



© Getty Images

Reiki

What's the Bottom Line?

How much do we know about Reiki?

We don't know very much because little high-quality research has been done on Reiki.

What do we know about the effectiveness of Reiki?

Reiki hasn't been clearly shown to be useful for any health-related purpose.

What do we know about the safety of Reiki?

Reiki hasn't been shown to have any harmful effects. However, Reiki should not be used to replace conventional care or to postpone seeing a health care provider about a health problem.

What is Reiki?

Reiki is a complementary health approach in which practitioners place their hands lightly on or just above a person, with the goal of facilitating the person's own healing response.

- Reiki is based on an Eastern belief in an energy that supports the body's innate or natural healing abilities. However, there isn't any scientific evidence that such an energy exists.
- Reiki has been studied for a variety of conditions, including pain, anxiety, fatigue, and depression.

What the Science Says About the Effectiveness of Reiki

Several groups of experts have evaluated the evidence on Reiki, and all of them have concluded that it's uncertain whether Reiki is helpful.

Only a small number of studies of Reiki have been completed, and most of them included only a few people. Different studies looked at different health conditions making it hard to compare their results. Many of the studies didn't compare Reiki with both sham (simulated) Reiki and with no treatment. Studies that include both of these comparisons are usually the most informative.

Reiki

What the Science Says About the Safety of Reiki

Reiki appears to be generally safe. In studies of Reiki, side effects were no more common among participants who received Reiki than among those who didn't receive it.

More to Consider

- Reiki should not be used to replace conventional care or to postpone seeing a health care provider about a health problem. If you have severe or long-lasting symptoms, see your health care provider. You may have a health problem that needs prompt treatment.
- Tell all your health care providers about any complementary or integrative health approaches you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care.

For More Information

NCCIH Clearinghouse

The NCCIH Clearinghouse provides information on NCCIH and complementary and integrative health approaches, 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: nccih.nih.gov

E-mail: info@nccih.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/pubmed

Key References

Assefi N, Bogart A, Goldberg J, et al. [Reiki for the treatment of fibromyalgia: a randomized controlled trial.](#) *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine.* 2008;14(9):1115-1122.

Catlin A, Taylor-Ford RL. Investigation of standard care versus sham Reiki placebo versus actual Reiki therapy to enhance comfort and well-being in a chemotherapy infusion center. *Oncology Nursing Forum.* 2011;38(3):E212-220.

Demir M, Can G, Celek E. Effect of Reiki on symptom management in oncology. *Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention.* 2013;14(8):4931-4933.

Ferraresi M, Clari R, Moro I, et al. Reiki and related therapies in the dialysis ward: an evidence-based and ethical discussion to debate if these complementary and alternative medicines are welcomed or banned. *BMC Nephrology.* 2013;14:129.

Friedman RS, Burg MM, Miles P, et al. Effects of Reiki on autonomic activity early after acute coronary syndrome. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology.* 2010;56(12):995-996.

Kundu A, Lin Y, Oron AP, et al. Reiki therapy for postoperative oral pain in pediatric patients: pilot data from a double-blind, randomized clinical trial. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice.* 2014;20(1):21-25.

Reiki

Lee MS, Pittler MH, Ernst E. Effects of Reiki in clinical practice: a systematic review of randomised clinical trials. *International Journal of Clinical Practice*. 2008;62(6):947-954.

Nield-Anderson L, Ameling A. Reiki: a complementary therapy for nursing practice. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services*. 2001;39(4):42-49.

Thrane S, Cohen SM. Effect of Reiki therapy on pain and anxiety in adults: an in-depth literature review of randomized trials with effect size calculations. *Pain Management Nursing*. 2014; February 27 [Epub ahead of print].

vanderVaart S, Gijzen VM, de Wildt SN, et al. A systematic review of the therapeutic effects of Reiki. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. 2009;15(11):1157-1169.

Acknowledgments

NCCIH thanks John (Jack) Killen, Jr., M.D., NCCIH, for his contributions to the 2014 update of this publication.

Reiki

This publication is not copyrighted and is in the public domain.

Duplication is encouraged.

NCCIH has provided this material for your information. It is not intended to substitute for the medical expertise and advice of your primary health care provider. We encourage you to discuss any decisions about treatment or care with your health care provider. The mention of any product, service, or therapy is not an endorsement by NCCIH.

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services • National Institutes of Health • National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health

nccih.nih.gov