

Integrative Oncology Resource Guide

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What Is Integrative Oncology?

You may have heard the term ‘integrative oncology’ mentioned at your cancer center or seen it online, but aren’t quite sure what it means or how it can help. Part of the confusion stems from the fact that there are often different terms – such as integrative cancer care, complementary cancer treatment, and holistic cancer care, among others – used to describe the same approach.

What Integrative Oncology Is – and What It Isn’t

Integrative oncology is a field of cancer care that uses evidence-based, complementary practices and therapies in addition to conventional cancer treatments like surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. While conventional treatments address the disease, integrative oncology supports the whole person – body, mind, and spirit – throughout cancer treatment and beyond.¹

Integrative oncology offers many potential benefits. Various methods within integrative oncology have been shown to help² with:

- improving quality of life
- relieving pain
- reducing anxiety and depression
- lessening fatigue
- reducing nausea and vomiting
- addressing unintentional, treatment-related weight loss, and more

Another important aspect of integrative oncology is that it is patient-centered, meaning that as the patient, you are an active participant in learning about the different modalities, deciding which ones you want to try, and selecting the integrative programs and services that work well for you and that you enjoy.

Participating in the decision-making and implementation for the integrative oncology portion of a cancer care plan can also help empower people, notes Shannon La Cava, PsyD, Senior Director of the Simms/Mann UCLA Center for Integrative Oncology. Utilizing integrative oncology modalities can provide an element of control in a situation, like cancer, where there is often a loss of control, she says.



Shannon La Cava, PsyD, Senior Director of the Simms/Mann UCLA Center for Integrative Oncology

What integrative oncology is *not* is a replacement for or alternative to conventional cancer treatment. Integrative oncology methods and practices should be used alongside conventional, standard-of-care cancer treatments and under the supervision of your oncology team to ensure that nothing you try will harmfully interact with or detract from what they are doing to treat your cancer.

And integrative oncology isn’t just for people undergoing active cancer treatment – it can be helpful in **survivorship** and for **caregivers**, too, notes La Cava. Even if you didn’t use any of these modalities during treatment, it’s never too late to start, she says.

Here are some of the most common categories that are usually included within integrative oncology – and how they can help.

Common Categories of Integrative Oncology

Nutrition

Integrative nutritional support can take different forms, from an individual consultation with an oncology nutritionist, to virtual or in-person cooking classes specifically designed for people

affected by cancer, to nutrition education materials and workshops, and more.

Like all integrative oncology modalities, nutrition is meant to be tailored to the individual and their needs, circumstances, and culture, and takes the *whole person* into account, says La Cava. Beyond helping to ensure that an individual consumes enough calories and nutrients to support their health, a nutritionist with experience in integrative oncology would likely take into account other relevant factors, such as neutropenia (lower-than-normal levels of a type of white blood cell that helps fight infections)³; limitations or restrictions resulting from the cancer and its treatment, like difficulty swallowing or the use of a feeding tube; food tastes and preferences; and any other, pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure.

Exercise and Movement

Exercise in the context of integrative oncology doesn't mean that you have to take a spin class, lift heavy weights, or even be able to return to forms of exercise you did prior to your cancer diagnosis. Again, it's going to be tailored to each individual's unique circumstances and needs and change over time, and can more broadly be thought of as 'movement.'

Similar to nutrition, movement can take many forms. You might find a virtual or in-person fitness class designed for people undergoing cancer treatment, or a gentle yoga or stretching video on YouTube. Taking a walk around the block counts, adds La Cava – gentle movement still provides benefits, including helping to reduce fatigue, increase strength, and boost mood.⁴

Find forms of movement you enjoy, go at your own pace, and don't push yourself, she advises.

Body and Energy Work

This category includes bodywork treatments such as massage, acupuncture, and reflexology, and forms of energy-based healing like Reiki. Potential benefits of these types of modalities can include promoting relaxation, helping to ease depression and anxiety, and, in some instances, helping with side effect and symptom management. Research has found that acupuncture may help relieve chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting, for example.⁵

Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness may sound lofty or complicated, but it's simply the act of paying attention to the present moment.⁶ Meditation is a common way to practice mindfulness, but there are many other options. Tai chi and Qi gong, traditional Chinese mind-body practices that use slow body movements in combination with controlled breathing, fall into this category.⁷ While yoga can be considered exercise, it incorporates elements of mindfulness, too. And activities like music and art therapy classes and journaling can also help cultivate mindfulness.

