backgrounder

# Reiki: An Introduction

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Reiki is a complementary health practice in which practitioners place their hands lightly on or just above the person, with the goal of facilitating the person's own healing response. There is a lack of high-quality research in this field. However, this fact sheet provides basic information about Reiki and suggests sources for additional information.

## Key Points

- Do not use Reiki to replace proven conventional medical care or to postpone seeing a health care provider about a medical problem.
- Overall there is a lack of high-quality research on Reiki, and studies that have been done show conflicting results.
- Training and certification for Reiki practitioners are not formally regulated.
- Tell all your health care providers about any complementary health practices you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care.

## Overview

Reiki is based on an Eastern belief in an energy that supports the body's innate or natural healing abilities. However, there is no scientific evidence that such an energy exists. Research on Reiki has generally focused on symptom management or well-being.

## Use in the United States

According to the 2007 National Health Interview Survey, which included a comprehensive survey of the use of complementary health practices by Americans, more than 1.2 million adults—0.5 percent of the U.S. general adult population—had used an energy healing therapy, such as Reiki, in the previous year.

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## The Status of Reiki Research

There has been limited clinical research (studies in people) on Reiki. Available research has examined the use of Reiki for conditions such as fibromyalgia, pain, cancer, and depression, and for overall well-being. Although some small studies suggest that Reiki may help with symptoms related to these conditions, others have not found any clinical benefits. There is a lack of high-quality research to definitively evaluate Reiki's effectiveness for any therapeutic purpose.

## Side Effects and Risks

Reiki appears to be generally safe, and no serious side effects have been reported.

## Training, Licensing, and Certification

No licensing, professional standards, or formal regulation exists for the practice of Reiki. There are many different forms of Reiki, and no special background or credentials are needed to receive training.

## If You Are Thinking About Reiki

- Do not use Reiki to replace proven conventional medical care or to postpone seeing a health care provider about a medical problem.
- Be aware that Reiki has not been thoroughly studied scientifically.
- Tell all your health care providers about any complementary health practices you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care. For tips about talking with your health care providers about complementary and alternative medicine, see NCCAM's Time to Talk campaign at nccam.nih.gov/timetotalk/.

## Selected References


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## For More Information

### NCCAM Clearinghouse

The NCCAM Clearinghouse provides information on NCCAM and complementary health practices, including publications and searches of Federal databases of scientific and medical literature. The Clearinghouse does not provide medical advice, treatment recommendations, or referrals to practitioners.

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-644-6226
TTY (for deaf and hard-of-hearing callers): 1-866-464-3615
Web site: nccam.nih.gov
E-mail: info@nccam.nih.gov

### PubMed®

A service of the National Library of Medicine, PubMed contains publication information and (in most cases) brief summaries of articles from scientific and medical journals.

Web site: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez

### NIH Clinical Research Trials and You

The National Institutes of Health has created a new website, NIH Clinical Research Trials and You to help people learn more about clinical trials, why they matter, and how to participate. Clinical trials are essential for identifying and understanding ways to prevent, diagnose, and treat disease.

Web site: www.nih.gov/health/clinicaltrials/

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