

# About Integrative Medicine

A Guide to Self-Care and Support | Spring 2023

## CHIEF'S NOTE



Jun Mao, MD, MSCE  
Chief, Integrative Medicine Service

The flowers are blooming and the days are getting longer and warmer, sure signs that spring is here. As we transition into this new season, I invite you to explore how integrative medicine can be a part of your routine. Daily online mind-body and fitness classes, massage and acupuncture treatments, and integrative medicine consultations with our expert team of doctors and advanced practice providers are just a few of the ways that you can connect with yourself and your community during and after cancer treatment.

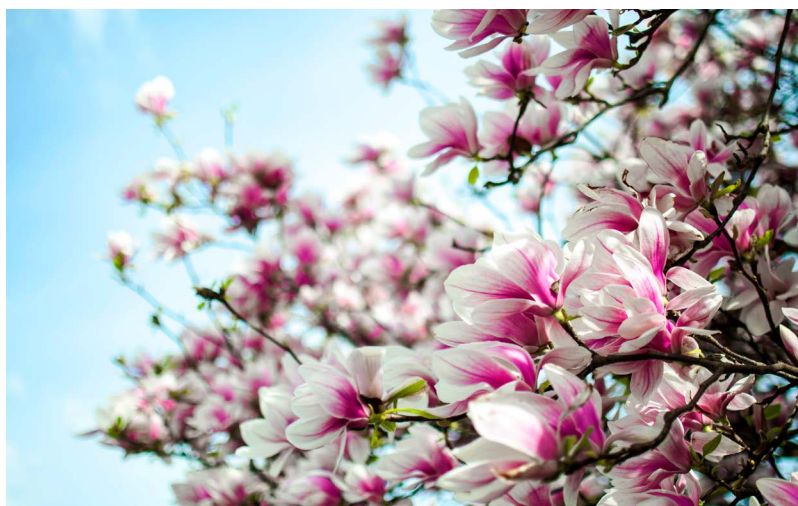
In this issue, massage therapist Khadijah Hewitt-Nelson shares the benefits of oncology massage – we offer 30-minute and 60-minute sessions. We also discover how Ayurveda can support us in the transition to spring and learn about a novel Herbal Oncology Program at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK) through a new publication on its development. Finally, we discover the evidence for the Mediterranean diet and invite you to join us for our upcoming online series and workshops.

Be well,  
Jun

## Embracing Spring With Ayurveda

By Krupali Desai, MPH, MD (Ayurveda)

Ayurveda is an ancient healing system of India. According to Ayurveda, we are a reflection of the universe and have the same qualities that exist in nature. This is why the seasons have a profound effect on our bodies. In Ayurveda, the emphasis is on staying in tune with Mother Nature by changing our diet and lifestyle with the change in the season.



Spring brings warmth and the blossoming of flowers. With the warmth of the season, just as the accumulated snow and ice of winter begin to melt, similarly, *excess kapha*, the water and earth element in the body that has accumulated from winter, also starts to liquefy. According to Ayurveda, this process can trigger spring-related health issues such as congestion, runny nose, watery eyes, and sneezing, as well as excessive mucus in the head and sinus.

To support health and well-being, and balance *excess kapha*, Ayurveda recommends adopting a simple spring routine. This includes eating warm, dry, light, and cooked food. You can also incorporate warm spices such as ginger, black pepper, cinnamon, cumin, and coriander with food or drink them as herbal teas. Khichari, a dish made from mung beans, rice, vegetables, and spices, is light, nourishing, and easy to digest. Turn the page for a simple khichari recipe. If you don't have all the spices, you can simplify it by using turmeric and ginger. As always, talk with your medical team about the right diet for you.



## Recipe for Khichari

### INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp.	ghee (clarified butter)
½ tsp.	cumin seeds
pinch	asafetida (hing)
3-4	whole cloves
1	cinnamon stick (small)
½ c.	yellow split mung dal (rinsed)
1 c.	basmati rice (rinsed)
½ tsp.	ground turmeric
½ tsp.	ground cumin
½ tsp.	ground coriander
½ tsp.	fresh grated ginger
½ tsp.	salt (to taste)
1 c.	mixed vegetables (optional)

### INSTRUCTIONS



1. Heat ghee in a pan.
2. Add cumin seeds, asafetida, cloves, and cinnamon stick.
3. When cumin seeds sputter, add dal, rice, turmeric, cumin, coriander, ginger, and salt.

4. Add 5 to 6 cups of water.
5. Mix well and bring to boil on high heat.
6. Cover the pot, turn down the heat, and simmer until the rice and dal are soft, about 30 minutes.
7. You may add some of your favorite vegetables halfway through the cooking process.
8. Serve hot and enjoy!

Do you want to learn more about Ayurveda? Join our workshop, [Understanding Your Body Through Ayurveda and Yoga](#) on June 8 at 6 p.m. ET.

## MSK's Herbal Pharmacy of Traditional Chinese Medicine

By Christina Seluzicki, MBE

People undergoing treatment for cancer and those who have completed treatment often experience symptoms and side effects that are difficult to manage. Many turn to herbs and supplements for symptom relief. However, in some cases, patients may not communicate with their oncology team about their use of herbs. In other cases, they may share the herbs and supplements they are taking only to find that their cancer care team does not know how to advise them on such use.

In 2019, MSK created the Herbal Oncology Program to support communication about and safe use of herbal products during cancer. Through this program, patients receive counseling on the role that herbs could play in their care. If an herbal prescription is deemed appropriate by the Integrative Medicine provider, the MSK pharmacy will dispense high-quality traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) herbs with existing evidence-based information for symptoms including mood, sleep, and digestive issues.

