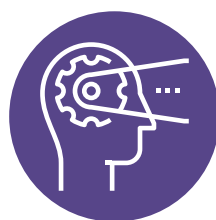


Choices

Complementary and other therapies



Multiple sclerosis information

Welcome to this Choices booklet about complementary and other therapies

MS-UK believes we must listen to the voices of people affected by multiple sclerosis (MS) to shape the information and support we provide. It is these people that bring us perspectives that no one else can give.

For every Choices booklet we produce, MS-UK consults the wider MS community to gather feedback and uses this to inform our content. All of our Choices booklets are then reviewed by the MS-UK Virtual Insight Panel before they are published.

This Choices booklet has been designed with you in mind. We hope it will answer some of your questions and also provide some first-hand experience from those who have been in your position - people who can truly understand and empathise with your current thoughts and feelings.

Every time you find bold text with quotation marks like this, it is a quote directly from someone affected by multiple sclerosis

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Complementary and other therapies

Many people with MS use complementary and other therapies. These can be in addition or complementary to conventional treatments including disease-modifying therapies. They are generally used to create an overall sense of wellbeing.


It is estimated that around 70 per cent of people with MS have used a form of complementary or other therapy to treat their symptoms (1). The results of a recent survey by MS-UK showed the most common therapies tried by people with MS are acupuncture and yoga.

A qualified complementary therapist will aim to treat the whole person and not just the symptoms. Each person is treated as an individual and any treatment is tailored to the specific needs of that person.

One of the main advantages of using these treatments is that it puts you in charge of decisions around your own health. It is important to be able to do something positive to help yourself.



Not everything will work, but give anything a go. Set realistic targets, considering your own personal difficulties



Research is limited in evaluating the safety and effectiveness of complementary therapies in MS (1). This is because the nature of complementary therapies mean that it is difficult to conduct a 'double-blind' trial - a research method used in the scientific

community to prove the safety and effectiveness of a medicine or treatment, where some of the people enrolled in the trial receive the real treatment, and some receive a placebo.

Many people receiving complementary therapies report that they find them beneficial. If you are considering trying a complementary therapy, it is important to find a reputable therapist who is fully insured and a member of a professional body. You can contact the complementary therapy's organising body to find a therapist near you. See further information for details of how to find a practitioner in your area. Before booking any treatment please remember to check the cost of the treatment you choose, particularly if there is more than one session required.

All practitioners should be fully aware of any potential contraindications and will advise of these if relevant.



Read up so you know what will be involved, such as cost, commitment, how long to use before effects will kick in etc. Its best to get recommendations



Some of the more commonly used therapies amongst people with MS are reflexology, massage, yoga, relaxation, meditation, aromatherapy, and acupuncture (2).

Over the following pages, we have listed a number of popular therapies with more information about what they are and how they may help. This is not an exhaustive list and there may be other therapies that you

are interested in. If the therapy you are interested in is not mentioned please contact MS-UK and we will find out more for you.

Try different therapies to find out what one/s work for you best, although give them a chance as not every therapy will feel like it's helping after only one session

Acupuncture

Acupuncture has been practised for thousands of years, originating from China. It works with the energy (or 'qi') of the body which flows through channels or meridians. It is believed that acupuncture stimulates the nervous system and causes the release of neurochemicals to promote physical and emotional wellbeing.

Acupuncture involves the use of very fine sterile needles, which pierce the skin to reach an acupuncture point. They are inserted very precisely and connect with the body's qi. It is not considered painful, just a small prick to the skin and maybe a dull ache for a few seconds when the point is reached (3). Some people find they

Acupuncture was very beneficial for me. It helped ease sciatic pain and also was effective in reducing clawing of my toes

benefit quite quickly, others require more extensive treatment and for some it may not provide the results they are looking for.

For MS, acupuncture is most commonly used to help relieve pain and tension, improve movement, sensation and spasticity. It may help eye problems and bladder urgency. It may also help to reduce fatigue, and increase energy levels

APS Therapy

APS stands for Action Potential Simulation. It helps to stimulate the body's own healing mechanisms. The APS machine sends a microcurrent signal to the human body to start the body's own action potential and release cellular energy.



I have benefitted greatly with pain relief in my back and stopping of leg spasms. I am now working to improve movement in leg and purchase a machine to use at home



APS Therapy is a safe, effective, drug free treatment for pain relief, which can also enhance recovery or injury repair, and improve energy levels (4). It is applied in a similar way to a TENS machine but works in a different way.

