



AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF CANADA

OTHER TREATMENTS

SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DE LA SCLÉROSE LATÉRALE AMYOTROPHIQUE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION #6 • GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT ALS & THE ALS SOCIETY OF CANADA

COMMENTARY ON ALTERNATIVE OR COMPLEMENTARY TREATMENTS

Because vitamins, herbs and other so called “complementary” or “alternative” medicines have become so popular over the last few years, it is timely to comment on these treatments in the context of research. People with ALS can be attracted to these apparent remedies, either because drug trials so far have been unsuccessful, or because of the perception that “alternative” medicines are natural.

While extensive research is done for pharmaceutical drugs, virtually no research has been done on “alternative” medicines with the exception of vitamins, which have been extensively researched. On the other hand many “alternative” medicines have been used by some cultures for hundreds and even thousands of years. We often hear stories of how people have been cured by these medicines and it is well known that animal and plant by-products have provided the basis for many successful drugs. Unfortunately, the hundreds of millions of dollars that are required to thoroughly test pharmaceutical medicines are not available to test “alternative” medicines. Scientifically, we know very little about the effect of “alternative” medicines on the human body.

If you are considering “alternative” medicines or therapies, here are some points to keep in mind:

- Be careful, some people who have ALS have been enticed into spending large sums of money on alternative medicines and therapies that carry false claims.
- Medicines that come from nature are, in fact, drugs and can be harmful, particularly in large doses. Different individuals have different tolerance levels for drugs, including so-called natural remedies. There are many products in nature which are, in fact, poisonous.
- “Alternative” medicines are not regulated. The consumer is subject to domestic and foreign manufacturers who could dilute the strength, or change the composition of their products without disclosing this information on their labels.
- The ALS Society does not recommend that people take “alternatives” and is not aware of any alternative medicines that will cure ALS. However, if you want more information about these types of medicines, it may be better to discuss the subject with professionals such as pharmacists, naturopathic and homeopathic doctors, rather than those who are untrained.

*Usage authorized: ALS Society of Canada
Health Professional Advisory Committee
February 2002*

ALS SOCIETY OF CANADA • AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF CANADA
SLA CANADA • SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DE LA SCLÉROSE LATÉRALE AMYOTROPHIQUE

265 Yorkland Blvd., Suite 300, Toronto, Ontario M2J 1S5

Phone toll free: 1-800-267-4257 • Toronto local calling area: 416-497-2267 • Fax 416-497-1256

Email: alscanada@als.ca • Web page: <http://www.als.ca> • Charitable registration: 10670 8977 RR0002

FEBRUARY 2002