

Untitled

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Alternative medicine rarely discussed with doctors

Most Americans age 50 and older use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), such as herbal products or acupuncture, often unbeknownst to their doctor, according to a survey conducted by AARP and the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

It's in patient's best interest to tell their doctor about the CAMs they're taking, experts say, because some alternative medicines may interfere with over-the-counter medications, prescription drugs, or other conventional medical approaches.

"Communication between patients and physicians about CAM and conventional therapies is vital to ensuring safe, integrated use of all health care approaches," the report states.

An open dialogue "allows patients and physicians the opportunity to identify CAM practices that might be beneficial and also minimizes risks to a patient from potential therapy interactions."

Among a total of 1,559 individuals age 50 and older surveyed in the spring of 2006, 63 percent reported having used one or more CAM therapies.

People between the ages of 50 and 59 are the most likely to report CAM use, according to the survey results, which can be found at www.aarp.org/research/health/prevention/cam_2007.html.

Forty-five percent of CAM enthusiasts used massage therapy, chiropractic manipulation or other bodywork; 42 percent used herbal or dietary supplements; 15 percent used mind/body practices, including hypnosis and meditation; 14 percent used naturopathy, acupuncture, or homeopathy; and 10 percent had tried energy therapies.

Sixty-six percent of CAM users said they did so to treat a specific health problem; 65 percent for overall wellness; 45 percent to supplement conventional medicine; and 42 percent to prevent illness.

Sixty-nine percent of those who reported using CAM had not discussed it with a doctor. Why? Forty-two percent said because their doctor never asked; 30 percent said they did not know they should; 19 percent felt there was not enough time during the office visit; 17 percent didn't think the doctor would know about the topic; and 12 percent thought the doctor would be dismissive or tell them not to use CAM.

Women were more likely than men to have discussed CAM use with their doctor (26 percent vs 16 percent) and those younger than age 65 were more likely to discuss CAM use than were older individuals.

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Interesting stats especially with the population in our area
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