

# BIOENERGY MEDICINE

## FAST FACTS

- Cancer Treatment Centers of America has integrated energy medicine into their treatment options for patients and self-care for hospital staff.
- Reiki is a form of bioenergy used on military bases to assist veterans coping with post-traumatic stress and addiction.
- Therapeutic touch was recognized in 2005-2006 as part of NANDA International's guidelines (NANDA-I was previously called North American Nursing Diagnosis Association).

## WHAT IS BIOENERGY MEDICINE?

Bioenergy medicine includes a number of different therapeutic interventions where a therapist helps to harness or manipulate a patient's subtle energy in order to help restore the body's balance and improve the body's ability to heal. These "subtle energy" therapeutic interventions have been described and used for thousands of years by systems such as Traditional Chinese Medicine and Traditional Indian Medicine, and by faith healers through approaches like "laying-on-of-hands." The most commonly used bioenergetic therapeutic interventions are Therapeutic Touch/Healing Touch, Reiki, Qigong, and the laying-on-of-hands.

## How does bioenergy medicine work?

We don't know. Current understanding of subtle energy medicine diverges from accepted principles in physics, chemistry and biology. Until an understanding of the practice can be accepted that is in line with current science, it will continue to be called pseudoscience by skeptics in the field.

Explanations often focus on the makeup of the human biofield (detectable or undetectable amounts of light that the body emits), but the medical and scientific fields have not yet accepted subtle energy healing as a valid form of medical treatment in part because there is no known mechanism by which it works.

Different theories include quantum mechanics, biophotons, intention and suggestion, placebo and unmeasured energy fields.

Advocates of the therapy say that because scientists don't know how it works, they may not be controlling for proper factors or have the right instruments to measure it. This creates issues with being able to reproduce results of studies; reproducibility is a major issue when studying energy medicine.

## What are the different types of bioenergy medicine?

### Qigong

- Qigong is an ancient Chinese practice that uses gentle movements, meditation and controlled breathing to restore

energy or "qi." According to the National Qigong Association, Qigong practices can be classified as martial, medical or spiritual. All styles have three things in common: they all involve a posture (whether moving or stationary), breathing techniques and mental focus. Some practices increase the qi; others circulate it, use it to cleanse and heal the body, store it, or emit qi to help heal others.

### Reiki

- Reiki is a practice along the lines of meditation, yoga and tai chi. Reiki was formulated to be a practice primarily for self-care. The hands-on practice can also be offered to others to gently encourage self-healing.

### Healing Touch

- Healing touch is a form of energy medicine in which practitioners consciously use their hands and mind in an intentional way to promote healing by manipulating the human biofield. The goal of Healing Touch is to restore balance and harmonies in the energy system, placing the client in a position to self-heal.

### Therapeutic Touch

- Therapeutic touch is a form of energy healing by which the healer places his or her hands on or near a patient's body and detects and manipulates the healee's energy.

## Laying-on-of-hands

- Laying-on-of-hands is a spiritual practice that appears in Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other faith traditions throughout the world. Hands are placed on an individual in conjunction with prayer to provide healing or blessings.

## What can I expect to happen during my session with a bioenergy medicine clinician?

### Do Your Research

- Make sure you research the different types of bioenergy medicine to be sure you are choosing the practice you believe is right for you. When you call to set up an appointment, speak with the practitioner to see if you are comfortable with their demeanor and how they conduct their practice. It is important you feel comfortable with your chosen practitioner.

## Is there evidence that bioenergy medicine works?

In the last 20 years, as patients increasingly integrate complementary and alternative medicine into their treatment plans, more and more literature is being published exploring the impact of bioenergy for certain conditions. The following is a short summary.

### Reiki for Burnout

- Reiki in comparison with a sham intervention significantly decreased burnout symptoms of community mental health workers.<sup>1</sup>

### Reiki for Cancer Patients

- A program evaluation of a Reiki program of 213 patients collected pre- and post-program surveys from them about their experience with Reiki and their symptoms following participation in the Reiki program. The program evaluation found that participants reported a decrease in distress, anxiety and pain, and 173 of the patients would continue using Reiki and most of them would recommend it to others. When patients were interviewed they reported that Reiki cultivated a feeling of relaxation and enhanced spiritual well-being.<sup>2</sup>

### Healing Touch for Pediatric Oncology Patients

- Pediatric oncology patients who received Healing Touch experienced significant decreases in the scores for pain, stress, and fatigue.<sup>3</sup>

### Healing Touch on Postsurgical Adult Outpatients

- A prospective pilot study found that postsurgical adult outpatients who received Healing Touch reported decreased anxiety and pain and a trend toward a decrease in the use of narcotics.<sup>4</sup>

