



C R E D I T • V A L L E Y

THE CARLO FIDANI PEEL REGIONAL CANCER CENTRE

Use of Natural Health Products During Chemotherapy and Radiation Therapy

A joint recommendation on behalf of Supportive Care, Medical Oncology, Radiation Oncology, Nursing, Pharmacy and Nutrition of the Peel Regional Cancer Centre Program

The use of some Natural Health Products (NHP's) during active treatment such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy requires careful consideration.

What are Natural Health Products?

Natural Health Products are vitamins, minerals, herbs and other supplements that you take on a regular basis as a natural medicine in addition to what is obtained from food. These products are sold in liquid, pill, powder or capsule form and can be found in concentrations that far exceed what one would obtain through food sources.

Why is careful consideration of NHP's required?

Caution is required when combining NHP's with your cancer treatment because the use of certain NHP's may reduce the effectiveness and safety of certain chemotherapies, radiation therapy and other prescribed medication associated with your treatment. Caution is also required because standards governing the products' ingredients and health claims may not be reliable.

The Peel Regional Cancer Program Recommendations During Active Treatment

1. If you are considering taking a NHP and will be receiving active treatment such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy, we recommend you discuss this with your health care team first.
2. If you are already taking a NHP we recommend that you inform your Health Care Team before beginning your cancer treatment. You may be advised to discontinue use of some supplements during active treatment. Discuss with your Health Care Team the most appropriate time to resume use of NHP's following completion of your active treatment.
3. We recommend that you maintain a healthy diet based on Canada's Food Guide. Consuming the recommended number of servings per day will provide you with the necessary nutrients.
4. If required, we recommend the use of a regular strength one a day multivitamin and mineral supplement appropriate for age.

These recommendations provide guidance on the use of NHP's during active treatment. Individual consultation with your healthcare team is available to address your questions or concerns. We are committed to helping you find information so you can make informed decisions.

Reliable Sources of Information on Natural Health Products & Therapies

Starting Point

1. National Institutes of Health
www.nih.gov

Use the search field on this site to locate the following:

- National Library of Medicine
Use the search field on this site to locate “Medline Plus”. View “ Drug and Supplements”. Browse by the product’s first letter.
- NCCAM (National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine)
Use the search field on this site to locate “Herbs at a Glance”.
- Office of Dietary Supplements.
Click on Health Information

2. Cancer Care Ontario
www.cancercare.on.ca

Use the search field on this site to locate “*Position Paper on Complementary Therapies*”.

3. National Cancer Institute
www.cancer.gov

Use the search field on this site to locate the following publication:

- Thinking About Complementary And Alternative Medicine: A Guide for People with Cancer

4. Canadian Cancer Society
www.cancer.ca

Click on publications, alphabetical list of publications, Complementary Therapies

Looking for Information About Your Specific Natural Health Products?

1. Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre
www.mskcc.org
Use the search field on this site to locate “About Herbs, Botanicals & Other Products”.
2. The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Centre
www.mdanderson.org
Use the search field on this site to locate “CIMER”
(Complementary/Integrative Medicine Education Resources)
3. Drug Digest
www.drugdigest.org
Click on “Drug Library” then view “Herbs and Supplements”