La Cava points out that mindfulness can be practiced in a group setting, one-on-one with an instructor, or by yourself. Don't feel like you need to try to meditate for 30 minutes at a time right off the bat, she cautions. Starting small – for just a couple minutes – can still provide benefits and be more sustainable. Build on that and lengthen your meditation sessions as you're ready.

IMPORTANT: Talk to your oncology team before starting any integrative health modalities to ensure that whatever you try is safe for you and your particular health and medical circumstances.

How to Access Integrative Oncology Programs and Services

The first step is asking your oncology team if any of these services are offered at the hospital where you're receiving care. For example, some hospitals may offer free sessions with an oncology nutritionist during and after treatment, provide oncology massage onsite, or, in some instances, have an entire integrative oncology center.

If your cancer center doesn't offer any options, ask to speak to a hospital social worker to inquire about programs that may be available in your community, La Cava advises, like a local branch of the nonprofit cancer organization Cancer Support Community, also sometimes called Gilda's Club. Organizations like this often offer free classes, such as yoga, journaling, art therapy, and more, both in-person and virtually.

For further help identifying appropriate, reputable integrative oncology programs and services,

national nonprofit CancerCare provides a free resource navigation assistance program via phone; call their helpline at 800-813-HOPE (4673) to access this service.

Overcoming the Major Barriers: Cost and Proximity

Some of these integrative services can be very costly, and they're not always covered by insurance. For instance, if you have to self-pay for oncology massage, acupuncture, or nutritional counseling, it can be prohibitively expensive.

Another significant issue can be finding nearby integrative programs and services, especially if you live in a remote area.

But La Cava says that cost and proximity don't have to be barriers. Many nonprofit cancer organizations run free programs, even for some of the typically more expensive services like massage and nutrition. For example, The Hand to Heart Project offers free in-home massages for people with cancer and their caregivers in Vermont and New Hampshire, and Unite for HER provides free wellness programs and services for people with breast or ovarian cancers.

You can find free guided meditation videos and audio recordings on YouTube, or download a free meditation app like Insight Timer or Medito. And paid meditation apps sometimes have a pared-down free version, such as Buddhify.

As for proximity, La Cava notes that since the pandemic, countless integrative oncology programs and classes are now available virtually online – at no cost to participants.

It can take time and effort to find integrative oncology programs and services, but La Cava says it's worth it. "Learning about the many therapies, interventions, modalities, and services that fall under the umbrella of integrative oncology gives individuals living with cancer more personalized pathways toward improved health and well-being, a sense of control in their care, and improved quality of life," she says.

To make it easier, we've compiled a list of integrative oncology resources in this guide. Keep reading to learn more.

Shannon La Cava, PsyD is not affiliated with Imerman Angels and was not compensated for her participation in this article.

What Our Mentor Angels Have to Say

Mentor Angels share their experiences with integrative oncology.

"During treatment, I did yoga, meditation, and acupuncture. They helped so much with my energy level, anxiety, and body pain."

– Ellen, Mentor Angel

"We [went to] an integrative oncologist who specialized in glioblastoma. We ate healthy, organic foods. My husband also exercised daily by riding his bike, working in the garage, and listening to worship music that calmed his soul."

– Pam, Caregiver Mentor Angel

"I am a BIG believer in complementary medicine. I followed my oncologist's protocols throughout my treatment and always checked with her before I tried something new."

– Kathy, Mentor Angel

"[I practiced] meditation and mindfulness. I didn't start until many years post-treatment but it has helped me cope with unresolved issues that I buried deep down during treatment."

– Matthew, Mentor Angel

Quotes reflect Mentor Angels' personal experiences only and are not medical advice.

Contact Imerman Angels to be matched with a peer mentor who's been through what you're going through now. And if you're a cancer fighter, survivor, previvor, or caregiver and want to provide support and encouragement to someone facing similar challenges, get in touch with us about becoming a Mentor Angel. Visit our website www.imermanangels.org or call us at **866-IMERMAN (463-7626)** to get started.

