

Homeopathy

The Medicine

of the

22nd Century

What can you Treat?

Hahnemann believed that homeopathy was a complete system of medicine and was destined to replace conventional medicine entirely. A few modern homeopaths would still adopt this extreme position today, but most - and certainly almost all medically qualified homeopaths - recognise that there are many illnesses that demand orthodox treatment. Even Hahnemann recognised that surgery would be necessary in some cases. Nevertheless, because it is prescribed on the patient's symptoms, homeopathy can be prescribed as a supplementary treatment in almost any situation.

Homeopathy lends itself well to self-treatment, especially for acute disease. It is possible to buy an emergency kit containing medicines that can be used to treat colds, coughs, sore throats, and minor burns, bruises and sprains. Children seem to respond particularly well to homeopathy and they enjoy taking the medicines, which are sweet. Animals, too, can be treated successfully in many cases.

Your response to the treatment

After taking a homeopathic remedy, different patients respond in different ways. While some feel an immediate surge of wellbeing such as they have rarely felt before, others may suddenly feel very tired at first and need to rest for a day or so before improvement - this often happens with patients who have been under stress and who really do need to stop and recuperate. Sometimes the original symptoms temporarily become worse, or patients may experience a brief awareness of symptoms of illnesses they have had in the past and from which they have not truly recovered. All these reactions are indications that the remedy is working and that a process of self-healing has begun. Sometimes these responses are quite subtle and may pass unnoticed, while at other times they can be quite marked.

Frequently asked questions

What about conventional drugs?

There is no good evidence that conventional drugs interfere with homeopathic medicines. In any case, it is always undesirable to stop conventional treatment without the approval of your doctor. There are no dangerous interactions between homeopathic medicines and conventional drugs.

Are there any dangers?

The principal claim made by homeopaths is that their treatment is safe, and this is true, provided that no serious disease has been overlooked and conventional treatment is not withdrawn unadvisedly. As noted above, there are no dangerous interactions between homeopathic medicines and conventional ones.

So Homeopathy is like Herbal Medicine?

Not So! Homeopathy should not be confused with herbal medicine, or naturopathy as it is often called, although the two are often used together. Herbal medicines, by definition, are medicines derived from plant extracts. They are generally concentrated in form and contain measurable amounts of physiologically active substances. Homeopathic medicines can be derived from any material; plant, animal, or mineral but are almost always diluted in a special way that preserves the basic essence of the original substance while eliminating the possibility of side effects which can be caused by allopathic and herbal medicines.

The History of Homeopathy

The story of homeopathy begins with Samuel Christian Hahnemann (1755-1843). He was an orthodox qualified German physician who, understandably, became dissatisfied with the medical practices of his day, which consisted largely in bleeding and the use of large doses of dangerous drugs. He therefore looked for alternative forms of treatment that would be better, but for a long time he was unsuccessful. Towards the end of the 18th century, however, he conducted an experiment on himself; he took some cinchona bark (quinine) to see what would happen. To his surprise he experienced, for a few hours, the symptoms of malaria. Perhaps, he thought, quinine cures malaria because it can produce the symptoms of malaria in a healthy person. This idea was the germ of homeopathy. This was the basis of his Law of Similars, by 1805 he was practising according to his new system, which quickly brought him success. He lectured at the Leipzig university and built up a small but devoted band of followers. In 1821 he was forced by the hostility of the Leipzig apothecaries to leave the town; he moved to the small principality of Kothen to act as physician to the Duke. He was now famous and patients flocked to him from all over Europe.



What is Homeopathy

Homeopathy is a complete system of medicine. It is becoming popular again but it has been in world-wide use for nearly two hundred years.

The Royal Family has used it for generations. People suffering from all kinds of illnesses, from depression to arthritis, migraine to ulcers, and now the more 'modern' illnesses including AIDS and ME (myalgic encephalomyelitis), can be helped by homeopathy to regain their health.

Good homeopathy will not just drive away the symptoms but help the patient deal with the cause of the illness and regain good health.

Homeopaths aim to help their patients achieve freedom from limitations in their lives, and, ideally, to reach a level of health where they are no longer dependent on any medicine or therapy.

