic nutrition and lifestyle approach for managing their symptoms. As always, talk with your doctor before making any decisions about your health.

Here are some Ayurvedic tips to maintain balance during winter:

- Eat warm, cooked, and nourishing foods to combat the cold and dry nature of the season. Include

healthy oils/ghee (clarified butter) in your cooking to lubricate your body from within.

- Incorporate spices such as ginger, black pepper, cumin, cinnamon, cloves, and turmeric in your cooking. Spices support healthy digestion, bring warmth, and help eliminate excess mucus that can easily accumulate.
- Drink warm or room temperature water and avoid cold water or beverages. Herbal teas, such as ginger with lemon and honey, are a great addition to your daily routine.
- Include warm sesame oil self-massage in your daily routine before taking a warm shower to hydrate and nourish your skin.

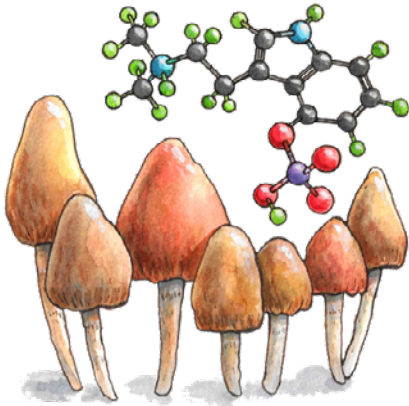


Join Krupali for upcoming workshops or series. See our Upcoming Online Programming to learn more and register.



Psilocybin

By Jyothirmai Gubili, MS



Psilocybin is a substance found in fungi that are commonly known as magic mushrooms. The mushrooms are consumed for their hallucinogenic effects, added to other foods to hide their bitter taste, or brewed as teas.

Studies suggest that psilocybin may benefit patients with multiple psychiatric conditions – including tobacco and alcohol addictions, treatment-resistant depression, and end-of-life anxiety. Larger clinical trials are needed to find out the long-term effects.

Psilocybin is associated with a lower risk of side effects

compared to LSD or MDMA (both psychedelics that alter a person’s perception of reality) and has low potential of addiction. However, it can cause acute psychological distress, dangerous behavior, and psychological discomfort in uncontrolled environments.

For more details about elderberry, see our [full write-up](#) on the About Herbs website or download the About Herbs app (available for Android via [Google Play](#) and iOS via the [App StoreSM](#)).



Upcoming Online Programming

[Register online today](#) to join an upcoming wellness program. Scan the QR code with your phone to sign up online or call [646-449-1010](tel:646-449-1010).



- Workshops:** \$20 members; \$25 non-members
- Regular series:** \$100 members; \$125 non-members
- Meditation series:** \$125 members; \$155 non-members

FEBRUARY

- › **Series:** Mindful Self-Compassion for People with Cancer
Sundays, February 2 to March 9, 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- › **Workshop:** Traditional Chinese Medicine & Qigong: Preparing for Spring
Tuesday, February 4, 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.
- › **Workshop:** NEW! Yoga for Balance & Stability
Thursday, February 20, 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.

MARCH

- › **Series:** Ayurveda & Yoga for Cancer Care
Wednesdays, March 5 to April 9, 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.
- › **Workshop:** NEW! Exercise Basics 101: Set Up for Success
Monday, March 10, 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.
- › **Workshop:** Massage for Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathye
Tuesday, March 18, 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.