

About Integrative Medicine

A Guide to Self-Care and Support | Spring 2022



*Jun Mao, MD, MSCE
Chief, Integrative Medicine Service*

CHIEF'S NOTE

Welcome to spring! In this issue, we learn about how Traditional Chinese Medicine can help us transition to this new season. We also share our upcoming programming, including new workshops and series, and patient advocate Jodi MacLeod speaks with a Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK) patient about the healing gift of integrative medicine. Finally, we explore the latest evidence for turmeric, and MSK yoga instructor Clare Patterson tells us about how yoga can address neuropathy.

Be well,
Jun

Welcoming Spring Through the Lens of Traditional Chinese Medicine

By Robin Hardbottle, LAc

Spring is here! As the temperature warms, we venture out and see signs of life everywhere, from plant shoots emerging from the ground and flowers blooming, to animals coming out of hibernation. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), an ancient medical system that includes acupuncture and tai chi, offers unique views on how the changing seasons relate to our health and well-being.

According to TCM, spring is a period of growth and creativity after the stillness and rest of the winter months. After snuggling in during the cold winter, spring triggers a renewed interest in going out and meeting people, of building and creating. It is a time to begin new projects, and we may experience a renewed sense of energy and excitement during this time.

Many of the principles seen in TCM are based on the careful observation of nature, including the changing of the seasons. Chinese medicine recognizes the



impact of these natural cycles on our health, and it works to encourage a smooth transition from the experience of rest and stillness in the winter to movement and growth in the spring. We tend not to think about these changes in the modern age, but when TCM was formulated thousands of years ago, people had a much closer relationship with the environment and recognized the influence seasonal changes had on their lives.

We spoke with MSK lead acupuncturist Matthew Weitzman about some simple ways that you can cultivate this connection and include TCM in your routine to encourage your mind and body to embrace spring. Matthew suggests including activities that encourage movement and stimulate your senses to help you adapt to the seasonal change.



How To Include TCM in Your Spring Routine



Get out into nature for gentle exercise, such as a walk or a run.



Practice tai chi in a local park.



Add seasonally appropriate foods, such as leafy greens or garlic scapes to your diet.



Spring is a time for seasonal allergies. If you have symptoms, **acupuncture may help**.

To learn more about acupuncture and tai chi, and other available integrative medicine services, visit [our website](#) or call **646-449-1010**.

Integrative Medicine at Home Membership Program

Start your membership online today. Visit [msk.org/athome](https://www.msk.org/athome) to get started.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Monthly membership: **\$25**

Three-month membership: **\$60**

Six-month membership: **\$120**
(includes one free workshop)

AS A MEMBER, YOU CAN ENJOY:

- › Connecting with your cancer community.
- › Staying active with guidance from MSK experts.
- › Learning new skills to increase resilience and decrease stress.
- › Unlimited access to daily fitness and mind-body classes.
- › Dedicated website with on-demand videos to help keep you moving on your schedule.
- › Discounts on our small-group workshops and mind-body series.

Integrative Medicine at Home: A Healing Gift

By Jodi MacLeod



Jodi MacLeod

For Nancy, a writer who is recovering from recent lung cancer surgery, Integrative Medicine at Home classes have been “a tremendous, healing gift.” The shock of a cancer diagnosis and the trauma of thoracic surgery

left her feeling “evicted from her body,” she says, “as if the chest tube went in and I went out, because there wasn’t room for both of us.”

Dismayed at finding her body so altered and out of sync with her sense of self, Nancy began attending mind-body Integrative

Medicine at Home classes each week. “There is something a little mysterious but real and empowering,” she says about the connection she feels with the instructors and fellow attendees of the virtual group classes. There, she explains, she is “seen as a whole person who deserves to have very good health.” The classes offer a supportive community that is both public and also intensely private. “Integrative medicine comes to me here in my home with just the click of a button,” Nancy says.

Not usually one to join groups, she has found the online classes enable her to heal while sheltering from the risk of a COVID-19 lung infection. Having had previous cancer surgeries during which she was not offered integrative medicine therapies, this time has been different. Now Nancy is exercising more than she did before her diagnosis and steadily embracing her new reality through the patience, self-acceptance, and encouragement provided by Integrative Medicine at Home mind-body classes.

You can learn more about Integrative Medicine at Home classes at www.msk.org/athome.



Clare Patterson on the Role of Yoga for Reducing Neuropathy



Clare Patterson is a yoga instructor in MSK's Integrative Medicine Service (IMS), where she teaches weekly classes in the MSK Integrative Medicine at Home membership program. Clare also leads yoga classes for the Yoga for Chemotherapy-induced Peripheral Neuropathy Treatment (YCT) study. A pediatric cancer survivor, Clare aims to create a safe space for her students to cultivate their resilience and strength.

How can yoga reduce the effects of neuropathy?

Neuropathy, a side effect of certain types of chemotherapy, is a troublesome, often long-term, debilitating side effect without effective prevention or treatment strategies. People experiencing chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy, or CIPN, may struggle with gait imbalance, muscle cramping, numbness, tingling, and pain. Yoga may provide some relief from CIPN. Here at MSK, we are conducting the YCT clinical trial to evaluate its effectiveness.

