

# Complementary Therapies: Medicinal

- **Some alternative treatments might be effective, but have not gone through thorough scientific tests**
- **Not all treatments or therapies will work the same for everyone**
- **It is strongly recommended that you speak to your general practitioner and/or other treating health practitioner about your options**
- **Complementary Therapies can include: Herbal Remedies; Vitamin and Mineral Supplements; and Pain Relief/Relaxation Treatments**

People living with the Late Effects of Polio often look for alternatives to conventional, Western medical treatments to manage their condition. These alternatives are often called complementary therapies. There are both physical and medicinal complementary therapies.

There are no drug treatments that have been found to be effective for post-polio symptoms. One type of treatment might be helpful for some people but not others.

It can be difficult to get good, objective advice about complementary therapies that might help you. Many alternative treatments may be effective, but have not gone through thorough scientific testing.

However, some Western health and medical professionals are becoming more accepting of complementary therapies. You might look for a general practitioner who practises holistic healthcare to consult with for options.



## Considerations For Choosing A Complementary Approach

Is the practitioner...

- registered with a professional body?
- knowledgeable about disability or the Late Effects of Polio?
- knowledgeable or experienced in the treatment they are recommending?

There are many 'natural' vitamin and mineral supplements, teas, and herbal remedies. They can react with drugs you might already be taking. The [National Health Service \(NHS\) UK](#) website lists potential issues to consider when using herbal medicines.

Also, the [Choice](#) website has good information about how medicines (including complementary medicines) are labelled and registered. This includes the difference between "listed" and "registered" medicines. Listed items are not always closely monitored. Registered medicines are individually assessed for safety and effectiveness.

Speak with your general practitioner about how certain supplements and herbs might affect you. Also discuss whether they might interact with other medicines you are taking.

## Common Vitamin And Mineral Supplements Used By Polio Survivors

- **Acetyl-L-carnitine:** may improve mental function and reduce deterioration in older adults with mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease
- **Co-enzyme Q10:** used as an anti-oxidant; may improve statin-associated muscle symptoms
- **Fish oil/Omega 3:** used as an anti-inflammatory
- **Magnesium:** an essential mineral used in almost all tissues of the body, especially nerve and muscle function
- **Manganese:** an essential element involved in formation of bone and joints
- **Vitamin D:** allows the body to absorb calcium; important for strong bones and teeth, and nerve function
- **Vitamin E:** used as an anti-oxidant
- **Zinc:** found in every cell in the body and helps the immune system



## Pain Relief And Relaxation Treatments

- **Aromatherapy:** essential oils can be massaged into the skin (diluted in oil), added to bath water or vaporised in an oil burner. Popular essential oil therapies include:
  - for joint pain and function use peppermint, marjoram, lemongrass, cypress, and copaiba
  - for relaxation use lavender, Roman chamomile, ylang ylang, and frankincense
- **Magnesium Chloride Flakes and Magnesium Sulfate-Epsom Salts:** add to a bath for stress relief, muscle and joint pain, improving circulation, and relieving headaches
- **Tiger Balm and Arnica cream (and others):** rub directly onto the skin as a topical anti-inflammatory

### More Information

- Australian Government's **Health Direct** website: lists the roles of vitamins and minerals
- Australian Government's **Health and Medical Research Council** website: includes a review of a range of nutrients recommended for daily intake and links to a list of individual nutrient reference values
- You can read more on the **Nutrition Fact Sheet**. This includes the role of protein and other dietary factors
- Discuss options with your general practitioner

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