## Biofield Therapies for Palliative and End-of-life Care Patients

- A structured review of bioenergy medicine therapies including Healing Touch and Therapeutic Touch for managing symptoms experienced by palliative and end-of-life care patients found that studies supported the use of bioenergy medicine in these populations; these studies reported that patients were better able to manage their pain, improving their quality of life and decreasing physiological indicators of stress.<sup>5</sup>

### Healing Touch and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- A randomized study of Healing Touch combined with relaxation imagery CDs vs usual care in 100 Marines with PTSD found that Healing Touch and relaxation imagery CDs reduced symptoms and improved the wellbeing of Marines compared to usual care alone.<sup>6</sup>

If you or your healthcare provider would like to read more, visit [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed)

## What conditions does bioenergy medicine treat?

Note that you may find claims that bioenergy can cure cancer and other major diseases on the internet. **There is no reliable data that this is true and to use bioenergy instead of proven treatments for these conditions is dangerous.** Primarily, different Bioenergy medicine practices are used to improve wellbeing and help reduce symptoms related to chronic health concerns and not to cure the disease. Examples of conditions in which Bioenergy has been used for symptom management include:

- Fibromyalgia
- Sleep apnea
- Restless legs syndrome
- Allergies
- Bronchitis
- Addiction
- Lupus
- Alzheimer's disease
- Chronic pain
- Cancer symptoms
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Burnout
- Fatigue
- Insomnia

## Are there concerns I should be aware of before I start bioenergy medicine?

Bioenergy medicine is widely considered safe when delivered by a well-trained certified bioenergy practitioner, provided it is not used as a substitute for a proven treatment.

### Potential

#### Precautions

- Psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia
- Swelling/Inflammation
- Pain that is undiagnosed
  - Including joint pain and pain where there is cancer present

#### Side Effects

- Increased thirst
- Restlessness
- Anxiety
- Fever
- Mental “spacy-ness”

## How often should I seek treatment from a bioenergy medicine clinician? How long is each session?

How often and for how long you will seek treatment from a bioenergy medicine clinician depends on why you are seeking help and the type of therapy you are seeking. Sessions with your practitioner can run anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour.

## What training/certifications do bioenergy practitioners need to have?

Currently, there are no nationally nor state-recognized certification, training or licensure programs for a majority of the bioenergy practices. There are many independent organizations that lead trainings and provide certifications to individuals who either take their courses or meet their qualifications. Before seeking the treatment of a bioenergy medicine practitioner, ask for their qualifications and research the organization where they received them.

### Healing and Therapeutic Touch Certification

The Healing Touch Certification Program ([www.healingtouchprogram.com](http://www.healingtouchprogram.com)) has been recognized or endorsed by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the American Holistic Nurses Association (AHNA), National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork, the NANDA and both the American Nurses Credentialing Center and it's Canadian equivalent.

To certify as a healing touch practitioner, individuals must complete the Healing Touch Program's coursework levels 1-5 and receive a certificate indicating that they have passed and completed all of the coursework ([www.healingtouchprogram.com/classes](http://www.healingtouchprogram.com/classes)). Additionally, practitioners must also take and pass The Healing Touch Certified Practitioner Entry Level Proficiency Exam.

To maintain certification, the practitioner must complete a renewal packet every five years indicating and providing proof that s/he has not faced any ethical violations, continues to regularly practice and has participated and completed continuing education classes.

Although there are no official training guidelines, the following websites can help you ask the right questions and address the training qualifications prior to seeing a practitioner for your first session.

- [www.umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/treatment/therapeutic-touch](http://www.umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/treatment/therapeutic-touch)
- [www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/explore-healing-practices/reiki/how-can-i-find-qualified-reiki-practitioner](http://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/explore-healing-practices/reiki/how-can-i-find-qualified-reiki-practitioner)

## How do I find a bioenergy practitioner?

Depending on the type of bioenergy treatment you are seeking, visit:

### Reiki

- [iarp.org/find-reiki-practitioner-teacher](http://iarp.org/find-reiki-practitioner-teacher)
- [www.reikimembership.com/MembershipListing.aspx](http://www.reikimembership.com/MembershipListing.aspx)

### Therapeutic Touch

- [therapeutictouch.org](http://therapeutictouch.org)
- [www.umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/treatment/therapeutic-touch](http://www.umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/treatment/therapeutic-touch)

### Healing Touch

- [www.htpractitioner.com/find-a-practitioner](http://www.htpractitioner.com/find-a-practitioner)
- [www.healingbeyondborders.org/index.php/find-healing-touch?st=spractitioner](http://www.healingbeyondborders.org/index.php/find-healing-touch?st=spractitioner)

### Qigong

- [www.qigonginstitute.org/directory](http://www.qigonginstitute.org/directory)
- [www.nqa.org/index.php?option=com\\_mcsearchresults&view=search&uuuid=cfe925f8-fa56-4fda-9d85-be4a1dba5d54#](http://www.nqa.org/index.php?option=com_mcsearchresults&view=search&uuuid=cfe925f8-fa56-4fda-9d85-be4a1dba5d54#/)

## How much will a bioenergy session cost me?

The cost of receiving bioenergy treatment will vary based on location, provider and extent of services needed.

