

## HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE

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### What is homeopathy?

- **Homeopathy is a safe and effective form of medicine** that stimulates your body's natural ability to heal. Rather than suppressing your symptoms like most conventional treatments, homeopathy helps you heal from the inside out, with the intent of actually reaching a cure of your illness.
- Your body has built-in mechanisms that allow you to heal. This is evident in cases of a cold or a small cut; your body mounts a reaction to the virus or the skin injury and initiates a healing cascade. Homeopathic medicine works with these innate mechanisms to restore health by speeding up the natural process of the healing.
- Homeopathic medicine was developed hundreds of years ago by a German physician by the name of Samuel Hahnemann. Today it is most widely accepted in India and throughout Europe, and is gaining popularity around the world as the public is becoming increasingly aware of its safety and efficacy.

### What is homeopathic medicine made of?

- **Homeopathic remedies are made from natural sources** such as plants and minerals. There are hundreds of well-known homeopathic remedies, each made from its own natural source. Each remedy can be used to treat a specific set of symptoms, and there is one medicine used at a time for each case. The remedies are prepared through a specific process according to the guidelines of the Homeopathic Pharmacopeia of the United States. Homeopathic medicines are FDA regulated.
- During the preparation process, the original substance is made into a solution that is diluted multiple times. For commercial production, small sublingual pills are coated with these highly diluted solutions to give them medicinal value as homeopathic remedies.

### What can be treated with homeopathy?

- The correct homeopathic prescription can help you to overcome **both acute and chronic illness**, ranging from ear infections to depression to autoimmune disease. There are some illnesses that cannot be cured with homeopathic medicine alone.
- **Homeopathy cannot substitute a healthy lifestyle.** Diseases caused by poor nutrition, substance abuse, or *intentional* lack of exercise or sleep, cannot be completely cured with homeopathy. Lifestyle changes must complement homeopathic care in these cases.
- **Mechanical diseases**, such as a life-threatening birth defect, often require minor or major surgery. A more common example of the same concept is the pain caused by a splinter. We would first remove the splinter, not give a homeopathic remedy, because we want to treat the cause of the pain. In cases where surgery is indicated however, homeopathy can often be of great benefit before or after surgery to speed healing time and reduce pain.
- If the cause of your problems is directly related to **negative outside influence**, such as an abusive relationship, homeopathy cannot fix the relationship. It cannot change your situation. What it often does, however, is help you get to a point where you start making better decisions about your relationships and your life.
- Another example of an illness that cannot be cured with homeopathy alone is a case in which the patient is holding onto **false belief**, such as a case of severe anorexia in which the patient truly believes that he or she is overweight when they are actually underweight. In this case, homeopathy may be key in helping to achieve wellness, but psychological counseling must be used in order for a complete cure to be reached.
- In some cases of **very advanced illness**, such as end-stage cancer, homeopathic care is usually not entirely curative. There have not been sufficient studies to suggest whether homeopathic treatment of terminal disease has the ability to increase life-expectancy. However, it can certainly be of great help in palliating symptoms without causing side-effects, and providing the person with the best possible quality of life.

### How will I take it?

- Most homeopathic remedies are prepared as **small sweet-tasting pills that dissolve under your tongue.** Your doctor will tell you how often to take your homeopathic remedy. This dosing schedule may be changed depending on your response to the medicine.

### Are there any side effects or drug interactions?

- There are **no side effects** from homeopathic medicine. There are **no drug interactions.** Homeopathic medicine is safe to take with other prescriptions. However, as your symptoms improve, your doctor may need to adjust the dosage of your medications, so tell your doctor about all the medications and supplements you are taking. Ask your doctor before taking new prescriptions or natural supplements as well.

## HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE

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### How do I know which homeopathic remedy to take?

- Your homeopathic doctor will treat you as an individual. Just because you may have the same diagnosis as someone else doesn't mean you will be prescribed the same homeopathic medicine. Your doctor must look at the totality of your symptoms, perhaps including your emotional state and all of the details that make you an individual, and match your most unique symptoms to the best homeopathic remedy for you.
- This is a complicated process, and especially for chronic complaints, homeopathic prescribing should be left to those with adequate training. Even in cases of acute illness such as a cold, it can be very confusing to attempt to find the perfect homeopathic remedy for yourself. Especially if you are currently under treatment for chronic concerns, it is important to contact your doctor if you become acutely ill, rather than trying to find a homeopathic remedy for your acute illness.