Homeopathic remedies are prescribed according to the Law of Similars. This law states, 'That which makes sick shall heal'. This means that the symptoms caused by an overdose (too much) of a substance are the symptoms that can also be cured with a small dose of that substance.

For instance, we know that when cutting a strong onion we often experience an acrid runny nose, a particular soreness in the throat and stinging, runny eyes; so a homeopath will prescribe *Allium cepa* (the homeopathic remedy made from onion) for the patient who has a cold and bad throat with these particular symptoms.

Homeopaths sometimes simplify the Law of Similars by saying that they treat 'like with like'. The name homeopathy comes from the same idea. It is derived from two Greek words, meaning 'similar + suffering'. The Law of Similars has been a part of medical practice at least since the time of classical Greece.

Homeopathy is holistic medicine

The holistic approach to medicine takes a wider view of illness, a wider view of the causes of disease and the ways in which people express their illness individually.

Paracelsus, a 16th century philosopher and physician, said, 'Those who merely study and treat the effects of disease are like those who imagine that they can drive away the winter by brushing the snow from the door. It is not the snow that causes winter, but the winter that causes the snow.'

Homeopaths do not treat physical, emotional and mental or even spiritual illnesses separately, but regard them as intimately connected, since all are aspects of the whole of the patient's suffering.

When starting homeopathic treatment, the patient may not realise the relevance of some of the questions being asked. It may appear that the homeopath is interested in matters which have little to do with the particular complaint about which the patient is most concerned.

Homeopaths understand that symptoms of illness are evidence of the body's natural and automatic efforts to heal itself and these clues are used to guide them when prescribing a homeopathic remedy.

In homeopathy more of these clues are used than in orthodox medicine, so the patient may be asked questions about all sorts of apparently minor deviations from health and about character and personality traits, in order to arrive at a clear understanding of the whole picture of the patient's state of health. Before prescribing, the homeopath wants to

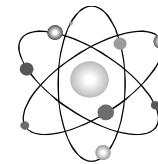
have a complete overview of the patient. The first consultation can take as long as two hours.

A remedy is then prescribed for that individual patient, not merely for his or her disease but for the person's whole state. Thus homeopathy is truly holistic. This fundamental principle of homeopathy, that of the individual prescription, explains why two patients with apparently similar illnesses may be treated with a different remedy. In other words, two patients might have headaches but the way they have their headaches can be different, their overall state of health can be different, the way they cope with life can be different and so on. To go back to the example from Paracelsus, you cannot drive away the whole illness by brushing the headache from the door!

How does it work?

There is abundant proof that the remedies do work (over 100 clinical trials have proved this) but homeopaths and scientists have yet to discover exactly why they work. A precise answer is likely to be found outside the chemistry laboratory in the field of physics, especially electromagnetism. The process of dilution and succussion apparently imprints the characteristic energy pattern, or blueprint, of the original substance onto the water in which it is diluted. This may be likened to the transmission of television signals, where the original scene is converted into an electromagnetic energy pattern (a signal) which can then be broadcast to your receiver.

A homeopathic remedy acts as a signal which energises or stimulates the body's self-healing powers, mobilising the defence systems and working on the mental, emotional and physical aspects of the body.



It is the body's energy which is influenced rather than its chemical balance, and the remedies do not cause side effects, as there is no chemical trace to accumulate in the body's tissues. For the same reasons it is not possible to take an overdose of homeopathic medicine in the same way as in orthodox medicine (orthodox medicine works on a chemical level).

Homeopathic medicines are not therefore intrinsically dangerous.

Nonetheless, they are clearly capable of stimulating the body's reactive forces powerfully and should be treated with respect.

Frequently the dilution is so great that no chemical trace of the original substance remains but, if no chemical trace remains, how do the remedies work?

How do you take the medicine?

They may be given as liquids or, more usually, as sugar pills or powders. Sometimes they are given as a single long-acting dose, or else they may be given once a day or more frequently for days or weeks. They should be allowed to dissolve in the mouth. It is often said that patients taking homeopathic medicines should avoid drinking tea or coffee, but there is no good evidence that these substances really interfere with cure. It is therefore probably enough to avoid eating or drinking for 10 or 20 minutes before and after taking the medicines.