

FACTSHEET

This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Making decisions about treatments in Spina Bifida

Making decisions about health care is an individual's right. The Spina Bifida team are available to assist you in gathering information to help you make informed decisions about your healthcare.

Evidence Based Medicine (EBM)

The evolution of medicine ensures the best, most accurate, safest and most clinically justified interventions and treatments are available to clients and their families.

The practice of EBM means individual clinical skill is combined with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research. Evidence based treatments are scientifically proven to be safe and effective. They are designed to diagnose Spina Bifida and treat associated complications. They are often referred to as mainstream or conventional medical treatments.

Complementary therapies and alternative therapies

Some families choose to explore complementary or alternative therapies. Many of these do not have clinical evidence to prove their benefits systematically. It is important to **always** inform your treating team if additional therapies are being explored, trialled or used on a regular basis. Some complementary and alternative therapies impact on conventional treatments and full disclosure is required.

What are complementary therapies?

Complementary therapies may be used together with conventional medical treatments to support and enhance quality of life and well-being. They do not aim to "cure" the person. Instead they are used to help control symptoms, such as pain or fatigue.

Complementary therapies include:

- Relaxation
- Meditation
- Visualisation
- Aromatherapy
- Reflexology
- Music therapy
- Art therapy
- Massage.

Some complementary therapies may not be recommended for people with Spina Bifida. Always talk to your doctor before commencing any complementary therapy.

What are alternative therapies?

Alternative therapies are used instead of conventional medical treatments. Alternative therapies are often promoted as “cures” but they are unproven and have not been scientifically tested. They may cause harm or suffering to those who use them instead of conventional medical treatments.

Some examples of alternative therapies include:

- Naturopathy
- Homeopathy
- Chinese herbs
- Megavitamins.

Remember:

- Always disclose additional therapies to your treating team.
- Some additional therapies may cause harm.