About Integrative Medicine & Wellness

A Guide to Self-Care and Support | Fall 2026

CHIEF'S NOTE



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As autumn arrives, we hope you are finding moments to enjoy the beauty of the season, connect with loved ones, and prioritize your well-being. This time of the year offers an opportunity to reflect, recharge, and explore practices that support your health and resilience.

In this issue, in celebration of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we share information on a research study exploring mindfulness for breast cancer survivors. Krupali Desai, an Ayurvedic physician, discusses how an Ayurveda-Yoga program can support patient well-being during and after cancer. We also announce the launch of an exciting new exercise oncology clinic for patients interested in improving their overall fitness and well-being. Finally, we invite you to learn about creatine in our About Herbs feature.

Whether you are looking for new ways to support recovery, manage symptoms, reduce stress, or enhance overall well-being, we hope this issue provides valuable insights and resources.

Be well,
Jun

Study Explores Mindfulness for Joint Pain in Breast Cancer Survivors

By Karolina Bryl, PhD

Women who have been diagnosed with estrogen-receptor positive breast cancer are often prescribed aromatase inhibitors (AIs). Although AIs are highly effective in reducing the chance of recurrence, they come with potential side effects including joint pain, known as AI-associated arthralgia (AIA), that many women find difficult to manage. In fact, some women stop taking this medication because of this joint pain.

A study open at MSK, Enhanced Pain Coping in Cancer (EPIC), is exploring the management of this treatment-related joint pain in women breast cancer survivors. Researchers will compare two types of group therapy – mindfulness and supportive psychotherapy – to find out whether they are effective approaches for helping breast cancer survivors manage AIA. They will also investigate participants' ability to continue taking AIs on a regular schedule and their quality of life. The groups will focus on learning different ways of coping with pain, stress, emotions, and medication-related problems.



In the mindfulness group, participants will focus on mindfulness-based pain and stress management approaches. They will learn techniques that encourage awareness of the present moment and foster greater acceptance of thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. In the supportive psychotherapy group, participants will be part of a supportive space to share and discuss their experiences with pain, stress, emotional challenges, and medication-related concerns. Participants in both groups will attend eight weekly, two-hour sessions.

Study lead, Dr. Jun Mao, says, "As we recognize Breast Cancer Awareness Month, it is important to know that even when treatment ends, many symptoms such as joint pain and psychological distress may linger in survivorship from ongoing hormonal treatment. We hope this study will advance our understanding of how we can harness a specific mindfulness-based intervention to help breast cancer survivors manage joint pain, improve well-being, and continue treatments that play a critical role in reducing the risk of recurrence."

For more information or to determine if you are eligible to join this study, please call **646-888-0863** or email EPICstudy@mskcc.org.

New Exercise Oncology Clinic Launches

By Kylie Rowed, Exercise Physiologist

Exercise is increasingly recommended by clinical guidelines for people with cancer. Despite this, exercise therapy is not integrated into patients' standard clinical care after a cancer diagnosis. As the director of MSK's Exercise Oncology Program, Jessica Scott, PhD, is looking to change this. She and her team of exercise physiologists conduct research investigating the effects of exercise to reduce treatment side effects and to control cancer. Now, to bring these findings directly to patients, Dr. Scott and her team have opened the Exercise Oncology Clinic at MSK. The clinic offers self-pay exercise consultations and three months of personalized programming and one-time general consultations via telemedicine.

When patients sign up for personalized programming, they can expect a program tailored to their current abilities and limitations depending on a variety of factors. These factors can include, but are not limited to exercise history, past and/or current injuries, treatment schedules, potential treatment side effects, and exercise equipment availability and access. The programs can include a combination of progressive aerobic, resistance, and flexibility work depending on the American Cancer Society's exercise guidelines and a patients' goals.



Throughout the three months, patients will have access to the exercise physiologist who created their program to ask questions and to contact for accountability.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with patients remarking that "It's nice not to feel like I'm not alone in this" and that the team "...provided insights, details, and clarity to enhance my current exercise routine."

Dr. Scott says, "Evidence for the benefits of exercise oncology is strong. We're thrilled to be able to offer personalized exercise programs for people navigating the challenges of a cancer."

If you are interested in learning more about the Exercise Oncology Clinic or to make an appointment for a consultation, contact Kylie Rowed at rowedk@mskcc.org or Exercise Oncology at medexonc@mskcc.org, **646-888-8103**.

Can Ayurveda Help You Feel Better During and After Cancer?



By Krupali Desai, MPH, MD (Ayurveda)

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.

Can Ayurveda and yoga support well-being during and after cancer?

Many people with cancer deal with ongoing symptoms, stress, sleep problems, and trouble keeping healthy habits during and after treatment. Healthy eating, physical activity, stress management, and good sleep can help people feel better. However, making and keeping these changes can be hard.

To help patients build healthy habits, MSK's Integrative Medicine & Wellness Service (IMWS) created a six-week virtual Ayurveda-Yoga education program. Ayurveda, which means "the science of life" in Sanskrit, is a traditional system of medicine from India. It focuses on healthy eating, daily routines, stress management, and mind-body practices such as yoga and meditation to support overall well-being.

What did participants learn in the Ayurveda-Yoga program?

Participants joined one-hour group sessions each week led by an Ayurvedic doctor and a yoga therapist. They learned practical Ayurveda-based lifestyle strategies to support well-being, including healthy eating habits, daily self-care practices, breathing exercises, gentle yoga, and techniques for managing stress, improving sleep, and addressing common cancer-related symptoms.

What benefits did participants report?

Early results of the program are encouraging. Feedback from 36 participants showed high levels of satisfaction with the program. Participants said it helped them make healthier food and lifestyle choices (88%), lower stress (73%), improve their overall well-being (77%), and better manage common symptoms (69%).

Participants also reported feeling more aware of their bodies and more empowered to take an active role in their health. Many incorporated self-care practices such as self-massage, healthy eating habits, breathing exercises, and yoga into their daily routines to help manage stress and symptoms.

Because the program is offered online and in a group setting, it could be an easy way for more people living with and beyond cancer to get support for healthy lifestyle changes and improve quality of life.

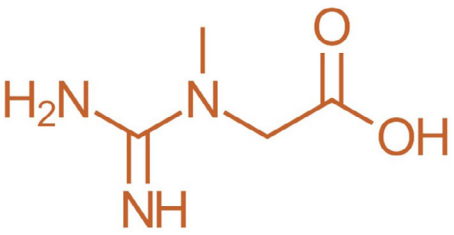
Learn more about upcoming Ayurveda workshops and series on our website.

Upcoming Wellness Programming

Integrative Medicine & Wellness Service offers a regular schedule of in-person and online workshops and series. 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**.

Creatine

By Jyothirmai Gubili, MS



Creatine, a nutrient produced by the body, is found in the skeletal muscles as well as in the heart and brain. It plays an important role in energy production.

Several studies have shown that creatine supplements help improve strength, muscle mass, and acute exercise capacity.

But more research is needed to find out if supplementation can benefit people with cancer.

Creatine supplements can cause gastrointestinal irritation, cramping, and headaches. Patients should consult with their physicians before taking creatine supplements.

For more details about Creatine, 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 Store℠).