

# Beauty & Health – Alternative Therapies

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## “It was just incredible...”

One of us is always raving about how the kinesiologist or naturopath changed our life. So we asked the therapists to explain their work, then shared our own experiences. By Wendy Howitt

Times have changed: many therapies once considered unconventional or even “crackpot” are now readily referred to as alternative, holistic or complementary, and we all know people who have used them even if we haven’t ourselves. Sure, there are some that still raise eyebrows and questions – ear candling, past-life regression and spiritual healing, for example – but on the whole, alternative therapies are booming in popularity.

The industry is currently estimated as being worth well over \$1 billion a year, and more than 50 per cent of Australians are using herbs or other complementary therapies with up to 15 million consultations taking place every year.

Large pharmacies now sell vitamins and Bach Flower Remedies alongside cough mixtures, “holistic” medical practices exist where GPs work alongside homeopaths, and health funds are coming to the party, offering rebates on a range of services from massage to iridology. To top it off, complementary practitioners now have university degrees and professional indemnity, and there is growing interest among scientists to test whether or not the therapies actually work.

“Some of the more trendy techniques will come and go,” says **Professor Alan Bensoussan** from the Centre for Complementary Medicine Research at the University of Western Sydney. “But as the evidence stacks up in favour of common therapies and more research money is invested, alternative medicine will expand even more.”

If you’re wondering how to choose a therapy or find a practitioner, the most common way is through word of mouth, but researching the web or talking with your GP can be very helpful. Us? Of course we do the hard research but in the end we always ask each other and our friends what they’ve tried. This story is the result of such a factfinding mission – first we asked the experts, then we asked you and us.

## TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

THEY SAY: This form of healing is based on the Taoist concept that illness is a signal the mind, body and spirit are out of balance. At a consultation your yin/yang energy flow is assessed in order to make a diagnosis. You are then treated in follow-up sessions with a variety of herbs, acupuncture and sometimes reflexology.

Most Chinese medicines are given as combinations of dried chopped herbs and need to be prepared at home. But there are also pills available for the most standard medicines.

COST: \$90-\$120 initial consultation. \$50 - \$90 for subsequent sessions.

DURATION: 1-1 ½ hours for initial consultation. 30-60 minutes for subsequent sessions.

WE SAY: “I went for fertility treatment when I have trouble conceiving a baby. The tea I had to boil up didn’t taste very nice – it was incredibly awful, actually – but the wonderful thing is: I have a daughter now.”

## GOING ALTERNATIVE:

Just as with GPS (and beauty therapists) complementary health practitioners will vary according to their training, philosophies and personality. Also, since some of the techniques have similar results, look for ones you are most likely to feel comfortable trying. The following websites are a good place to start:

- The Australian Traditional Medicine Society: [www.atms.com.au](http://www.atms.com.au)
- Natural Therapy Pages: [www.naturaltherapypages.com.au](http://www.naturaltherapypages.com.au)
- Better Health Channel: [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)
- Kinesiology Australia: [www.kinesiology.com.au](http://www.kinesiology.com.au)
- The Bowen Therapists Federation of Australia: [www.bowen.asn.au](http://www.bowen.asn.au)