

Many people use complementary medicine (CAM) during their cancer treatment and care. CAM refers to a wide range of therapies such as massage, acupuncture, natural health products, and self-healing practices like yoga and meditation. It can be challenging to decide which CAM therapies to use and to keep track of how well those therapies are working.

Keeping a diary of your CAM use may be a helpful strategy to:

- See how well therapies are working.
- Maintain control over your cancer treatment and care.
- Focus discussion with your health care providers about your CAM use.

Our worksheet provides a flexible template that provides space for the key components that should be in any CAM use diary or journal. It comprises two parts:

- 1) A place to capture the background information including the therapy name, your goals, the dosing and frequency of using the therapy, a quick summary of the known possible side effects, and your evaluation plan.
- 2) The journaling components such as the date, your evaluation of effectiveness, and any questions, comments, and possible side-effects.

Some suggestions for using your diary and maximizing the impact of any CAM you use:

- 1) **Try just a few CAM at a time**—preferably start with just one, evaluate it for a while and then add in one at a time—or you may not be able to identify which therapy(s) may be producing the desired effects and which may be causing unwanted effects, or perhaps both!
- 2) **We recommend taking time to fully develop your goals for each therapy.** The more specific you are about what you hope each CAM will do, the easier it becomes to ensure your therapy choice is appropriate for your goal, and to determine how best to evaluate the therapy's effectiveness. Check out "SMART Goals" [link: [https://www.google.ca/search?q="SMART+goals"](https://www.google.ca/search?q=)] online for ideas on writing down good goals.
- 3) **Rating a therapy's effectiveness is always relative to the goal.** Keeping that goal in mind will make it easier to evaluate the therapy in your journal. The suggested effectiveness scale may not work for all therapies, particularly those that take weeks to see an effect, so think about and write down how YOU would measure and rate the therapy's effectiveness.
- 4) **Take the time to verify what evidence is known** about the use and effectiveness of the CAM—particularly whether it matches your goals for using the CAM therapy—along with possible side effects, and potential interactions with other medications and CAM therapies (could this CAM therapy change the effectiveness of other medications or CAM therapies you are using)?

These topics are covered in detail in CAMEO's patient education program on CAM and cancer.

To share this worksheet with others, please send them an e-vite from the CAMEO website at www.cameoprogram.org/send-an-e-vite

This worksheet is intended to help you monitor your CAM use, not to replace the advice of a qualified health care provider.

To share this worksheet with others, please send them an e-vite from: www.cameoprogram.org/send-an-e-vite