Breast cancer is one of the most common cancer diagnoses in the United States. As a result, there are millions of breast cancer survivors in the United States. During and after treatment, many people who have been diagnosed with breast cancer experience a variety of symptoms that interfere with daily activities and lower their quality of life. Finding personalized evidence-based treatments for chronic and wide-ranging side effects can be a challenge. Growing evidence supports the benefits of integrative medicine for pain, fatigue, nausea, and anxiety. In addition, leading medical organizations endorse the use of integrative therapies for management of symptoms due to breast cancer and its treatment.

MSK’s Integrative Medicine Service (IMS) is leading research to further improve symptom management and quality of life for people who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. Currently, three clinical trials are investigating novel integrative approaches to address cognitive difficulties and insomnia, nerve pain, and muscle and joint pain.

The ENHANCE study, led by the chief of IMS, Dr. Jun. J. Mao, will help researchers determine if acupuncture improves cognitive difficulties and insomnia in breast cancer.
ABOUT HERBS FEATURE

Black Cohosh
by Jyothirmai Gubili

A perennial plant native to the eastern United States and Canada, black cohosh has been used by Native Americans to treat colds, cough, malaria, and menstrual disorders. It has gained popularity over the last few decades in the United States and Europe as a non-medication approach to address menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes and night sweats. The part of the plant used in herbal preparations is the root.

Findings in lab studies not involving people indicate that black cohosh enhances bone formation and prevents the spread of cancer cells as well as leads to their death. But definitive clinical data in human subjects to support its use for menopausal symptoms are lacking.

In oncology settings, an observational study reported black cohosh to be associated with prolonged disease-free survival in breast cancer patients. But investigations of its ability to reduce hot flashes resulting from breast cancer treatment produced mixed data. Whether black cohosh mimics estrogen in the body is also not fully known. Patients with breast cancer or at risk of breast cancer should consult with their doctors before taking it.

Adverse events including abnormal liver function and liver damage have been correlated with the use of black cohosh products. However, it is not clear if black cohosh is responsible. For more details about black cohosh, see our full article on the About Herbs website.

Contact us to learn more about the studies and determine your eligibility:
- **ENHANCE**: 646-888-0812 / medenhancestudy@mskcc.org
- **ACT**: 646-888-0829 / medacuCIPN@mskcc.org
- **YCT**: 646-888-0897 / medyogaforCIPN@mskcc.org
- **Tibetree Pain Relieving Plaster study**: 646-888-0844 / rtmmedims@mskcc.org.
Exercising Through Breast Cancer Treatment
by Jodi MacLeod

Jodi MacLeod is a patient advocate and cancer survivor who contributes to patient-centered outcomes research trials in MSK’s Integrative Medicine Service (IMS). She also serves as secretary of the Society for Integrative Oncology (SIO), and co-chair of the SIO Patient Advocate Committee.

As a breast cancer survivor, staying physically active is an important part of how I maintain my health and wellbeing. With the start of fall comes Breast Cancer Awareness Month. I spoke with Donna Wilson, nurse and clinical fitness expert, who advocates for inclusion of exercise as part of ongoing care for people living with breast cancer. Donna leads the popular Fitness for Everyone classes as part of MSK’s Integrative Medicine at Home membership program.

Donna shares that the common complaints post-breast cancer treatment include pain, restricted shoulder range of motion, joint pain, chest tightness, shoulders that cave in, poor posture, and fatigue. “These issues occur because the muscles become tight and shortened, which creates muscle imbalance and leads to neck and back problems,” says Donna. “Movement is the key to decrease the negative side effects of these complaints. The goal for all patients is to regain normal range of motion. Simple mobilization stretching can be done every day to decrease pain, and ease tight muscles, soft tissue restriction, and joint range of motion dysfunction, thus improving flexibility, range of motion and posture.”

