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# CONVENTIONAL, ALTERNATIVE OR COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE: WHICH IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

There is more than one way to achieve a healthy mind, body and spirit. In the world of medicine, there are three common approaches.

**Conventional Medicine** is an evidence-based practice for diagnosing and treating disease. Providers of this type of care are highly trained and subject to strict federal guidelines and regulations. Diagnostic tests such as x-rays and blood work-ups are used to reveal the presence of disease, even before a patient experiences symptoms. The main treatment types are drugs, surgery and radiation. Conventional medicine is readily accepted by all health insurance companies.

**Alternative Medicine** is built on the philosophy that the body has a natural ability to heal itself. Practitioners often search for emotional, physiological, psychological and spiritual conditions that could be affecting a person's health. Alternative medical fields include nutrition, homeopathy, massage therapy, acupuncture and even yoga. Alternative medicine isn't always based on research

but rather on anecdotal evidence, therefore, it may not be recognized as medically necessary by some health insurance companies.

Many alternative therapies are used in conjunction with conventional treatments to prevent illness, reduce stress and manage disease. This is known as Complementary Medicine. For example, if a special diet is used to combat high cholesterol levels in a patient with heart disease, in addition to bypass surgery, the diet would serve as a complementary therapy.

All approaches must be administered correctly and properly monitored by a professional in order to be safe and effective. It is extremely important for you to have honest discussions with all of your physicians and practitioners. They need to be aware of all treatments, conventional and alternative, you are receiving so that each has a complete picture of you and your health. If not, you could experience unintended consequences.

Just like conventional medicine, alternative

medicine can cause side effects in some people. The severity and types of side effects can vary greatly depending on the patient's medical history and what kinds of treatments are being undergone. The two disciplines can also interfere with one another if they are not coordinated properly. In addition to your prescription drugs, all vitamins and supplements should be included in any medical history you are providing. To insure interactions do not occur, you should also include your pharmacist as part of your team of medical care advisors.

Conventional medicine is most commonly used for emergency situations, major injuries and serious illnesses. For non-emergency, acute and chronic conditions, alternative medicine may be a more attractive approach. Regardless of your method of choice, all professionals should have the applicable licenses or certifications required for their field of expertise.

As with anything, ask a lot of questions and research your options thoroughly so that you can make the best decision for your personal situation.

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*Since 1985, Ed Gaelick, CLU, ChFC, has helped people protect their families, their assets, their businesses and their employees. He specializes in life, disability and long term care insurance, employee and executive benefits. Ed has exceptional knowledge, integrity and a commitment to being relevant to his clients. Throughout his career, he has received many of the highest professional honors awarded in the insurance industry and is the go to insurance expert for various organizations.*  
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