



Choosing Medical Treatments

Pre-reading

Questions: What thoughts or questions come to mind when you read the title?

Definitions: Treatment – giving medicine or using other means to help cure a disease or injury

Pharmacist – a person who is trained and licensed to prepare and sell medicine

Reading

When you're sick, it isn't always easy to get well again. There are lots of medicines and other ways to treat health problems. You may hear about some from a friend or you may see an ad on TV or in the newspaper. Your doctor may also recommend a treatment.

It is the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) job to make sure the medicines and other treatments people buy are safe and really work. Most treatments you can buy have the FDA's **approval**; however, some do not.

Sometimes there are no FDA approved treatments that may help you. This is mainly true for illnesses like some cancers and AIDS. This is also true for chronic illnesses like arthritis.

There are many unproven treatments that may or may not work. A couple you may have heard of are:

- Imagery – You learn to imagine yourself in a certain way. For example, you might be guided to think of yourself as very strong or healthy and think of your sickness as weak and easy to destroy.
- Biofeedback – You try to make yourself better by learning to control body functions like your heart rate, temperature, and muscles.

If you want to try an unproven treatment, talk to people who have tried it. Ask them about everything that happened during and after the treatment – both good and bad. Ask the person who is giving the treatment what kind of training they've had and how long they have been doing the treatment. Also, find out how much it will cost. Health insurance may not pay for unproven treatments. Before you try an unproven treatment, talk to someone who knows about it and tell your doctor that you're thinking about trying it.

Watch out for **phony** treatments. People who sell phony health products often use tricks to gain your trust and get your money. Question ads that talk about: secret formulas; amazing breakthroughs or miracle cures; and, quick, painless, or guaranteed cures. Phony medicines or treatments cheat you out of money and some can make you even sicker. **Consult** your doctor or pharmacist about treatments that may help you.

Understanding

1. What does the word **approval** mean in this reading? _____

2. In the U.S., who gives approval of medical treatments? _____

3. Before trying an unproven treatment, what should you do? Why? _____

4. What does the word **phony** mean? _____

5. How can you tell if a treatment is phony? _____

6. What are two common unapproved treatments? What is known about them? _____

7. What does the word **consult** mean in this reading? _____

Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: What are your thoughts about unproven medical treatments?
