



# Types of CAM

There is limited research on use of CAM in the US and the Expert Panel Review-3 (EPR-3) Guidelines for Asthma state “evidence is insufficient to recommend or not recommend most complementary and alternative medicines or treatments.”<sup>1</sup> Overall, 43% of adults and 23% of children with current asthma reported using some kind of CAM for their asthma (Figure 1). Below lists the frequency of types of CAM mentioned for adults and children with asthma in Montana (Figure 1).

**Breathing techniques:** Includes inspiratory muscle training and Buteyko breathing (raising the partial pressure of carbon dioxide in the blood through hypoventilation). One third of adults and 14% of children with asthma in Montana mentioned using breathing techniques for their asthma.

**Vitamins:** Consuming vitamins or provitamins in addition to food eaten to treat asthma. Ten percent of adults and seven percent of children with asthma report using vitamins for their asthma.

**Herbs:** The use of plants and plant extracts to treat asthma. Nine percent of adults and three percent of children report using herbs to treat their asthma. The EPR-3 Guidelines caution that herbal products are not standardized and therefore patients must be aware that some herbal treatments may have harmful ingredients and/or may interact with other pharmaceutical products.

**Aromatherapy:** The use of volatile plant materials to alter health, moods, or cognitive function. Very little research has been conducted on whether an association between aromatherapy and asthma exists. Five percent of adults and two percent of children with asthma report using aromatherapy.

**Yoga:** A form of exercise including a series of set postures to promote control of the mind and body. Four percent of adults reported using yoga to treat their asthma.

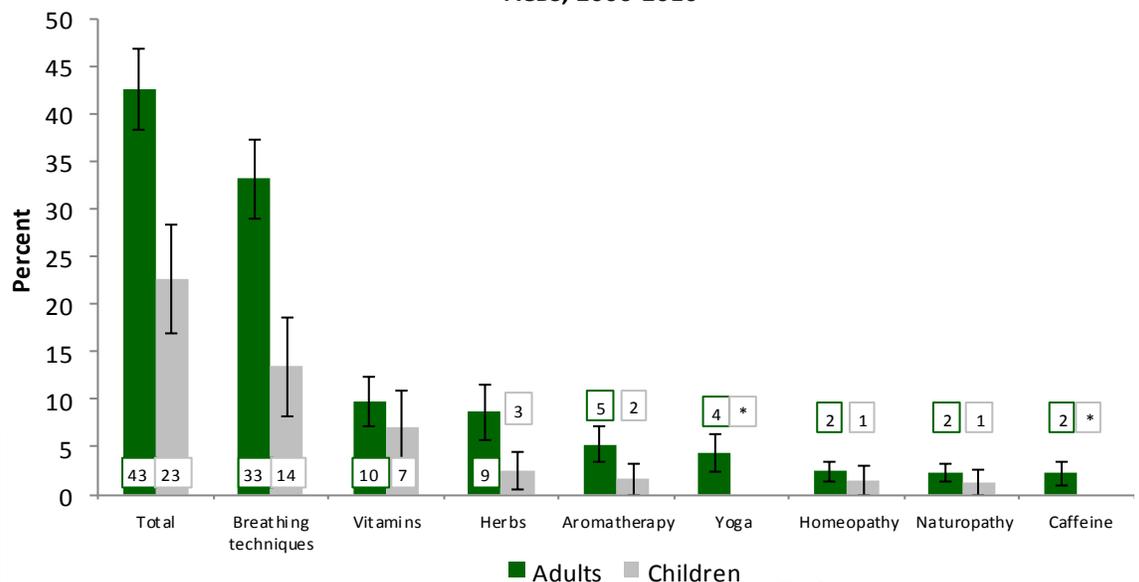
**Homeopathy:** Based on the theory that “like cures like”. Remedies are usually a diluted form of a substance that would cause similar symptoms as the illness when undiluted. Two percent of adults and one percent of children with asthma report using homeopathy.

**Naturopathy:** Treatment that tends to be holistic and non-invasive where surgery and medications are avoided. Two percent of adults and one percent of children report using naturopathy to treat their asthma.

**Caffeine:** Caffeine may modestly improve airway functioning for up to four hours.<sup>2</sup> Caffeine use within four hours of lung function testing may lead to misinterpretation of results. Two percent of adults in Montana reported using caffeine to treat their asthma.