### What can I expect after taking it?

- **You may feel better right away.** For acute (short-term) concerns, such as a cold or flu, you should begin to feel better within minutes to hours with the right homeopathic remedy. If you don't feel better by the next day, the remedy chosen was not the best for your case and you should contact your doctor to select a different homeopathic medicine.
- For chronic (long-term) conditions, it may take a little longer to notice improvement. Most people say they feel better within a few days, however in some cases you may start noticing significant changes after a few weeks.
- Everyone is an individual, and because homeopathic medicine stimulates your own healing process, it is impossible to predict precisely how long it will take for your symptoms to completely resolve. It is essential to recognize that your body will heal on its own time, and look for a general trend of improvement of your symptoms.
- **You may feel a little worse before you feel better.** This is normal, and although it does not happen for everyone, you should be aware that it is possible. This time of aggravation typically will last from minutes to days. The good news is that the longer the aggravation, the longer the subsequent improvement tends to be. If you experience a worsening of your symptoms that lasts longer than a week, contact your doctor to let them know. Aggravations do not occur for everyone, and typically resolve shortly after they begin. If they do happen, be assured that it is a sign that you are responding to the medicine, and that improvement is likely to be on its way.
- **You may notice no change.** Sometimes, even the best-trained homeopathic physicians select the wrong remedy. In this case, the most likely outcome is that you will notice very little change, if any, in your symptoms. At your follow up visit, your doctor will determine whether a change needs to be made in the current prescription, or if there is a better homeopathic remedy for you.
- After the initial dose of your homeopathic remedy, some people experience a temporary sleepy feeling. This is your body telling you that you need to rest and fully recover. Let yourself rest if you can. This is likely to speed up the healing process.
- For long-term illnesses, you can expect improvement for a period of time, followed by a plateau period of no progress, and potentially a slight worsening of symptoms. This temporary return of symptoms is to be expected after the improvement; it happens in almost every case of a long-term illness, and it simply means that a change needs to be made in the prescription. Remember, homeopathy stimulates a healing reaction, and **after a certain amount of time, you may need another boost in order to continue to improve.** It is best to catch your progress at the first sign of worsening, or even at the plateau stage, so that changes can be implemented before a worsening of your symptoms occurs. (See "Progress Graphs" on page 5.)

### What are the risks?

- You may feel worse before you feel better. (Explained above.)
- **Homeopathy is not a quick fix for your chronic concerns.** In cases of long-term health concerns, homeopathic treatment will likely involve a process of healing over time. Because your homeopathic doctor will treat you as an individual, he or she will probably need to spend more time with you than a typical conventional doctor's visit. For most patients, it is relief to have a doctor who will take the time to truly listen to them. However, if you are only interested in a quick fix, homeopathy may not be for you.
- **Old symptoms may return from your past, or previously suppressed symptoms may come to the surface.** By choosing homeopathic treatment, you are giving your body the chance to fully heal from the inside out. In cases of chronic illness, suppression of symptoms has often occurred, whether it is suppression of eczema with steroids, or suppression of anger or sadness. If this is the case for you, there is often something that needs to come up in order for you to heal. Homeopathy gives your body and mind a chance to finally let these things out

## HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE

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so that it can restore health naturally. You may think of it like cleaning out a closet; sometimes you have to take everything out in order to put it all back in the right place. This is often a very important part of the process of healing, and it is vital to let previously suppressed symptoms come up so you can finally let them go and completely heal.

- **Your symptoms may not go away in the order you want them to.** Your body knows what it needs to heal first. In cases of chronic illness with several symptoms, the things that you think are most important may not be what your body needs to heal first in order to begin to restore health. By trusting in this innate wisdom, you will foster the patience to allow yourself to actually take the time you need to get better.
- **If the wrong remedy is chosen, it is possible that nothing will happen.** As discussed above, sometimes the remedy chosen is not the best remedy for your case. Even with well-trained physicians who specialize in homeopathic prescribing, there are no guarantees that you will feel 100% better right away. With chronic complaints that are not life-threatening, several weeks of no change in symptoms is typically not a serious risk. However, in cases of severely progressive disease, especially those that are likely to respond well to conventional treatment, the risk of potentially not improving immediately should be considered. Your doctor will determine the severity of your illness and follow up as appropriate to assess your improvement and make changes to your treatment as necessary.
- It is important to understand all of the risks and benefits of all of your treatment options. Ask all of the questions you need to in order to feel informed.

On my vial of homeopathic medicine, it has a symptom written on the label, but I don't have that symptom. Does that mean it's the wrong remedy for me?

- No. That symptom is just some of many that your remedy can cure. In order to comply with the FDA, all medicine must have indications for use written on the label. The companies that produce homeopathic remedies will choose a random symptom that matches each remedy, and write that symptom on the label as a possible indication of the medicine. Each remedy has a multitude of indications, and therefore the same remedy can be used for a variety of different complaints.

I ran out of my homeopathic remedy. Should I take the last potency of the same remedy until I get a new vial?

