

Amish Communities

What is CAM?

- “Complementary” generally refers to using a non-mainstream approach together with conventional medicine.
- “Alternative” refers to using a non-mainstream approach in place of conventional medicine.
- Common CAM used in the Amish community include, but not limited to: St. John’s wort, red clover, saw palmetto berries, garlic, Echinacea, ginseng, vitamins & supplements, herbal teas, burn slaves
- Chiropractic & body manipulations, foot treatments and acupuncture, prayer & faith healing



Amish use of CAM

- The Amish culture and religious beliefs greatly impact the type and methods of healthcare they seek
- Inadequate health literacy among the Amish population can contribute to improper use of health services leading to health disparities
- Multiple studies show that there is a significant increase in the use of complementary and alternative medicines (CAM) among the Amish populations as compared to the non-Amish.
 - One study suggested that up to 90% of Amish men and women have used CAM
 - It is thought the Amish use herbal remedies because they are considered natural, a concept appealing to their cultural. However, this does not ensure safety

Associated Risks

- There is limited research on side effects and interactions of CAM, but it is known that interactions are possible and potentially serious
- CAM are classified as dietary supplements and therefore there are no FDA regulations on accuracy, dosing, efficacy or safety of active ingredients
- Use of CAM by Amish patients is often not reported due to being perceived as “natural” and therefore not a medication or out of fear of being scolded or ridiculed

Herb	Ginko biloba	Garlic	St. John Wort	Ginseng	Echinacea
Potential Side Effects	Increased bleeding time	Increased bleeding time	Prolong effects of anesthesia, Trigger manic episode	Increased bleeding time	Hepatotoxicity
Potential Drug Interactions	Anticoagulants, thiazide diuretics, trazodone	Anticoagulants, chlorzoxazone	Warfarin, oral contraceptives, MAOIs, SSRIs	Anticoagulants, phenelzine	ketoconazole, methotrexate, amiodarone, anabolic steroids

Role of Provider

- Keys to successful health programs in Amish communities are establishing good communication with family leaders, creating an environment of trust between healthcare provider and patient, and placing value in the patients culture and belief system
- Obtain an accurate history by asking questions regarding CAM in a gentle and nonjudgmental manner
- Educate patients and families on use of CAM and possible unwanted side effects and interactions with other medications.
- Create interventions that are patient centered and if patient preferred, incorporate CAM when appropriate