¹ All About Integrative Oncology, OncoLink, <https://www.oncolink.org/support/practical-and-emotional/integrative-therapies-spirituality/all-about-integrative-oncology>; and Witt CM, Balneaves LG, Cardoso MJ, Cohen L, Greenlee H, Johnstone P, Küçük Ö, Mailman J, Mao JJ. A Comprehensive Definition for Integrative Oncology. J Natl Cancer Inst Monogr. 2017 Nov 1;2017(52). doi: 10.1093/jncimonographs/lgx012. PMID: 29140493, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29140493/>

² Taking Care of the Whole You: A Practical and Patient-Centered Guide to Integrative Oncology by The Society for Integrative Oncology and CancerChoices, p. 15

³ Neutropenia Overview, Cleveland Clinic, <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/21058-neutropenia>

⁴ Taking Care of the Whole You, p. 14

⁵ Acupuncture (PDQ®)-Patient Version, National Cancer Institute, <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/cam/patient/acupuncture-pdq#:~:text=In%201997%2C%20the%20National%20Institutes,and%20vomiting%20from%20radiation%20therapy.>

⁶ Taking Care of the Whole You, p. 12

⁷ Taking Care of the Whole You, p. 10

Integrative Oncology Resources

DESCRIPTION	LINK
Integrative Oncology - General	
Cancer Nation: About Integrative Oncology	Read
How Integrative Oncology Helps Manage Cancer Side Effects	Listen
How To Use Integrative Therapies Safely	Read
Integrative Medicine And Complementary Therapies	Watch
Kidney Cancer Unfiltered: Integrative & Support Care	Watch
PEN Restore Program	Read
Society for Integrative Oncology Patient e-Book	Read
UCLA Health Integrative Oncology Programs For Everyone	Watch
Understanding Integrative Medicine	Listen
Unite for HER Wellness Passport Program	Read
Nutrition	
Balancing Work & Nutrition	Watch
Benefits Of Good Nutrition During Cancer Treatment	Read
Cancer Nutrition: Myth Busters Edition	Watch
Diet and Nutrition After a Nephrectomy	Watch
Diet, Nutrition & Prostate Cancer	Read
Fred Hutch Cook For Your Life	Read
Guideline For Diet And Physical Activity For Cancer Prevention	Watch
Holiday Eating For Cancer Survivors	Watch
Ina® - The Intelligent Nutrition Assistant	Read
Krystle Zuniga, Oncology Nutrition Education and Tips	Watch
Learning About CLL Nutrition	Read
Making Good Food Choices: Recipes For Health	Read

Nutrition Handbook	Watch
Nutrition Made Simple: Helping Kids Thrive During Cancer Treatment	Listen
Nutrition Pre And Post Autologous Transplant	Listen
Nutrition Support During Ovarian Cancer Treatment	Watch
Schedule a Dietitian Consultation - Free	Read
Supporting Cancer Patients Through Nutrition	Listen
Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center Lifestyle Medicine: Nutrition Series	Watch
UCLA Health Nutritional Well-Being: Healthy Recipes For Cancer Patients	Read
Understanding Bladder Cancer and Nutrition	Watch
Exercise & Movement	
Active Living With Bladder Cancer	Watch
Exercise And Cancer: Celebration That You CAN	Read
Exercise, Physical Activity & Prostate Cancer	Watch
Exercising Through Cancer Treatment	Read
Marlene Meyerson JCC Cancer Care Program	Watch
Movement: A Tool to Optimize Your Bladder Cancer Journey	Read
Moving Through Bladder Cancer	Watch
Onco-Ballet Foundation Classes	Watch
Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center Lifestyle Medicine: Exercise Series	Watch
The Power Of Exercise In Head And Neck Cancer Recovery	Watch
Yoga4Cancer	Watch
Mindfulness & Meditation	
BCAN Summit: Mindfulness and Meditation	Watch
Buddhify Meditation App (try the free version)	Listen
Insight Timer Free Meditation App	Listen
Mary's Place By The Sea Free Virtual Programs and Services	Watch
Medito Free Meditation App	Listen
Mind and Body Therapies for HNC Patients and Survivors	Watch

Poetry as a Coping Tool: How Writing Can Help [Listen](#)

Recover Well: Breathwork & Mindfulness [Read](#)

Simple Practices For Stress Relief [Listen](#)

Sound Bath By Julia Francis [Read](#)

UCLA Health Free Video Library: Guided Meditations [Listen](#)

Yoga Practice [Read](#)

Mental Health

Body Image, The Body Keeps The Score [Read](#)

How Psychiatry Can Help You Cope [Read](#)

Mental and Emotional Health After a Nephrectomy [Watch](#)

Mental Health and Ovarian Cancer [Watch](#)

Mental Health And Wellbeing, Healthy Ways To Interact With Social Media [Watch](#)

Mental Health And Wellbeing, Lost In Transition [Watch](#)

The Not So Visible Side Effects Of Cancer: Trauma, Resilience And Regulation [Watch](#)

Other

Cancer Support Community / Gilda's Club Free Programs and Classes [Watch](#)