- No. **Once you start a remedy, it is best to continue on the same potency** of that remedy until your doctor decides that you need either a new potency or a new remedy. **Taking a higher or lower potency of your remedy may stop your improvement**, so it is better to simply wait until you can get a new vial of the correct potency.
- Homeopathic medicine does not work like conventional drugs. The different potencies of your homeopathic remedy are not similar to the greater or lesser strengths of conventional medications, so the various potencies are not interchangeable.
- If you run out of your homeopathic remedy, call your doctor to refill the prescription. For most remedies, it is also possible to buy lower potencies (such as 6C or 30C) from health food stores. If you are unsure about which potency to buy, call your doctor to be sure.

What do the numbers and letters mean that are on the label next to the name of my remedy?

- That is the **potency** of your remedy. It refers to the number of times the medicine has been diluted during a specific homeopathic preparation process. The lowest potencies are less dilute, and the higher potencies are more dilute. Examples of remedy potencies are 6C, 30C, 200C, 1M, 10M, etc.
- **These different potencies are not stronger or weaker than one another.** The different potencies do not work faster or slower than each other, according to clinical experience. They are simply different. An analogy one might use in understanding this idea is that of different octaves of a musical note. If you imagine sitting in a room with a certain musical note playing, at first you will notice it, and over time you will tune it out and not hear it anymore. Then if that note is stopped and a new octave of the same note is played, you will hear it again, not because it is louder, but because it is new. The new potency is not stronger; it is just new to your system. This new potency is intended to re-stimulate a healing response and restart your improvement.
- Over time, you may need different potencies of your homeopathic remedy in order to maintain your progress toward optimal health. Remember, **these potencies are not interchangeable**, so ask your doctor before making any changes to your prescription.

## HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE

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I am coming down with a cold. Should I take the homeopathic cold medicine I have at home until I can come in to see my doctor?

- **No. It is best not to take other homeopathic remedies if you are already undergoing homeopathic care for your chronic symptoms.** If you cannot wait to see your doctor, and you feel you have to take an over-the-counter medicine for a sudden-onset complaint, it is usually better to take nutritional, herbal, or conventional medicine rather than homeopathic medicine. This way the medicine is not likely to interfere with your homeopathic treatment. Often all your body needs is rest to help you overcome an acute illness. However, with the correct homeopathic prescription, you are likely to overcome acute illnesses much more rapidly and completely than without treatment, so you may want to come in for a visit.
- **If you have a symptom come up that is an old symptom from your past, it is important not to suppress it with conventional treatments.** Your body is trying to undo the suppression of symptoms of your chronic illness, and clearing out old symptoms is sometimes a necessary part of that process. These symptoms will typically resolve on their own without any additional treatment. If they continue for more than a few days, or become significantly distressing, contact your doctor to discuss the best method of treatment for your symptoms.

Is it true that I'm not supposed to use mint toothpaste or gum, or drink coffee while taking homeopathic medicine?

- No. Some homeopathic practitioners believe that strong mint flavors or coffee will interfere with a person's healing reaction to homeopathic medicine. This has not been found to be true in clinical practice, or in research. **The things that certainly can interfere with your positive reaction to the homeopathic medicine are things that cause you significant stress.** So if coffee is something that you are highly sensitive to, and is a major stress to your system, than perhaps coffee would be good to avoid during homeopathic treatment.
- **Sudden illness, unusually intense physical exertion, or abruptly increased emotional stress can interfere** with your positive response to your homeopathic medicine. Anything that acts as a major stressor on your system can stop your reaction to your remedy, and cause a plateau or decline in the improvement of your symptoms. (See "Progress Graphs" on page 5.)
- Keep your homeopathic remedy away from extreme heat, water, or volatile chemicals. X-ray machines or electronic devices will not decrease the effectiveness of your remedy.

How do I find out more about homeopathic medicine?

- There are many books written about homeopathic medicine, from the most scholarly, such as **Samuel Hahnemann's *Organon of Medicine***, to more easily understandable texts such as ***Beyond Flat Earth Medicine* by Dr. Timothy Dooley**. Today, there are several different styles of homeopathic practice, and therefore you will see variations in methodology from one author to another, and from one doctor to another. Classical homeopathy has remained the most practical and effective style of homeopathic care since its development hundreds of years ago. Modern methods are practiced more widely today than classical homeopathy, despite the relatively poor results of the newer styles. It can take a great deal of time and effort to excel at classical homeopathic prescribing, and this often drives people away from it, regardless of its higher rates of success.
- There are several journals that focus on homeopathic medicine, such as *Homeopathy Today* or more academic journals such as *Homeopathic Links*. There are also websites with more information on homeopathy, such as the **National Center for Homeopathy's** website, [www.homeopathic.org](http://www.homeopathic.org), or Whole Health Now's website, [www.wholehealthnow.com](http://www.wholehealthnow.com).
- Ask your doctor if you have any questions throughout the course of your treatment. It is important for you to feel informed and empowered about all of your options regarding your health.

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