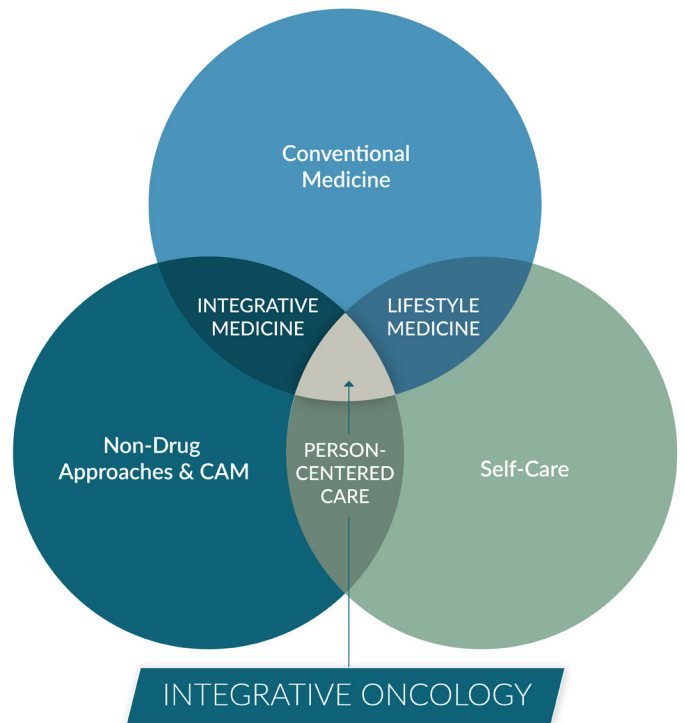
## Will my insurance company cover the cost of seeing a bioenergy medicine clinician?

Currently, bioenergy medicine is not covered by most insurance. Nevertheless, there are certain clinics and hospitals whose nurses and/or employees are trained in bioenergetic medicine practices and their services are offered for free. You should ask about this at your hospital or clinic.

## Should I inform my primary care physician that I am interested in receiving bioenergy treatments?

To receive the best treatment and effectively address your psychological or physical condition, it is best to openly communicate with all of your healthcare providers. Open communication can help you and your healthcare providers properly integrate care, avoid complications that may arise from interactions between therapies and improve provider-patient trust.

Bioenergy medicine can be used alongside any conventional treatments you are receiving; bioenergy medicine is not meant to take the place of proven conventional care. Any decisions regarding treatment should be discussed with your doctor(s) prior to making changes to your treatment plan.



### Endnotes:

- 1 Rosada, R.M., Rubik, B., Mainguy, B., Plummer, J., & Mehl-Madrone, L. (2015). Reiki Reduces Burnout Among Community Mental Health Clinicians. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 21(8): pp. 489-495.
- 2 Fleisher, K.A., Mackenzie, E.R., Frankel, E.S., Seluzicki, C., Casarett, D., & Mao, J.J. (2014). Integrative Reiki for cancer patients: a program evaluation. *Integrative Cancer Therapies*, 13(1): pp. 62-67.
- 3 Wong, J., Ghiasuddin, A., Kimata, C., Patelesio, B., & Siu, A. (2013). The impact of healing touch on pediatric oncology patients. *Integrative Cancer Therapies*, 12(1): pp. 25-30.
- 4 Foley, M.K., Anderson, J., Mallea, L., Morrison, K., & Downey, M. (2016). Effects of Healing Touch on Postsurgical Adult Outpatients. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 34(3): pp. 271-279.
- 5 Henneghan, A.M. & Schnyer, R.N. (2015). Biofield therapies for symptom management in palliative and end-of-life care. *American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Care*, 32(1): pp. 90-100.
- 6 Jain S., McMahon, G.F., Hasen, P., Kozub, M.P., Porter, V., King, R., & Guarneri, E.M. (2012). Healing Touch with Guided Imagery for PTSD in returning active duty military: a randomized controlled trial. *Military Medicine*, 177(9): pp. 1015-1021.