

# ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

## PROS AND CONS

*Alternative medicine is the use of treatment methods that differ from medicine. Widely used healing methods are homeopathy, Ayurveda, chiropractic and others. Medicinal methods, in contrast to methods in medicine, do not have proven effects. Science does not recognize healing and so-called alternative medicine, as there is no empirical evidence in their favor. It follows from the definition of medicine and healing that the theoretical boundary between them is clear and sharp: scientific provenance.*

Comparative studies and research based on empirical evidence do not belong to scientific research. The line between science



and medicine is set more artificially, but clearly: medicine is what is taught in medical schools in the USA and Great Britain, everything else is medicine. Even this definition has shortcomings, as the curriculum is not the same at all faculties. In some Western European countries, the line between healing and medicine is distinctly blurred. Possible dangers when using medicine

are:

- direct injury due to the medical procedure or means
- delayed visit to the doctor
- non-professional advice.

Physiological and other direct effects of healing on the body are by definition unproven. Undoubtedly, medicinal methods have a placebo effect. This is also present, known and proven in medical treatment methods, but it can be especially pronounced in medicinal methods. The placebo effect depends on the patient's will, self-confidence, faith and trust. All this usually develops more clearly during the healing process, during which a more personal dialogue takes place.

Alternative medicine is suitable for people with major or minor health problems/diseases, people who have overcome a certain disease, people who have already been branded by official medicine as an "intractable case" and people who take care of their health holistically and want to maintain it high level. People who use alternative medicine to maintain well-being and to enhance and maintain optimal health use it because of the positive physical, mental, psychological and spiritual feelings that each method brings. Such people often place a lot of importance on the

philosophical aspect of a method/technique, which is why they adopt this philosophy "as their own" or start living it in their everyday life. Some feel connected to individual techniques or methods of alternative treatment on different levels through intuitive channels.

People to whom official medicine has closed its doors or already written them off, or people who are dissatisfied with the approach of officially recognized medicine, often resort to alternative medicine, where they learn about new possibilities of returning, gaining or strengthening holistic health, they are filled with inner strength and joy that restores their hopes for better, more complete health. Those people who have overcome a certain disease often use supportive techniques and methods of alternative medicine, especially in the case that the accompanying condition has not been completely completed or resolved by official medicine after the treatment has been completed. However, there are people who, at the time of broken health and the resulting disease, will first of all decide on alternative medicine based on previous experience with alternative forms of treatment, on the basis of the experience of people with a similar health problem or disease, or because they live and believe into a way of life in which there is no "space" for official medicine. Therefore, it is suitable for both preventive, curative and rehabilitation purposes. Alternative medicine covers many techniques and methods of treatment and is an extremely diverse field, namely:



- **Alternative medical system or traditional alternative forms of treatment.** This includes old methods and techniques (healing systems) that have their basis in ancient traditional skills and knowledge. This group can include e.g. naturopathy, acupuncture, Ayurveda and traditional Chinese medicine.
- **Alternative techniques that affect or intervene in the relationship between mind and body.** Techniques or methods are aimed at the individual, to direct him to strengthening, connecting and unifying mind and body. The individual is encouraged to start thinking positively, to strengthen life motivation. This includes all types of meditation, sound therapy, relaxation techniques, dance, affirmations, prayers,...
- **Alternative techniques and methods of treatment with biological action.** Techniques or methods are based on biology, which means that they are based on the use of natural substances (plants and their products). When using these types of therapies and methods, we begin to balance the body and improve certain processes (e.g. chemical ones).
- **Alternative manipulation techniques and methods are based on body movement or manipulation of body parts** (joints, muscles, etc.). These include

therapies such as manual therapy and medicine, chiropractic, osteopathy (belonging to "alternative and complementary medicine - CAM"), massage, etc. Increasingly, this group also includes e.g. tai chi chuan and yoga.

- **Alternative forms of energy therapy use energy to heal or restore balance in the body and energy field of the individual.** Alternative energy treatments include bioenergy, reiki, magnetotherapy, crystal therapy, reconnection,...



By definition, an alternative form of treatment (complementary, unconventional, unorthodox) is actually some other option, some parallel to Western medicine (official, evidence-based, good medicine). Alternative treatments may include acupuncture with acupuncture needles, biological substances (such as vitamins) or manual skills of the healer (such as manipulation). Alternative medicine also includes meditations and energies that are used for

healing and also work at a distance - in these forms of alternative treatment, the physical presence of the patient is not necessarily necessary.

The US National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) also cites as examples naturopathy, chiropractic, herbalism, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) as a whole, Ayurveda, meditation, yoga, bio-feedback, hypnosis, homeopathy, acupuncture and nutritional therapies that have been around for a long time, but he also mentions many other newer branches (bio-field therapy, bio-electromagnetic therapy, etc.). All of these forms are grouped under the group "complementary medicine" (CAM or CAM), which generally refers to similar forms of work: the use of natural energies for healing - all within the term complementary or alternative medicine.

According to the latest national estimates, Americans spend more than a tenth of their money (outside of regular health insurance) on alternative forms of treatment. On the list of providers are chiropractors, who collect most of this money, followed by massage therapists and herbalists, and acupuncture is also high on the list. A 2007 report estimates \$34 trillion spent by American consumers on alternative therapies, including alternative medicine.

Some forms of alternative healing require patients who simply believe that healing is possible in this way. The second group includes methods of alternative treatment (such as chiropractic), which easily convince even the most skeptical customers with their effectiveness. The more "alternative" a treatment is, the harder it is to get people to try it. Basically, alternative treatment is very different from the established forms in the West, which is why it is very difficult to get used to it and very difficult to accept it.