By bringing her expertise to each of her exercise classes, which are open to people with any cancer diagnosis, Donna makes them fun, engaging, and accessible to each person’s current fitness level, while helping them to decrease anxiety and increase strength. She understands that for some people living through cancer, words like “fitness” or “exercise” can sound intimidating. But once they see changes in their strength and ease of movement, they are motivated to continue. “You took me from frail to fit,” exclaimed one participant in Donna’s classes. “They tell me they aren’t afraid of stairs anymore, and they are in better shape now than before they were treated for cancer,” Donna says. “Now, my tag line is, ‘Keep moving!’”

Donna Wilson leads an exercise class.

Visit www.MSK.org/AtHome today and learn about exercising with all of our instructors with the Integrative Medicine at Home membership program.

Fall Online Programming

Register online today to join for one of these upcoming virtual wellness programs. Scan the QR code with your phone to sign up online or call 646-888-0800.

COST
Series: $125 for Integrative Medicine at Home members, $155 regular price
Workshops: $20 for Integrative Medicine at Home members, $25 regular price

OCTOBER
› Series: Mindful Self-Compassion
     Sundays, October 10 to November 21, 2021, 7:00 pm to 8:15 pm
› Workshop: Find Balance and Ease with Yoga, Music, and Healing Sound
     Wednesday, October 14, 2021 7:00 pm to 8:15 pm
› Workshop: Yoga for Chemotherapy-induced Peripheral Neuropathy
     Saturday, October 23, 2021 12:00 pm to 1:15 pm

NOVEMBER
› Workshop: Osteoporosis: How to Build Bone with Exercise, Yoga, and Nutrition
     Thursday, November 4, 2021 1:00 pm to 2:15 pm
› Workshop: Relax Yourself to Sleep
     Thursday, November 11, 2021 7:00 pm to 8:15 pm

DECEMBER
› Workshop: Acupuncture for Chemotherapy-induced Peripheral Neuropathy
     Saturday, December 4, 2021 12:00 pm to 1:15 pm
Eugenie Spiguel is a certified Adult Nurse Practitioner and a licensed Holistic Nurse Practitioner in MSK’s Integrative Medicine Service. An expert in sleep management, Eugenie guides her patients to wellness through methods including cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I), diet, exercise, and stress management.

Since I completed treatment for breast cancer, I am having a hard time sleeping. What can I do to fix this?

Sleep disturbance is quite common after a cancer diagnosis and can occur at any time. There are several reasons why sleep disturbance happens, particularly for people who have experienced breast cancer. Symptoms from breast cancer treatment such as peripheral neuropathy, hot flashes, and joint pain may cause nighttime awakenings. Once awake, anxiety or intrusive thoughts may make it hard to fall back to sleep. Fortunately, there are some easy lifestyle changes you can make to help. Most importantly, set a sleep schedule. Having a consistent sleep and wake time can help you fall asleep easier.

Getting regular physical activity also prepares your body for a restful night’s sleep. Since stress and anxiety can contribute to sleep disturbance, having a relaxing bedtime routine can aid in preparing both your mind and body for bed. Through our Integrative Medicine at Home program, we offer exercise classes so that you can get moving and gain strength; meditation classes, yoga, and tai chi provide opportunities to practice relaxation techniques.

If you have tried all these approaches and are still having a difficult time, then you may want to consider insomnia treatment. Integrative medicine has non-medication therapies that have been shown to be effective for treating insomnia. One treatment option is cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia, or CBT-I. This is a program that helps people change their sleep habits to sleep better. Acupuncture is another treatment option that has been shown to be helpful for insomnia, especially for people experiencing symptoms such as hot flashes or joint pain, common in people with a history of breast cancer, that wake them at night.

To schedule a consultation with Eugenie or with one of our Integrative Medicine doctors, please call 646-888-0845.

Join Eugenie Spiguel and mind-body therapist Beth Sandweiss for the upcoming workshop, Relax Yourself to Sleep, Thursday, November 11, 2021, 7:00 pm to 8:15 pm. Call 646-888-0800 to learn more and register.

Do you have a question for our integrative medicine experts? Email us with “Ask the Expert” in the subject line at abouterbs@mskcc.org. We may feature your question in an upcoming issue!