



Penny Brohn UK
Living Well with Cancer

Therapies

Acupuncture | Art Therapy | Counselling | Healing Imagery | Massage | Meditation and Mindfulness Music Therapy | Nordic Walking | Physical Activity Qigong | Reflexology | Relaxation | **Shiatsu** | Yoga



Shiatsu is an Asian bodywork therapy from Japan that uses the principles of acupressure. This is where the practitioner applies pressure to points around the body to release blocks in the flow of energy (Ki, Qi) through the meridians (energy pathways) of the body.

Shiatsu is offered to people with cancer to enhance wellbeing and mood, and to reduce stress, anxiety, pain, nausea and vomiting. People who have had shiatsu report enhanced wellbeing and better symptom control. A high quality systematic review of other related Asian bodywork therapies suggests these can reduce nausea. A small research study has shown that shiatsu can reduce anxiety.

Information on shiatsu

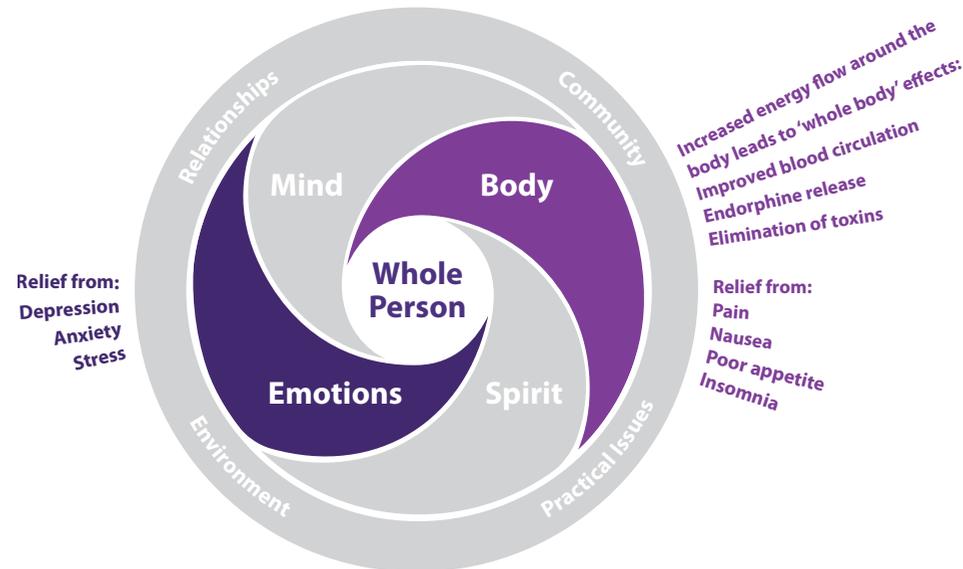
This evidence-based information sheet aims to provide clearly sourced and reliable information to help you make informed choices about shiatsu, one of a range of complementary therapies available to support people with cancer. If you would like more information on how to access the range of services Penny Brohn UK provides, please contact our Helpline on 0303 3000 118. We are able to provide our services free of charge, thanks to the charitable donations and voluntary contributions which fund our work.

What do people who have tried shiatsu say about it?

Research studies known as qualitative studies ask people about their experiences. They can provide information from a personal perspective, but can't tell us if a therapy is likely to work for everyone.

One study looked at shiatsu offered through a palliative day care centre. Some of the participants were people with cancer. Overall, people were very positive and reported increases in energy levels, better relaxation, increased feelings of confidence, better symptom control, better mobility, improved clarity of thought and a restoration of wellbeing. Some participants concluded that shiatsu can be a valuable treatment to help those in palliative care "claim back their life" and manage the symptoms of their disease.

Shiatsu and The Bristol Whole Life Approach



This adaptation of The Bristol Whole Life Approach wheel shows the areas that shiatsu can help with, according to providers.

(Please note that these are not the claims of Penny Brohn UK.)

What happens in an shiatsu session?

- A shiatsu session is usually an hour in length.
- For the first visit, the shiatsu therapist will ask questions about medical history, health, diet and lifestyle.
- Treatment is generally carried out on a futon-style mattress, which is low down on the floor. If clients cannot lie down, then shiatsu can be practised sitting up or on a treatment couch.
- Clients keep their clothes on throughout the session and are advised to wear loose-fitting, comfortable clothes.