Roughly speaking, patients and users of alternative forms of treatment are divided into two groups. The first group are people who take care of their health and constantly improve it. These are people who actually don't need either medicine or a doctor, as a rule they are not sick, but they are attracted to alternative forms in a philosophical aspect. The alternative offers them the possibility and form of maintaining optimal health. This group of people opts for alternative treatment procedures and methods because they somehow intuitively feel connected to them. Own positive experiences and reactions of the physical body further support such thinking and belonging to the alternative. Those who have previously been dissatisfied with recognized Western medicine find new dimensions and hope in the alternative. Another group includes people who want to recover from an illness.

Individuals look to alternative sources for treatment when their physical health problems or illnesses have not been resolved by classical Western medicine. In this case, the alternative offers them a new set of solutions, a new hope. Alternative forms represent a proactive approach to achieving health, which pleases many and many choose them, despite the fact that classical Western medicine offers them no solution and no hope.



Interestingly, alternative forms of treatment and procedures offer a wide range of options for both groups of "seekers"! People from the first group who want to maintain holistic health will find a lot useful in the alternative (Tibetan exercises, meditations, yoga, food supplements and various nutritional tips). Patients from the second group often turn to the alternative because it means their last hope - in this case, the alternative offers them hope and the possibility of a cure, while classical medicine promises nothing. Many practitioners in the alternative point out that diseases and health problems are closely related to the psyche and the way of thinking and to energy patterns that can be changed, replaced or eliminated at any moment.

It is very generally and roughly divided into five large groups, which differ in the way of mutual influence between the client, client or patient on the one hand and the healer (practitioner of alternative forms of treatment) on the other.

Alternative traditional forms of healing They represent very old systems of healing that grew out of ancient traditional knowledge and skills - people used them long before the advent of allopathic and evidence-based Western medicine. Among them, the most well-known are traditional Chinese medicine and Ayurveda, which are still rooted in Asia and India. They are defined as alternative forms of treatment, as they



include e.g. also herbalism and acupuncture, which are not included in Western medicine.



Alternative treatment with biological action All substances (available without a prescription in pharmacies and over-the-counter) that can be introduced into the body with the aim of balancing the body or improving chemical processes in it belong to forms of treatment with biological action. The most widely

represented in this group are vitamins and, next to them, a range of nutritional supplements. In orthodox medicine, doctors generally recommend vitamins only in case of vitamin deficiency. Alternative treatment with biological systems also includes the use of sveltin oil, eggshells, shark cartilage or imperial Russian fish, which is not found in classical Western medicine.

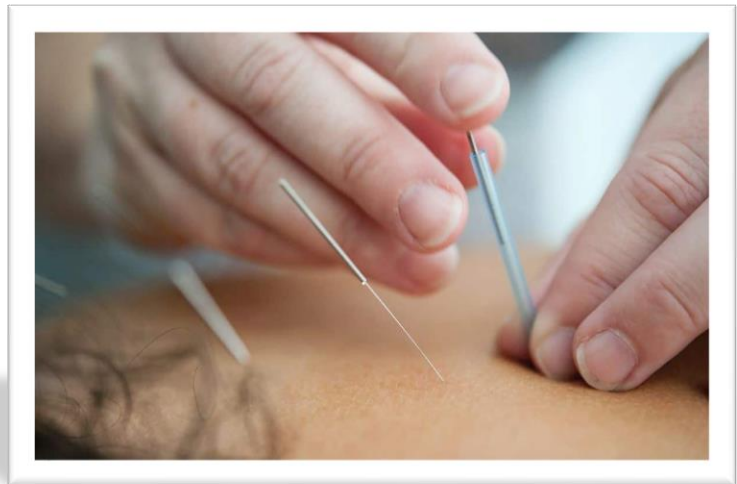
Alternative intervention in the "soul and body" relationship Procedures that encourage the individual to think positively and create their own positive affirmations, to search for healing energies with the help of their own motivations, are defined as alternative intervention in the "soul and body" relationship. Alternative advocates a form of neurologically programmed systems, orthodox Western medicine does not. Western medicine includes psychological support for the patient in the form of various organized groups (e.g. alcoholics), which somewhat resembles an alternative approach and support for the patient's psyche, but the principle of work is quite different from the alternative.

Alternative treatment with manipulation includes manual techniques (e.g. different types of massage techniques, chiropractic) in which the healer performs manipulation of a joint or part of the body. This form of alternative is actually still the most accepted among Western medicine practitioners. It is worth noting that manipulation with redression is also one of the officially recognized procedures in orthopedics and partly in physiatry, that the mobilization of joints and the spine belongs to the "normal" procedures of physical medicine and rehabilitation, and in particular: osteopaths are trained in the West and according to Western medical criteria doctors who use a form of spinal manipulation in their work.

Alternative energy healing is based on the assumption of an induced imbalance in certain energy fields within the human body. These energy fields are extremely sensitive and delicate, their imbalance causes diseases. They can be re-balanced and balanced with certain manual techniques and even better with meditation, hope and the intention of healing. Among the best-known alternative energy techniques, Reiki certainly belongs, and the placement of crystals, magnets, pyramid stones and other

materials, with the aim of purifying the energies in the patient's body, is also known. The term light energy healing is sometimes used for these forms.

In any case, it is necessary to warn all users of alternative techniques that they should be at least a little careful before the procedures, because there is still no law on medical treatment in our country! In each of the mentioned groups, damage can also be caused to an individual, for which no



one will be held responsible. If we ignore the material damage, many of the untrained, self-proclaimed healers can further incapacitate, injure or otherwise throw an individual out of balance with an inappropriate method. At least some consideration and checking before the procedures, when we entrust our own body to an unknown (perhaps ignorant) stranger, is still worth it, right?!