Conditions that have been successfully treated include muscular pain, nerve pain, neuropathy, restless leg syndrome, chronic fatigue, insomnia and headaches (5).

Aromatherapy

This uses powerful, fragrant essential oils with massage to help you feel relaxed or energised. Essential oils are the essence of the plant. They are extracted from herbs, flowers, shrubs or trees. Each one is different with its own fragrance and therapeutic use. Some oils have anti-inflammatory properties, others bring about a feeling of relaxation and others are stimulating.

An aromatherapy massage can help to relax the whole body, improve sleep, reduce pain, help with the mobility of joints and muscles, and provide an improved sense of wellbeing (6).

Chiropractic

This is a system of gentle manipulation of the body to treat disorders of the joints, ligaments and muscles and their effect on the nervous system. It is used for back pain, neck pain, headaches, migraine and sports injuries. In MS, many of the musculoskeletal symptoms could be managed with physical therapy (7).

Treatment consists of a wide range of manipulation techniques designed to improve the function of the joints, relieving pain and muscle spasm.

Massage

This is one of the oldest known therapies and has been used for thousands of years to help ease stiffness in muscles and joints, relieve pain, improve blood and lymph circulation, and increase wellbeing. It can also be used to stimulate the various systems of the body and can also help with posture, ease stress and release tension. It has been found that massage lowers anxiety, reduces pain, promotes relaxation and improves patient wellbeing (8).

I have monthly massages to relax tight muscles and remove knots from shoulders caused by walking gait

There are a number of different types of massage, some gentle, others more vigorous. These include

- Therapeutic massage – a traditional type of massage. Good for relieving aching joints and muscles
- Manual Lymphatic Drainage – a very gentle massage. Works on the circulation of the lymph, stimulating lymphatic drainage
- Shiatsu – a very stimulating massage where firm pressure is applied to acupressure points. It helps with a range of symptoms, including depression, constipation and low vitality
- Aromatherapy massage – Relaxing massage where essential oils are used to help give symptomatic relief with sleep, relaxation, joint mobility and an improved sense of wellbeing

There are many other types of massage therapy that may also provide some symptomatic relief.

Being able to relax relieves muscle spasms and spasticity

Meditation

This is an ancient practice by which a person learns to be present in the moment, allowing them to become more relaxed, and peaceful. It helps to slow the mind and be more kind and gentle to yourself. It is seen by researchers to be one of the most effective forms of stress reduction and has been shown to relieve biological markers of stress (9).



Meditation helps me to relax



Meditation encourages a gradual release of all thoughts and feelings. There are a number of different forms of meditation including transcendental meditation and mindfulness.

It provides the individual with a number of health benefits including stress reduction, relieving anxiety, depression and also reduction in pain (10).

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is an ancient Buddhist practice and according to Jon Kabat-Zinn, it is a practice which is very relevant for life today (11).



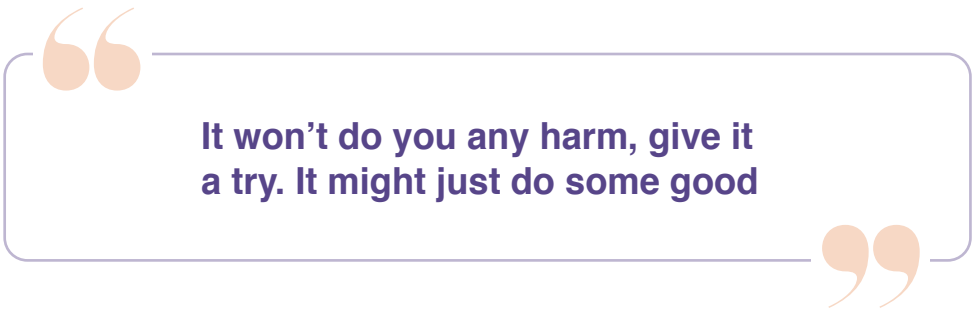
I use mindfulness a lot. You only need a small amount of time to switch off and feel calmer. I use it to get to sleep



Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to the present moment, using techniques like meditation, breathing and yoga.

Training helps people to become more aware of their thoughts, feelings and body sensations so that instead of being overwhelmed by them, they're better able to manage them.

Practising mindfulness can give more insight into emotions, boost attention and concentration, and improve relationships.



It won't do you any harm, give it a try. It might just do some good

It is recommended by NICE that health professionals consider mindfulness as a way of treating MS-related fatigue (12). It is also recommended as a preventative practice for people with experience of recurrent depression (13).

