

**TIME TO TALK.** TELL your health care providers about your use of complementary and alternative medicine.



Did you know that more than one in three adults use some form of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)?<sup>1</sup> For women and older Americans, those numbers are even higher—two out of five report using CAM. But many people don't talk with their health care providers about their CAM use.

### What is complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)?

CAM is a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not generally considered part of conventional medicine. CAM includes such products and practices as herbal supplements, meditation, chiropractic manipulation, and acupuncture.

### Why tell your health care providers about CAM use?

- Giving your health care providers a full picture of what you do to manage your health helps you stay in control.
- Some CAM approaches can have an effect on conventional medicine. Talking to your health care providers about CAM use will help ensure coordinated and safe care.
- Talking to your providers about CAM use helps them to be fully informed and your partners in health care.

### Tips for talking to your health care providers about CAM

- When completing patient history forms, be sure to include all therapies and treatments you use. Make a list in advance.
- Tell your health care providers about all therapies or treatments—including over-the-counter and prescription medicines, as well as herbal and dietary supplements.
- Don't wait for your providers to ask about your CAM use. Be proactive.
- If you are considering using a CAM therapy, ask your health care providers about its safety, effectiveness, and possible interactions with medications (both prescription and nonprescription).

<sup>1</sup> Barnes PM, Bloom B, Nahin R. Complementary and alternative medicine use among adults and children: United States, 2007. *CDC National Health Statistics Report #12*. 2008.

### CAM Resources from the National Institutes of Health

**National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine**  
nccam.nih.gov or 1-888-644-6226

**MedlinePlus**  
medlineplus.gov

**NIH Office of Dietary Supplements**  
dietary-supplements.info.nih.gov

**National Cancer Institute Office of Cancer Complementary and Alternative Medicine**  
www.cancer.gov/cam



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