

NIH Analysis Reveals Rising Use of Complementary Health Approaches

Study finds approaches such as acupuncture, yoga and massage therapy are especially popular for pain management.

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An analysis conducted by the National Institutes of Health's National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) reveals a substantial increase in the overall use of complementary health approaches by American adults from 2002 to 2022.

[The study](#), published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, highlights a surge in the adoption of complementary health approaches for pain management over the same period.

Researchers utilized data from the 2002, 2012, and 2022 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) to evaluate changes in the use of seven complementary health approaches, including yoga, meditation, massage therapy, chiropractic care, acupuncture, naturopathy, and guided imagery/progressive muscle relaxation.

The key findings include:

- The percentage of individuals who reported using at least one of the seven approaches increased from 19.2% in 2002 to 36.7% in 2022.
- The use of yoga, meditation, and massage therapy experienced the most significant growth from 2002 to 2022.
- Use of yoga increased from 5% in 2002 to 15.8% in 2022.
- Meditation became the most used approach in 2022, with an increase from 7.5% in 2002 to 17.3% in 2022.
- Acupuncture, increasingly covered by insurance, saw an increase from 1% in 2002 to 2.2% in 2022.
- Additionally, the analysis showed a notable rise in the proportion of U.S. adults using

complementary health approaches specifically for pain management. Among participants using any of the complementary health approaches, the percentage reporting use for pain management increased from 42.3% in 2002 to 49.2% in 2022.

Despite the findings, the authors acknowledge study limitations, including decreasing NHIS response rates over time, possible recall bias, cross-sectional data, and differences in survey wording.

The study also highlights the role of factors such as higher quality research supporting the efficacy of complementary health approaches, the inclusion of these approaches in clinical practice guidelines for pain, and the expanded insurance coverage for approaches such as acupuncture, which has contributed to increased patient access.

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