



Complementary treatment

There is no scientific evidence to suggest that any type of complementary treatment is successful in controlling or curing epilepsy, although some people find complementary treatments helpful in treating their epilepsy. Because of this lack of scientific evidence, it is recommended that complementary treatment should be used with anti-epileptic medication, rather than on its own.

In providing information, Epilepsy Action is not making any recommendations with regard to the use of complementary treatment. If you are considering complementary treatment we strongly recommend that you consult a qualified practitioner in that particular type of therapy, and also that you discuss the matter with your GP or epilepsy specialist first.

Contact details for the following complementary treatments are available at the end of this information.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture involves treating the whole person, body and mind, by using needles, and sometimes heat, to stimulate the nerve endings. The aim is to improve the general state of health, creating a better mental, physical and emotional balance. Very little research has been carried out into the use of acupuncture in epilepsy. However, of the research that is available, there do not appear to be any harmful side effects relating specifically to epilepsy.

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy involves the use of pure aromatic oils taken from various plants. General relaxation is

one way that aromatherapy can be used and oils, such as ylang ylang, camomile and lavender, appear to aid relaxation. In some people, whose seizures begin with a warning, breathing in the scent of the aromatic oils at the start of the warning can reduce the chance, or severity, of an epileptic attack. Aromatherapy should only be given by a qualified aromatherapist. This is because some oils can trigger seizures and should therefore be avoided by people with epilepsy. These oils include rosemary, sage, hyssop, fennel and wormwood. (Note: these herbs when used in foods and drinks are perfectly safe, with the exception of wormwood, which should be avoided.)

Research carried out at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham by Dr Tim Betts suggests that aromatherapy can help to control epilepsy in some people.

Herbal treatments

There are different types of herbal treatments available, for example, general herbal medications and Chinese herbal medicines. Herbal treatment uses plants as a cure to treat the whole person. Some people may have their seizures triggered by certain Chinese herbal remedies. The information contained within the packaging may advise on any interactions with epilepsy or anti-epileptic drugs. Advice can also be found from a herbalist, the manufacturer of the herbal treatment or Anglo Chinese Medicine Doctor Society (see contact details at the end of this fact sheet). It is advisable to discuss any herbal remedies with your own doctor before starting treatment.

Homeopathy

Homeopathy is a treatment that aims to stimulating the body's natural healing process. It concentrates on treating the person rather than the disease. Some people have found homeopathic treatment has helped their epilepsy.

If you are reading this publication more than 12 months after the date shown below, please contact Epilepsy Action to check whether it is still current.

Contacts

Further information, if required, can be obtained from the organisations listed below.

- British Acupuncture Council, 63 Jeddo Road, London, W12 9HQ. Telephone: 020 8735 0400, www.acupuncture.org.uk
info@acupuncture.org.uk
- International Federation of Aromatherapists, 61 – 63 Chesterfield Road, Acton, London, W3 6AY. Telephone: 020 8992 9605, www.ifaroma.org
office@ifaroma.org
- National Institute of Medical Herbalists, Elm House, 54 Mary Archer Street, Exeter, Devon, EX4 3BA. Telephone: 01392 426 022, www.nimh.org.uk
nimh@ukexeter.freeserve.co.uk
- British Homeopathic Association, 29 Park Street West, Luton, LU1 3BE. Telephone: 0870 444 3950, www.trusthomeopathy.org
- Anglo Chinese Medicine Doctor Society, 1A Cheam Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1SN. Telephone: 020 8643 8885, www.acmds.org
<mailto:herbalmed@intonet.co.uk>

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