Researchers in Integrative Medicine conducted a study to evaluate the feasibility of bringing this program to patients at MSK. Earlier this year, the paper [“Integrating herbal medicine into oncology care delivery: development, implementation, and evaluation of a novel program”](#) was published in *Supportive Care in Cancer*. The authors found that the majority of patients were highly satisfied with the herbs they received for symptom management and had few adverse effects.

Integrative Medicine pharmacist Yen Nien “Jason” Hou PharmD, DiplOM, LAc, an author on the study, says: “This novel program is the first of its kind within a comprehensive cancer center to not only encourage communication about safe and effective herbal use but also to increase accessibility and inclusion. By incorporating TCM into a conventional medical setting, we can begin to address healthcare disparities among patients from different cultural backgrounds. We hope to expand this reach in the future.”

If you are interested in learning more about the Herbal Oncology Program, call [646-608-8550](tel:646-608-8550) to schedule an Integrative Medicine consultation.



## IMS Insights: The Benefits of Oncology Massage

By Khadijah Hewitt-Nelson, MHA, LMT



*Khadijah Hewitt-Nelson is a licensed massage therapist with board certification in oncology massage. She has nearly two decades of experience in the oncology field. Khadijah completed training in oncology massage after her dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Here, she shares how massage can help people affected by cancer.*

### What is oncology massage?

Oncology massage is the modification of existing massage therapy techniques to safely work with complications of cancer and cancer treatment. The touch we use is gentle, but very effective. For a long time, massage therapists were taught not to massage patients with cancer. But we're learning a lot more

about how cancers spread, and we're finding the mechanisms that lead to metastasis are not connected to massage. So we can feel safe adding positive touch to the whole cancer care experience.

Each session is customized based on patients' medical history and the side effects they are experiencing. As therapists, we want to provide our patients with relief from their symptoms and address their treatment goals. So much of cancer treatment is associated with depletion and loss of energy, weight, and sense of self. But when you come to massage, your therapist can help you replenish your energy while you are getting treatment. Our goal is to provide you with a boost so the side effects you experience don't prevent you from continuing treatment.

### What are the benefits of massage for people managing cancer?

Massage for people with cancer is helpful for many physical symptoms and side effects, including pain, nausea, sleep, peripheral neuropathy from chemotherapy, and lymphedema.

It can also address mental symptoms, such as anxiety and depression, and stress and mood, by increasing the production of endorphins (our "feel good" hormones). In addition, sessions can improve quality of life by helping people regain the ability to do things they were able to do before diagnosis and treatment. For example, we can address stiff or tight tissues resulting from radiation treatment to ease neck constriction for a patient with head and neck cancer or enable a patient with breast cancer to reach that coffee mug in the cabinet.

*MSK Integrative Medicine offers 30-minute and 60-minute oncology massage treatments. You can make an appointment for a massage with Khadijah or another member of our team by calling 646-449-1010.*

## Integrative Medicine at Home Membership Program



Start your membership online today!  
Visit [msk.org/athome](https://msk.org/athome).

### 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



## Mediterranean Diet

By Jyothirmai Gubili, MS



The Mediterranean diet, inspired by cultures around the Mediterranean Sea, emphasizes whole, minimally processed foods. It is rich in fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, legumes, and olive oil with moderate amounts of red wine and smaller portions of dairy, poultry, and seafood. A key element of the Mediterranean lifestyle is promoting social connections by sharing and enjoying food with family and friends.

Numerous studies consistently have shown that the benefits of a Mediterranean diet include reductions in both weight gain and risk factors for heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and overall mortality, as well as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

Because disease state and treatments can impact nutritional status, patients should consult a dietitian before adopting new diets. It is also important to note that the Mediterranean diet may not be right for individuals with multiple food intolerances or allergies.

For more details about the Mediterranean diet, see our [full write-up](#) on the About Herbs website or download the About Herbs app (available for Android via [Google Play](#) and iOS via the [App Store](#)).

## Upcoming Online Programming in 2023

Register online today to join one of these upcoming virtual wellness programs. Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to sign up online or call [646-449-1010](tel:646-449-1010).



Learn about the benefits of [tai chi](#), [meditation](#), [yoga](#), and more on our [About Herbs website](#).

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

**Regular series:** \$100 for members; \$125 regular price

### APRIL

- › **Series:** Barre Basics  
Wednesdays, April 12 to May 17  
9 a.m. to 10 a.m.
- › **Workshop:** Feeling Good! Reclaiming Your Body Using Yoga and Dance  
Sunday, April 23, 4 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.
- › **Workshop:** Massage for Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy  
Thursday, April 27, 5 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.

### MAY

- › **Workshop:** Boost Your Attention, Thinking, and Memory With Music  
Thursday, May 4, 6 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.
- › **Series:** Latin Rhythms  
Wednesdays, May 17 to June 21  
5:45 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.
- › **Workshop:** Mobilization Stretching for Movement, Flexibility, and Balance  
Tuesday, May 16, 7:00 p.m. to 8:15 p.m.

### JUNE

- › **Workshop:** Understanding Your Body Through Ayurveda and Yoga  
Thursday, June 8, 6:00 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.
- › **Series:** Yoga Essentials: Focus on Balance & Breath  
Wednesdays, June 14 to July 19  
8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

### About Herbs App Available for Android and iOS

Would you like help figuring out the value of using common herbs and other dietary supplements? Learn the latest research on 290 herbs and supplements.

Download the app for Android via [Google Play](#) and for iOS via the [App Store](#).