If you feel that you may benefit from attending a mindfulness course, please speak to your GP in the first instance about a referral.

Osteopathy


Osteopathy is based on the belief that pain and disability stems from abnormalities in the body's structure and function. An osteopath recognises and treats problems in the bones, joints, muscles and ligaments to help the body heal naturally. When the body is balanced and working efficiently it will function with minimum wear and tear, leaving more energy for living. Treatment can involve gentle, manual techniques to help ease some symptoms of MS.

A small scale study saw improvements in fatigue and depression, and an increase in quality of life following osteopathic manipulative therapy (14).

Oxygen Therapy

Oxygen Therapy involves breathing 100% oxygen through a mask whilst inside a pressurised metal chamber similar to that used in diving. The chamber is a sealed unit, usually large enough to seat six to eight people. Over the course of an hour, it is filled with a higher concentration of oxygen than normal air under pressure. As you breathe, the oxygen saturates your blood and tissues.

Anecdotally improvements have been experienced with fatigue levels and bladder symptoms. Although there is a lack of research supporting the effectiveness of oxygen therapy, one study suggests treatment is better in patients with less advanced disease (15).



Oxygen therapy is the only thing that clears my brain, plus it helps reduce fatigue



Oxygen therapy is available in many Therapy Centres around the country. Treatment requires regular attendance at the Centre - usually three to four times per week initially. A treatment plan may consist of a course of around 20 sessions, each one lasting an hour, spread over a month. These are followed by top-up sessions, which may vary from once a week to once a month.

It is easy to communicate with the operator at any time. All operators should be skilled and fully trained.

To find your nearest therapy centre offering oxygen therapy, please visit the Neuro Therapy Network website or contact the MS-UK office.

Reflexology

Reflexology is a complementary therapy that works most commonly on the feet, but also on the hands, face or ears. The aim of the treatment is to encourage the body to restore its natural balance. Gentle pressure is applied to specific reflex points and by working on these points, imbalances or blockages can be released which helps to restore the free flow of energy around the body. This helps to increase energy and balance the immune system. It may also help to ease tension and improve circulation. Reflexologists should not diagnose or claim to cure, but some symptoms may be relieved through regular treatments.



Definitely give it a try, you won't know the benefits until you try



Reflexology is an enjoyable, relaxing treatment. For people with MS, it can help reduce bladder issues and help alleviate motor and sensory disturbances (16).

Yoga

Yoga originates from India and has been practiced for over 5,000 years. The main components of the practice involve postures and breathing. Some studies suggest that yoga is helpful to reduce




Yoga improves my mobility and balance




aches and pains and lower back pain. It can also increase physical activity, especially strength, flexibility and balance (17).

Yoga has been shown to help reduce MS related fatigue and may also help to improve depression, anxiety, pain and spasticity (10).



**Try anything, especially if it can
be recommended by another MSer
who has used it successfully**



Further information

Acupuncture

The British Acupuncture Council

Call 020 8735 0400

Email info@acupuncture.org.uk

www.acupuncture.org.uk

APS Therapy

Painfree Potential

Call 01908 799870

Visit www.painfreepotential.co.uk

Aromatherapy

Federation of Holistic Therapists

(Aromatherapy, Bowen, Homeopathy, Massage & other therapies)

Call 023 8062 4350

Email info@fht.org.uk

Visit www.fht.org.uk

Chiropractic

British Chiropractic Association

Call 0300 302 0332

Email enquiries@chiropractic-uk.co.uk

Visit www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk

Massage

Federation of Holistic Therapists

(Aromatherapy, Bowen, Homeopathy, Massage & other therapies)

Call 023 8062 4350
Email info@fht.org.uk
Visit www.fht.org.uk

Meditation

British Meditation Society
Call 01460 62921
Visit www.britishmeditationsociety.org

Mindfulness

British Association for Mindfulness-based Approaches
Visit www.bamba.org.uk

Osteopathy

General Osteopathic Council
Call 020 7357 6655
Email info@osteopathy.org.uk
Visit www.osteopathy.org.uk

Oxygen Therapy

Multiple Sclerosis National Therapy Centres (MSNTC)
Call 01296 711699
Email info@msntc.org.uk
Visit www.msntc.org.uk

Reflexology

Association of Reflexologists
Call 01823 351010

Email info@aor.org.uk

Visit www.aor.org.uk

Yoga

The British Wheel of Yoga

Call 01529 306851

Email office@bwy.org.uk

Visit www.bwy.org.uk

About MS-UK

MS-UK is a national charity formed in 1993 supporting anyone affected by multiple sclerosis. Our hope for the future is a world where people affected by MS live healthier and happier lives.