**GUIDELINES<sup>1</sup>**  
**RECOMMEND ASKING PATIENTS ABOUT ALL MEDICATIONS AND TREATMENTS THEY ARE USING FOR ASTHMA AND TO ADVISE PATIENTS THAT CAM IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE CLINICIANS’ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ASTHMA TREATMENT**

Figure 1. Type of CAM used among people with current asthma, Montana, ACBS, 2006-2010



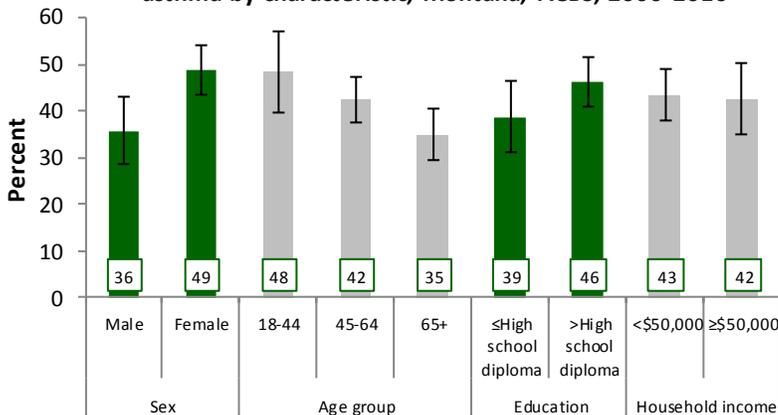
## Other Types of CAM Mentioned Infrequently by Respondents

**Acupuncture and acupressure:** Acupuncture refers to inserting thin needles along certain points on the body. The EPR-3 Guidelines do not recommend the use of acupuncture for the treatment of asthma. Acupressure is derived from acupuncture and involves applying physical pressure to certain points on the body.

**Chiropractic:** A form of spinal or body manipulation or massage. The EPR-3 Guidelines conclude there is insufficient evidence to recommend the use of chiropractic or related techniques for asthma.

**Relaxation techniques:** Includes imagery, muscle relaxation, hypnosis, and meditation. The EPR-3 Guidelines state “there is some encouraging data from small studies,” but that more data from larger controlled studies would be needed to be able to recommend relaxation techniques for the treatment of asthma.

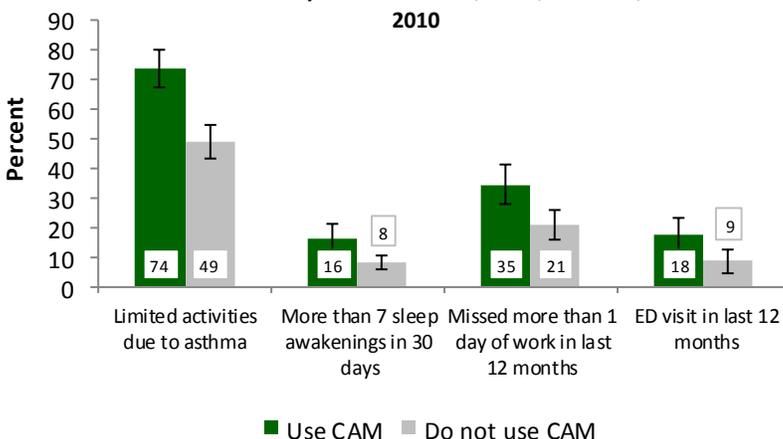
**Figure 2. Percent of CAM use among adults with current asthma by characteristic, Montana, ACBS, 2006-2010**



## Among adults with asthma, who uses CAM?

Use of CAM was more frequent among females compared with males (Figure 2). There were no differences in the frequency of CAM use between age groups, educational levels or household income levels.

**Figure 3. Percent of adults with current asthma with poor health outcomes by CAM use status, ACBS, Montana, 2006-2010**



## Asthma outcomes

Use of CAM did not result in better asthma symptoms among adults with current asthma. Adults who used CAM reported limiting their activities due to asthma, awakening at night due to asthma, and missing work due to asthma more frequently than adults with asthma who did not use any CAM (Figure 3). There was no reported difference in the frequency of visiting an Emergency Department between CAM users and non-CAM users. After adjusting for sex, the associations between CAM use and limiting activities, sleep awakenings, and missing work remained (data not shown).

**Note to our readers:** If you would no longer like to receive this report or if you would like to receive it electronically, please email [jfernandes@mt.gov](mailto:jfernandes@mt.gov) or call 406-444-9155 to make your request.

### References

1. National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (US). Expert Panel Review-3 Guidelines to Asthma Management. National Institutes of Health (US); 2007 Aug. NIH Pub. Available at: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/asthma/asthgdln.pdf>
2. Welsh EJ, Bara A, Barley E, Cates CJ. Caffeine for asthma. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2010 Jan 20;(1):CD001112.

# Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

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## Clinical Recommendations

- Ask asthma patients about all medications they may be taking including complementary or alternative medicines or therapies.
- Evidence is insufficient to recommend or not recommend most complementary and alternative medicines or treatments for asthma.
- Advise patients on the appropriate use of herbal therapies as they may interact with other pharmaceutical therapies or contain harmful ingredients.
- Acupuncture is not recommended for treating asthma.

## Report Highlights: Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use for Asthma

- Montana adults and children with asthma report frequently using complementary or alternative medicines (CAM) to treat their asthma.
- The most frequently reported CAM used are breathing techniques.
- Adults with asthma who use CAM do not report better asthma health outcomes than adults with asthma who do not use CAM.