CancerCare Resource Navigation Assistance [Read](#)

Feel More Like You [Read](#)

How Do I? Video Series [Listen](#)

Improving Quality Of Life Through Wellness Practices [Listen](#)

Living With Ovarian Cancer [Watch](#)

The Hand to Heart Project [Read](#)

Understand Your Cancer Risk - Cancer Risk 360 [Read](#)



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Our live discussions bring experts and community members together to explore the topics featured in our quarterly themes. Follow us on social media to join our upcoming lives.



facebook.com/imermanangels



instagram.com/imermanangels

Integrative Oncology Events

**All events listed are offered virtually unless noted otherwise*

DESCRIPTION	DATE/TIME	LINK
Livestrong x Imerman Angels Free CancerFit Class Enter code IMERMANANGELS when booking	3/27 9 am CT	Register
Guided Yoga Nidra Meditation	4/6 & 5/4 7 pm CT	Register
Gentle Yoga	Every Monday 9:30 am CT	Register
Chair Yoga	Every Tuesday 9:30 am CT	Register
Healing With Energy Through Reiki	Every Monday 10:45 AM CT	Register
Nutrition And The Cancer Journey	4/21 & 5/19 7 pm CT	Register
AnCan's Creative Writing Group	Every second Thursday of the month 7:00 pm CT	Register
AnCan's Virtual Art Classes	Every third Thursday of the month 9:00 pm CT	Register
Finding Yourself Through Cancer	4/20 6:30 pm CT	Register
Strength And Conditioning	Every Wednesday 10:45 am CT	Register



I am thrilled to be matched with my Mentor Angel and am amazed to have a Mentor who is my age, gender, and rare diagnosis and who is pursuing alternative treatment, too. I have been so happy to speak with her and no longer feel all alone in my diagnosis or in the treatment mode I have chosen. I am still learning about my diagnosis and how to manage it and I already know that my Mentor will be so helpful in finding more understanding, comfort, and control in doing so. I would be interested in being a mentor myself in a couple of years when I feel that I understand and am stable with my diagnosis and treatment of ET. Heartfelt thanks!!

- Jennifer, Mentee, Essential Thrombocythemia (ET)

Partner Spotlight

LIVESTRONG®



The **Livestrong Foundation** is a national nonprofit dedicated to improving the lives of people affected by cancer through programs that support survivorship, navigation, and whole-person wellness. Their CancerFit program offers low-impact, accessible workouts designed specifically for cancer survivors, helping individuals rebuild strength, confidence, and connection – all from the comfort of home.

Together, our organizations support the full cancer experience. Imerman Angels provides the compassion and peer support that comes from truly shared experience, while Livestrong empowers survivors with tools to strengthen their physical well-being and recovery.

[LEARN MORE](#)



“

Navigating this experience alone was hard, I questioned if I was ready to be a Mentor and talk to people. I don't think I was healed initially, but I was healing through talking to Mentees and seeing them heal. This was more personal for us, they felt more comfortable talking to me, they want to talk to someone else, having gone through the same experience. They need hope, hope is really important! Being diagnosed with cancer is one of the most difficult things I've experienced. Fighting that battle alone was the second most difficult thing. People need to know that cancer doesn't define your life, it is a chapter in a book, it's not the whole book, there is life after cancer. That's why I suit up and show up to those who I help."

– Leanna, Mentor Angel, Stage 3 Lung Cancer

Integrative Oncology: Whole-Person Support

Community Event Series

 **TUES**
MARCH 31  **6:00 PM**
CT

Cancer impacts more than the body. It affects the whole person and the caregivers around them. This virtual session will introduce the principles of Integrative Oncology, an approach that blends evidence-based complementary practices with conventional cancer care to support physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Our expert speaker will explore practical options such as yoga, exercise, nutrition, mindfulness, and other supportive therapies that can help manage stress, ease symptoms, and enhance quality of life during and after treatment. Designed for both patients and caregivers, this conversation will provide accessible tools and meaningful insights to help participants feel more empowered, supported, and resilient throughout the cancer journey.

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Virtual
Edition



PRESENTED BY:

LORA THOMPSON, PHD

Director, Integrative Medicine
Service at Moffitt Cancer
Center

Lora Thompson, PhD is not affiliated with Imerman Angels and is not being compensated for her participation in this event.