MS-UK has always been at the forefront of promoting choice, of providing people with all the information and support they need to live life as they wish to with multiple sclerosis, whether that be through drugs, complementary therapies, lifestyle changes, a mixture of these or none at all.

We will always respect people's rights to make informed decisions for themselves.

The MS-UK Helpline

We believe that nobody should face multiple sclerosis alone and our helpline staff are here to support you every step of the way.

Our service is informed by the lived experience of real people living with MS, so we can discuss any treatments and lifestyle choices that are of benefit, whether they are clinically evidenced or not.



New Pathways

Our bi-monthly magazine, New Pathways, is full of the latest MS news regarding trials, drug development and research as well as competitions, special offers and product reviews. The magazine connects you to thousands of other people living with MS across the country.

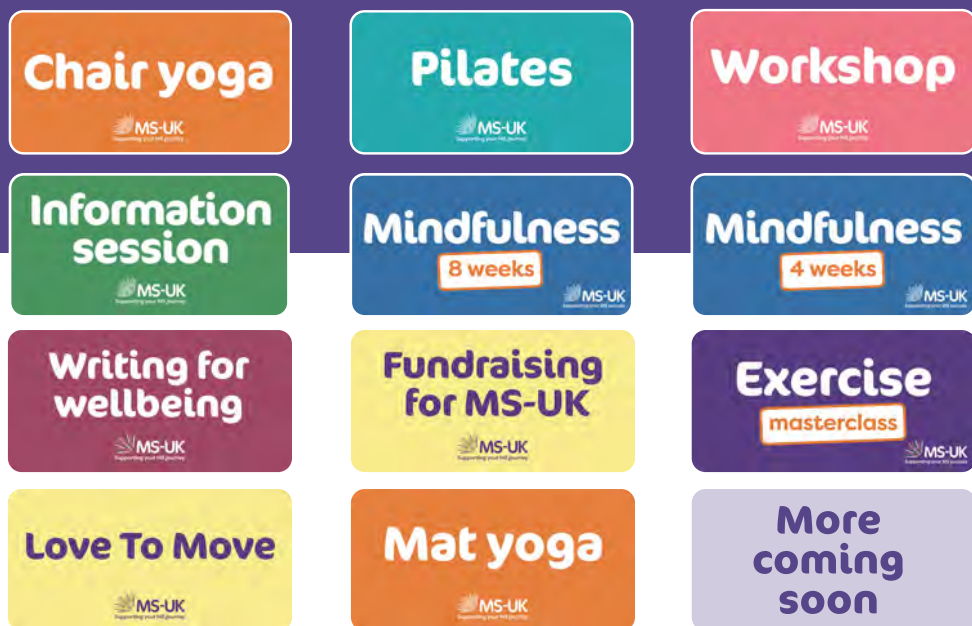
Available in print, audio version, large print and digitally.

About MS-UK

Peer support service

Our Peer Support Service enables people to connect with others in a safe space and share experiences on topics of interest. Our Peer Pods take place regularly and are all volunteer led. Please visit the website to find out more www.ms-uk.org/peer-support-service or email peersupport@ms-uk.org.





Online activities

MS-UK offers a variety of online activities to stay active and connected for those affected by MS and manage their symptoms to live happier and healthier lives. Activities include exercise sessions, mindfulness courses, chair yoga classes, information sessions and workshops. Visit our website to explore and find out more.

E-learning

Do you work with or support someone living with MS and want to increase your understanding and knowledge of this long-term health condition? Professionals at MS-UK have created accredited Learning courses that can help you do this. Visit <https://ms-uk.org/excellence-ms/> to find out more.

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Check out MS-UK's online activities

Live a happier and healthier life with MS



- ✓ Accessible online exercise classes
- ✓ Chair yoga classes
- ✓ Mindfulness courses

- ✓ Interactive workshops
- ✓ Information sessions
- ✓ Peer Support Service

Don't miss out – sign up for our new online activities today!

Visit www.ms-uk.org or contact us at register@ms-uk.org

 **MS-UK**
Supporting your MS journey

Registered charity number 1033731

Stay in touch

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✕ @MSUK6

f www.facebook.com/MultipleSclerosisUK

▶ www.youtube.com/c/ms-ukorg

in www.linkedin.com/company/ms-uk

📷 www.instagram.com/multiplesclerosis_uk

MS-UK Helpline
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