- During the session therapists may apply pressure to the body using their thumbs, palms, fingers, knees, elbows and feet.
- At the end of a session, clients are advised to drink water and relax for a while, before returning to normal activities.

More about shiatsu

In Japanese shiatsu means finger (shi) pressure (atsu). Shiatsu has its roots in ancient Japanese massage techniques and involves finger pressure, palm pressure, massage, stretching and other manual techniques targeted at 'acupoints' on the body. Shiatsu is similar to acupuncture, in that it stimulates acupoints lying along the body's network of energy pathways (or meridians). However, it uses manual pressure rather than the needles used in acupuncture.

The concept behind shiatsu is that energy, referred to as Ki or Qi (pronounced "chi") should flow freely around the body along pathways known as meridians. If this flow is blocked, disease may occur. Shiatsu aims to unblock the flow of Qi around the body by stimulating the acupoints.

Shiatsu was developed from ancient Japanese massage techniques and was first introduced to the West in the 1970s. It falls within a wider category of 'Asian bodywork' techniques, which use the acupressure points to manipulate the flow of Qi around the body. There are a number of branches and new forms of Asian bodywork and shiatsu, which incorporate other techniques such as breathing, meditation and stretching.

Is shiatsu safe?

If practised by a suitably trained therapist, who is experienced in working with people with cancer, shiatsu is considered safe. For those with low platelet count, osteoporosis, fever or those in the first three months of pregnancy, the practitioner will use a more gentle form of shiatsu.

Practitioner perspective

"At Penny Brohn UK we appreciate that life can sometimes appear too complicated and may seem overwhelming. We use shiatsu to encourage clients to connect more directly with themselves and how they truly feel. The quality of touch and stillness helps clients to acknowledge their emotional or physical pain, returning them to a place of simplicity and space. As well as clients feeling deeply relaxed and peaceful, their symptoms and side-effects may be relieved and a sense of hope restored. During these times there is a great potential for insight and transformation."

Are there any legal issues?

Although shiatsu practitioners undergo training, they are not legally required to hold any formal qualification. Voluntary registration is coordinated by the Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC). The Shiatsu Society also has a register of practitioners.

What is the evidence on shiatsu?

There is only one small clinical trial, which concluded that shiatsu reduced anxiety, but not physical symptoms, in patients receiving chemotherapy. More research has looked at Asian bodywork. A high quality review found that stimulation of the P6 point on the wrist helped relieve nausea. Another review found some weak, but positive, results for acupressure relieving

breathlessness in advanced stages of cancer. Wider studies not specific to cancer are generally positive, but not good enough quality to draw conclusions.

A full list of references and an extended summary of the research literature is available upon request from our Helpline.

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Statement

Our information and research is designed to help you make informed choices about the services that we provide. From time to time, for illustrative purposes, we may make reference to commonly available products (such as relaxation CDs and popular self-help books). We do not endorse or advertise the use of any specific product.

Disclaimer:

While we make every effort to use up-to-date and reliable sources, we cannot accept liability for errors in the sources that we use and also cannot guarantee to find all the information relevant to your enquiry or request. All responsibility for interpretation of and action upon that information rests with you. This information and advice is offered on the understanding that if you intend to support your treatment with complementary or alternative approaches, then it is advisable to consult your medical team to ensure that they have a complete understanding of your situation and the complementary or alternative approach that you are considering.

Organisations that offer support and information for people with cancer

Cancer Research UK Tel: 0808 800 4040
www.cancerresearchuk.org

Macmillan Cancer Support Tel: 0808 808 0000
www.macmillan.org.uk

NHS 111 Tel: 111
www.nhs.uk

More information on complementary therapies

NHS Evidence www.evidence.nhs.uk
CAM Cancer www.cam-cancer.org/CAM-Summaries

Organisations that represent shiatsu

Shiatsu Society (UK)
Tel: 0845 130 4560 | www.shiatusociety.org

Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council
Tel: 020 7653 1971 | www.cnhc.org.uk