**IMERMAN
ANGELS**

Additional Resources

ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS (AYA) RESOURCES

[Bright Spot Network](#)

[Dear Jack Foundation
Community](#)

[Elephants And Tea Virtual
Happy Hour](#)

[Stupid Cancer](#)

[The Ahmad Butler
Foundation](#)

[The Cassie Hines Shoes
Cancer Foundation](#)

[Young Survival Coalition](#)

BILINGUAL RESOURCES

[ALAS Wings](#)

[CancerCare](#)

[Latinas Contra Cáncer](#)

[Nueva Vida](#)

[The Latino Cancer Institute](#)

[Triage Cancer - Seguros,
Empleo, Finanzas](#)

[Chinese Community
Cancer Information Center](#)

[New Hope Chinese Cancer
Care Foundation](#)

CANCER-SPECIFIC RESOURCES

[GYN Cancers Alliance
\(Gynecological\)](#)

[National Ovarian Cancer
Coalition](#)

[Blood Cancer United](#)

[Leukemia Research
Foundation](#)

[National Brain Tumor
Society](#)

[Bladder Cancer Advocacy
Network](#)

[American Lung Association](#)

[Kidney Cancer Association](#)

[Kidney Couch](#)

[Hope For Stomach Cancer](#)

[Melanoma Action
Coalition](#)

[Head & Neck Cancer
Alliance](#)

[305 Pink Pack \(Breast\)](#)

[Learn Look Locate \(Breast\)](#)

[The Breast Cancer Club](#)

[For The Breast Of Us](#)

[Male Breast Cancer Global
Alliance](#)

[Melanoma Research
Foundation](#)

[MPN Research Foundation](#)

[Sarcoma Alliance](#)

[Northwest Sarcoma
Foundation](#)

[Ewing Sarcoma Institute](#)

[The Paula Takacs
Foundation For Sarcoma
Research](#)

[Colontown](#)

[Fight Colorectal Cancer](#)

[Lary's Speakeasy
\(Laryngectomy\)](#)

Additional Resources

GENETICS

[Alive And Kick'n - Lynch Syndrome](#)

[Jacqueline Rush Lynch Syndrome Cancer Foundation](#)

[KRAS Kickers - KRAS Biomarker](#)

[Living LFS - Li-Fraumeni Syndrome](#)

[What Is Genetic Counseling And Genetic Testing?](#)

[What If I Test Positive For Genetic Mutations - Should I Tell My Family?](#)

[Decoding Genetic Tests For Parents To Be](#)

RESEARCH & CLINICAL TRIALS

[A Healthy Diet And Exercise May Prevent Colorectal Cancer Recurrence](#)

[Black Women And Cancer Study](#)

[Emotion Regulation And Psychological Well-being Among Cancer Caregiver-Patient Dyads](#)

[Open Clinical Trials Related to Hereditary Cancers](#)

[Organ Transplant And Cancer Study](#)

[Participate In The Inherited Genetic Cancer Registry](#)

[The Childhood Cancer Identity Project](#)

[Self-Perception And Intimacy After The Cancer Experience](#)

[Help Improve How Surgeons Communicate With Patients](#)

[Free Pilot For Cancer Patients And Caregivers: Nutrition, Fitness, Mindfulness](#)

MISCELLANEOUS

[3 Little Birds 4 Life](#)

[Alliance For Fertility Preservation](#)

[Byrd Cancer Foundation](#)

[Camp Kesem - A Child's Friend Through And Beyond A Parent's Cancer](#)

[CancerCare - Free Professional Support Services And Information](#)

[Cocktails & Caregivers](#)

[Cure Today - Online Magazine](#)

[Empowering Intimacy](#)

[Epic Experience - Adventure Camps](#)

[Global Leadership In Oncology & Wellness](#)

[Livestrong Foundation](#)

[Patient Empowerment Network -Education](#)

[Pickles Group - Kids Supporting Kids](#)

[Team Maggie's Dream - Fertility Preservation](#)

[Triage Cancer - Insurance, Employment, Finances](#)

[Twist Out Cancer - Creative Arts Programming](#)

[Worth The Wait - Fertility Treatments, Adoption, And Surrogacy](#)



Imerman Angels Grief Toolkit

A guide to coping and supporting the grief process.

[DOWNLOAD](#)

List of helpful cancer-related resources.

[Resource Page + Videos](#)

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Become a Mentor Angel

Join our worldwide cancer support community as a Mentor Angel and provide personalized, one-on-one support for cancer fighters, survivors, previvors and caregivers.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Share your journey

Everyone has a story to tell. It only takes one story to inspire and provide hope to others. Whether it is a story of survivorship or your experience as a caregiver, others like you will find comfort in knowing they are not alone.

[SHARE YOUR STORY](#)

Connect with us

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