

# About Integrative Medicine

A Guide to Self-Care and Support | Fall 2021

## CHIEF'S NOTE



*Jun Mao, MD, MSCE  
Chief, Integrative Medicine Service*

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. In recognition of the incredible resilience of those facing breast cancer as well as the challenges that they face from diagnosis and treatment into survivorship, we have focused this issue on sharing our resources and current work. As always, we aim to provide comprehensive integrative care to support our patients and their families throughout the cancer trajectory.

In this issue, we highlight promising research we are conducting to address symptoms and side effects in people with breast cancer. Patient advocate and breast cancer survivor Jodi MacLeod talks with fitness expert Donna Wilson about the importance of exercise during and beyond breast cancer. We also explore the evidence of black cohosh for menopausal symptoms, and our integrative nurse practitioner Eugenie Spiguel shares tips for how breast cancer survivors can improve their sleep.

Be well,  
Jun

## Finding Answers for Challenging Side Effects from Breast Cancer Treatment

by Colleen Smith

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



*MSK yoga instructor Clare Patterson is part of a research team studying if yoga can help reduce some side effects of breast cancer treatment.*





Acupuncturist Yi Chan, LAc DPM, with a patient.

survivors. It will also provide insight into the link between cognitive problems, such as memory and concentration, and insomnia.

Dr. Ting Bao, director of Integrative Breast Oncology, focuses her research on finding effective non-medication treatment for numbness and/or nerve pain caused by chemotherapy. This condition is called chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN). Building on promising findings from her prior study, in her current clinical trial, Acupuncture for Chemotherapy-induced Peripheral Neuropathy Treatment (ACT), Dr. Bao and her team are

examining the effects of electroacupuncture for CIPN. She is also preparing to open a new trial, Yoga for Chemotherapy-induced Peripheral Neuropathy Treatment (YCT).

People with breast cancer may experience muscle and joint pain related to their treatments. In a study open to cancer survivors of all types, Dr. Mao and his research team are assessing an herbal patch, Tibetree Pain Relieving Plaster, for relief of musculoskeletal pain experienced by some patients treated for cancer. Researchers think the herbs may reduce inflammation caused by cancer and treatments.

Dr. Mao says, “We hope that our study findings can further establish the safety and effectiveness of acupuncture and herbal medicine to expand therapeutic offerings and address specific symptoms for those in active treatment and survivorship.”

**Contact us to learn more about the studies and determine your eligibility:**

- › **ENHANCE:** 646-888-0812 / [medenhancestudy@mskcc.org](mailto:medenhancestudy@mskcc.org)
- › **ACT:** 646-888-0829 / [medacuCIPN@mskcc.org](mailto:medacuCIPN@mskcc.org)
- › **YCT:** 646-888-0897 / [medyogaforCIPN@mskcc.org](mailto:medyogaforCIPN@mskcc.org)
- › **Tibetree Pain Relieving Plaster study:** 646-888-0844 / [rtmmedims@mskcc.org](mailto:rtmmedims@mskcc.org).

**ABOUT HERBS FEATURE**

**Black Cohosh**

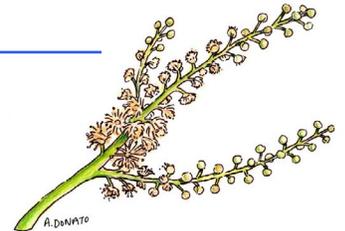
by Jyothirmai Gubili

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](#).



# 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



Donna Wilson leads an exercise class.

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!'"

Visit [www.MSK.org/AtHome](http://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



## Integrative Medicine at Home Membership Program

Start your membership online today. Visit [msk.org/athome](https://msk.org/athome) to get started.

### 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

### ASK THE EXPERT

## Eugenie Spiguel, Nurse Practitioner, on Improving Sleep During Breast Cancer



*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 [aboutherebs@mskcc.org](mailto:aboutherebs@mskcc.org). We may feature your question in an upcoming issue!

