

## A Sampling of POPULAR CAM THERAPIES FOR MS

This listing provides a few of the popular complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies that have been used by some individuals for the treatment of MS symptoms. This list does not include all CAM therapies that might be considered; it is only a sampling of some of the more popular therapies, all of which are deemed to be **(1) possibly effective, (2) probably safe, and (3) low-to-moderate cost**, while **(4) not requiring too much effort**.

Individuals considering CAM therapy are strongly advised to consult their medical professional in advance, to be sure that the therapy selected does not pose any health risks or potential interactions with their medications. Consumers need to know that clinical studies of CAM therapies are extremely limited, particularly studies with MS patients. For this reason, the effectiveness of CAM therapies in the treatment of MS is not fully known. Additional research is needed before all of the benefits and risks associated with the different types of CAM therapies may be identified and evaluated.

Information for this section was taken from Dr. Bowling's books, *Complementary and Alternative Medicine and Multiple Sclerosis* and *Alternative Medicine and Multiple Sclerosis* (Demos Medical Publishing, 2007, 2001).



Acupuncture

**Description:** Involves insertion of thin metallic needles into specific points of the body to alter the flow of energy along energy pathways

**Notes:** Generally well tolerated, provided the acupuncturist is well trained; if poorly trained or negligent, serious complications could occur; may produce drowsiness

**Possible effects:** May help with anxiety, depression, dizziness, pain, bladder difficulties, and weakness



Aromatherapy

**Description:** Uses aromatic substances derived from plants; administered by direct application to the skin, mixing with bath water, or inhalation

**Notes:** Usually well tolerated but not risk-free; some oils may produce a skin rash; approximately five percent of people are allergic to fragrances

**Possible effects:** Aromatherapy may help anxiety and depression; one large study found it not effective for pain

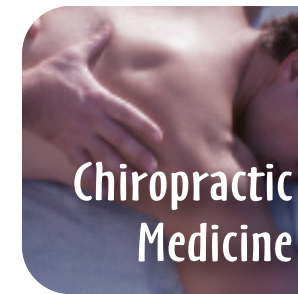


Biofeedback

**Description:** Equipment translates body activity into images (viewed on computer) or sounds, noting muscle tension, skin temperature, perspiration, respiration, pulse, or brainwaves

**Notes:** If electrodermal, people with heart conditions or pacemakers should consult physician; may help several MS symptoms; not known if able to regulate immune system

**Possible effects:** May help with anxiety, insomnia, headaches, pain, incontinence, stiffness, circulation, blood pressure, substance abuse, and posttraumatic stress



Chiropractic  
Medicine

**Description:** Misalignment of the spine believed to put pressure on nerves, affecting muscles and organs; chiropractors manipulate bones of spine

**Notes:** Achy muscles common; stroke or bone fractures very rare; people with spinal problems or diabetes, on blood-thinner, or pregnant, should consult physician

**Possible effects:** No strong evidence shows benefit for MS attacks or altering disease; may help low-back pain, and possibly neck pain and headaches

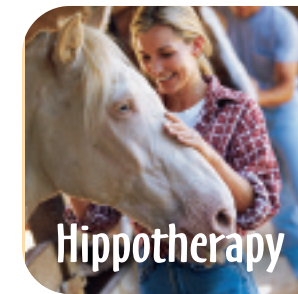


Cooling  
Therapy

**Description:** Cool showers or baths, air conditioning, ice pack, or cold drinks; or special clothing for gradual body cooling

**Notes:** Slightly lowering body temperature may temporarily lessen some MS symptoms; well tolerated, except for few whose MS symptoms may temporarily worsen

**Possible effects:** May temporarily improve difficulties with weakness, fatigue, spasticity, walking, bladder, speech, vision, sexual function, coordination, and cognition



Hippotherapy

**Description:** Therapeutic horseback riding; done in conjunction with physical therapy; therapist controls horse while rider sits, responding to horse's movements

**Notes:** Individuals with severe muscle stiffness, severe fatigue, bone problems, or other serious conditions should consult physician

**Possible effects:** May help with walking difficulties, spasticity, weakness, bladder and bowel problems, as well as depression



Massage

**Description:** Uses special table in warm, quiet room; soft lighting and relaxing music; techniques include pressing, stroking, rubbing, and tapping

**Notes:** Usually well tolerated, minor effects include headache, muscle pain, and lethargy; rare serious effects include blood in liver from deep-abdominal massage

**Possible effects:** May reduce muscle stiffness and pain, increase self-esteem, improve social functioning, and reduce anxiety and depression



T'ai Chi

**Description:** Uses slow, rhythmic, body movements and breathing techniques; claimed to balance opposite forces "yin and yang;" and strengthen life force "chi"

**Notes:** Gentle exercise requiring little strength or flexibility; could worsen MS fatigue; walking unsteadiness and/or a sensitivity to overheating may require modifications

**Possible effects:** May increase walking ability; decrease stiffness; improve social and emotional functioning, strength, fatigue, depression, and anxiety



Yoga

**Description:** Believed to unite the mind, body, and spirit; uses breathing, movement, and posture; may be practiced regardless of physical ability

**Notes:** Consult physician if health conditions limit physical activity; if meditating, individuals with psychiatric disorders should consult doctor

**Possible effects:** Improvements in anxiety, pain, muscle stiffness, depression, cognition, breathing, walking, strength, and wellbeing have been reported