

# What Is Integrative Oncology?

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You practice integrative and naturopathic medicine. What does that mean?

I joined Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center in 2017 to start our Integrative Medicine Program. Integrative medicine is the evidence-based use of mind and body practices, natural products and lifestyle modifications from different traditions alongside conventional medicine. Integrative oncology combines integrative therapies with conventional oncology care. It aims to optimize the health, quality of life and clinical outcomes of people across the cancer care continuum and to empower people to prevent cancer.

I'm trained as a naturopathic doctor, or ND. Naturopathic medicine emphasizes disease prevention and promotes wellness through the use of natural therapies. Naturopathic doctors attend four years of naturopathic medical school.

Is there evidence that these forms of medicine can help to manage cancer?

Yes! The [Society for Integrative Oncology](#) (SIO) and the [American Society of Clinical Oncology](#) have published clinical practice guidelines on the evidence-based use of integrative therapies for symptom management— specifically, pain, fatigue, anxiety and depression. [Those can be found at [integrativeonc.org](#).] SIO also offers online modules for patients to learn more.

What are some examples of approaches you use?

I spend time talking with my patients about nutrition, physical activity, restful sleep and stress management. I recommend acupuncture for many of my patients as a non-pharmacologic approach to managing pain and other symptoms.

I recommend our website [CookForYourLife.org](https://CookForYourLife.org) for healthy recipe ideas and for dietitian-approved information on cancer and nutrition. We send out a newsletter every two weeks, and people can follow us on our social media too. [Editor's note: CancerHealth.com highlights one of their recipes each Friday.]

How do you fit into a cancer patient's care team?

At Fred Hutch, we provide integrative medical care to patients at any time after a cancer diagnosis. We help patients manage the symptoms and side effects of cancer and its treatment as well as work toward optimizing health and wellness.

Are integrative medicine practitioners widely available at cancer centers?

Most cancer centers now offer some kind of integrative therapies or services, whether it be mind-body medicine, like meditation or yoga; acupuncture and massage; or integrative medicine consults. At Fred Hutch, we have a group of providers who offer integrative medicine consults, including an MD, NDs, a nurse practitioner and a physician assistant. We also have a team of acupuncturists. We have two pharmacists who focus on integrative medicine and nurses who provide information on symptom management.

What inspires you in this work?

My patients are amazing. I learn from them every time I'm in clinic, and I bring that information and inspiration back to my research lab. Every day I'm in clinic, a patient asks me what they should eat, if they should be taking any supplements and what they can do to help themselves tolerate their treatment better. Our research aims to answer all those questions.