Yoga addresses CIPN in several different ways. Importantly, it helps build body awareness and sensory awareness, both of which can help with balance and fall risk reduction. Through breathing exercises (pranayama) and a restorative practice known as savasana, yoga also brings on the relaxation response of the nervous system. Then, of course, through physical postures (asanas), yoga promotes strengthening muscles and bones throughout the body, including in the spine to help prevent further nerve damage. In addition, the postures address joint mobility and flexibility, and help increase circulation and blood flow to the hands and feet, areas frequently impacted by CIPN.

What are some other benefits of yoga?

Yoga has many benefits, including prevention of bone loss through the building of bone density. Yoga also helps build core strength, which can help facilitate functional everyday movements. For example, transitional movements like moving from being seated to standing, or moving from being seated to sitting or lying on the floor, can be easier and safer when working from the core. These transitions are critical to decrease the risk of falls, which often occur during our normal daily activities. Yoga also offers a major benefit that we can all relate to—stress relief. At the end of a busy day, many people in my classes simply need a space to unwind, rest, and reconnect with themselves.



Can we practice yoga in an online setting?

Yes! Over the past couple of years, with ongoing concerns about the pandemic, we have transitioned to offering yoga sessions using the Zoom platform for both our Integrative Medicine at Home classes and for the YCT study. The benefits of an online classroom are significant. We can reach many more people, including those who do not live near MSK, which makes our classes much more accessible. Many people are happy to practice from the comfort of their homes, while still feeling that they are an integral part of a close-knit community. In my classes, the participants and I hold space for each other to share experiences and support one another. It's wonderful to have this sense of camaraderie.

Dr. Ting Bao, MSK's Director of Integrative Breast Oncology, shares, "We know that yoga is a safe therapy that can lead to improvements in balance, flexibility, and muscle strength. The YCT study aims to reduce CIPN symptoms for people affected by this difficult issue."

For more information about Dr. Bao's YCT study, please contact the clinical research team at [646-449-1033](tel:646-449-1033).

Join Clare, MSK yoga therapist Tina Paul, and Director of Integrative Breast Oncology Dr. Ting Bao for the Yoga for CIPN workshop. Check our upcoming events calendar on the next page for details and to register.



Spring 2022 Online Programming

Register online today to join us for one of these upcoming online wellness programs. Scan the QR code with your phone to sign up online or call **646-449-1010**.



Workshops: \$20 for members; \$25 regular price

Regular Series: \$100 for members; \$125 regular price

Meditation Series: \$125 for members; \$155 regular price

APRIL

- › **Workshop: Mechanics of Breathing: Perfect Exchange**
Tuesday, April 5, 1:30 PM to 2:45 PM
- › **Workshop: Relax Yourself to Sleep**
Thursday, April 7, 11:00 AM to 12:15 PM
- › **Series: Yoga Essentials: Focus on Balance and Relaxation**
Wednesday, April 13 to Wednesday May 18, 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM
- › **Series: Mindful Self-Compassion**
Sundays, April 24 to June 5 (no class May 29), 7:00 PM to 8:15 PM

MAY

- › **Workshop: Building Body Awareness With Core Strength and Yoga**
Monday, May 2, 6:00 PM to 7:15 PM
- › **Series: Yoga for Core Strength**
Monday, May 9 to Thursday, June 9, 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM
- › **Workshop: Embodied Empowerment Through Movement and Music**
Thursday, May 12, 6:00 PM to 7:15 PM
- › **Series: Joy of Dance**
Tuesdays, May 17 to June 21, 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM

JUNE

- › **Workshop: Yoga for Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy**
Saturday, June 11, 11:00 AM to 12:15 PM
- › **Series: Yoga for Better Balance**
Tuesdays, June 21 to July 26, 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM
- › **Workshop: Martial Arts and Meditation for Functional Everyday Movement**
Tuesday, June 7, 7:00 PM to 8:15 PM
- › **Series: Kung Fu for Health: Beginning Series**
Wednesdays, June 15 to July 20, 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM

ABOUT HERBS FEATURE

Turmeric

By Jyothirmal Gubili

A perennial herb, turmeric is native to Southeast Asia. It produces underground stems known as rhizomes, which are used as a spice in many cuisines around the world. Turmeric is also valued in traditional Eastern medical systems for reducing inflammation. It is widely used in Ayurveda, a medical system that originated in India, to treat infections and stomach ailments, and to heal wounds.

Of the many chemicals in turmeric that may promote health, curcumin is the most researched. Preliminary data suggest that it decreases cancer-related weight loss (cachexia), delays the onset of swelling of mouth tissue from radiation, and is safe when taken with certain types of chemotherapy. Also, when combined with other compounds, curcumin may lower inflammation and pain in people with

early breast cancer who are experiencing musculoskeletal symptoms associated with a class of medication known as aromatase inhibitors.

Data on turmeric suggest its benefits in alleviating the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome, inflammation in the digestive system known as ulcerative colitis, and in the treatment of knee osteoarthritis. Also, topical use of turmeric decreased skin irritation from radiation.

Liver damage has been associated with formulations with high bioavailability (the amount of a substance absorbed and used by the body), and high dosage of curcumin and other active ingredients in turmeric. The symptoms lessened after stopping turmeric use.

For more details about turmeric, see our full article on the [About Herbs website](#).

