

Alternative treatments: Parker Posey and Suzanne Somers seek other means to cure their diseases

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Parker Posey and Suzanne Somers Stars aren't the only people who are trying alternative therapies to get better.

When [Suzanne Somers](#) was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2001, she decided to forgo chemotherapy, had a lumpectomy and followed it up with radiation therapy and alternative treatments.

[Actress Parker Posey](#), diagnosed with Lyme disease earlier this year, used not just antibiotics but homeopathic remedies and supplements to help her recover.

Stars aren't the only ones who are trying alternative therapies to get better.

"More than 30 percent of cancer patients will try some kind of alternative therapy," says [Dr. Roberta Lee](#), vice chair of the [Department of Integrative Medicine](#) at [Beth Israel Medical Center](#).

and medical director of the [Continuum Center for Health and Healing](#). "As at treatment on its own, alternative therapy is complicated and risky. But when it is supportive, it is a good strategy."

Some 3,000 patients a month are seen at her program, Lee explains. They may make use of everything from acupuncture and ginger tea for nausea to acupuncture for dry mouth caused by chemotherapy.

Very often, alternative treatments for various illnesses focus on dietary supplements, Lee explains.

"Just staying away from processed foods and red meat, and adding spices such as turmeric and ginger can be helpful," Lee says. "Green tea extract given at the right time is wonderful, since it's a powerful antioxidant."

[Dr. Sheryl Leventhal](#) is a former [New York City](#) oncologist who now recommends alternative therapies and has an office in [Nyack](#). She appears in a video called "Rethinking Cancer," made by the [Foundation for Advancement](#) in Cancer Therapy, which shares information about alternative treatment sources and practitioners. (The film, which can be ordered from the website, www.rethinkingcancer.org, outlines the treatment plans of four cancer patients and a Lyme disease patient.)

Leventhal believe that ridding the body of toxins is key in treatment plans.

"Our core program is detoxification of the body from the many insults that we have in our lifetime, from heavy metals to additives and preservatives," Leventhal explains. "When traditional medicine isn't working, people are now turning to alternative medicine."

Dietary supplements aren't the only alternative to conventional treatments; medical experts also are focusing on learning the mind, explains [Dr. Isaac Eliaz](#), who runs a dietary supplements company called [Econugenics](#).

Stress management, guided imagery and meditation all can enhance conventional medicine and the immune system," he says. "Take cancer, for instance. Conventional treatment focuses on killing the cancer. Traditional medicine sees something that is wrong and then tries to fix it. The alternative approach is to look at the person as a whole and see how we can enhance the well being of that person."

In Somers' case, she was inspired to write a book promoting treatments that avoid chemotherapy.

"It's a very brave choice to go against traditional medicine and embrace the alternative route," Somers writes in "Knockout." "It's easier to try the traditional route and then, if it fails, go to the alternatives, but often it can be too late."

But medical experts caution, however, against substituting alternative for conventional therapies.

[Dr. Erika Schwartz](#), who likes meditation, yoga and even massage as alternative therapies, says it makes sense to combine conventional with alternative treatments.

"I believe in integrating the alternative with the conventional to get the best results," she says. "Especially when treating cancer, we have to be very careful that we don't jump on just one option."

http://www.nydailynews.com/lifestyle/health/2009/11/23/2009-11-23_alternative_treatments_parker_posey_and_suzanne_somers_seek_other_means_to_cure_.html