



What Is Homeopathy?

Homeopathic Principles

The principles of homeopathy were first formulated at the end of the eighteenth century by Samuel Hahnemann, a German physician. He had given up the practice of medicine when he found the therapies of his time to be ineffective and harmful, and did not resume practice until he discovered in homeopathy a means to help people heal gently, rapidly, and reliably. Homeopathy spread quickly throughout Europe and to the United States, where at the beginning of this century, 15-20% of all doctors practiced homeopathy. Despite repeated criticism from orthodox medical circles, the validity of Hahnemann's ideas continues to be demonstrated over 200 years later.

Stimulus to the body. Homeopathic treatment, like all truly natural therapies, seeks to stimulate the innate healing power of the individual so that all physiological systems function at their best. As the person moves toward his or her optimal level of general health, he or she feels better. Subsequently, specific symptoms improve as the strengthened body defenses become active. But the homeopathic remedy does not directly treat a symptom or condition. Instead, it simply helps to initiate the process by which the person heals himself or herself.

Totality of symptoms. The homeopath views a person's health as a condition of the entire individual rather than in terms of isolated symptoms. Homeopaths do not diagnose disease or treat diseases. Remedies are selected that best correspond to the person's total state of illness. Evaluation of the individual's level of health and choice of the correct remedy does depend in part on a thorough understanding of all symptoms. But in addition, important indicators of general health, such as the level of vitality the person experiences and his or her emotional well-being, demand close attention.

Law of similars. Homeopathy is based on the principle that "like helps like." A remedy is chosen that is capable of causing, in a healthy person, symptoms similar to those of the sick person. The symptoms the sick person experiences are thus the most important guide to the choice of the correct remedy.

Remedies. Homeopathic remedies are usually made from plants and simple minerals. These substances are prepared by a process of repeated dilution and shaking, which makes them capable of stimulating the healing process. Remedies are given to stimulate the whole body to heal itself, while herbs and regular drugs and medicines are given to take away specific symptoms generally from specific parts of the body.

Homeopathic remedies are made at special FDA regulated and approved homeopathic pharmacies according to very high standards of purity. There is no homeopathic pharmacy in Minnesota. Certain health food stores and food cooperatives carry remedies. Our staff has a list of such stores in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area.

Minimum dose. As little remedy as possible is used. After a remedy is given, the individual's response is carefully observed, and the remedy is changed only if necessary.

Scope of homeopathy. Since homeopathy is used to assist people rather than to treat illness, anyone, whatever his or her diagnosis, can benefit from homeopathic care. Homeopathy helps by increasing the individual's strength and resistance to disease. Homeopathy is not a substitute for good health habits. In the long run, health depends in good measure on eating well and exercising adequately, getting enough rest, dealing effectively with stress, and living creatively.

Homeopathy cannot strengthen the system to heal itself of genetic problems. Also, homeopathy cannot help people who are continually exposing themselves to the very things that make them sick. For example, it won't change a smoker's cough, headaches from birth control pills, or depression from being in an emotionally hurtful situation. However, it can help strengthen people enough so that they are able to make helpful changes in their lifestyle.


Homeopathy can make your pregnancy go more smoothly and help your baby be as healthy as possible. Be sure to inform your homeopath if you are pregnant.


Acute illnesses. Homeopathic care is often effective during acute illness. Again, the remedies are not directed at removing symptoms or killing germs, but rather toward strengthening the person so that his or her own healing capacities work better.


The Homeopathic Consultation


Essential to effective homeopathic care is the information that you provide to the practitioner. The homeopathic interview involves extensive questioning that may cover unfamiliar ground for those who are accustomed to a few quick questions from a busy doctor. To better prepare you for the consultation, following are the kinds of information that homeopathy requires.


Reason for visit. The homeopathic practitioner will want you to describe as fully as possible, in your own way, the conditions that have caused you to seek homeopathic care. Your description should include everything that is truly characteristic of your problems. Precise details are best, but only if you can be definite about them. If applicable, your account should include, but not be limited to:


 *Location of the complaint as precisely as possible.* For example, "pain in the left temple" is more helpful than simply saying "headache."

 *Character of sensation or pain.* Describe the nature of the sensation in your own words. Is it tingling, burning, numbness, crawling, or itching? Is the pain cutting, dull, aching, or cramping? These are suggestions only.

 *Factors that make the feeling better or worse.* Often the most crucial information to the homeopath concerns what makes your complaint better or worse. Does your condition vary with time of day or night or season? Is it affected by your position (sitting, standing, lying, etc.) or activity (motion of any body part, walking, vigorous exercise, rest, etc.)? Does temperature, weather, eating, and sleeping affect your condition? Report anything that clearly influences the intensity or pattern of symptoms.

 *Concomitants.* Anything that regularly occurs in association with your symptoms should be mentioned. Are you always nauseated when you have a headache? Does your skin clear up when you get your menstrual period?

 *Onset of symptoms.* Do you associate the onset of your condition with an emotional upset, prolonged or pronounced stress, lack of sleep, exposure to weather, an injury, drug use, surgery, or any other factors?

 *General information.* In addition to information about your local symptoms, the homeopath needs to know a lot about you in general. Essentially, the homeopath wants to know how vital and energetic you feel on the whole and how your sense of well-being (not any particular symptom) changes as a result of environmental or emotional factors. How are you affected, in general, by temperature, weather, time of day, activity level, eating, and sleeping? What typically makes you feel better; what makes you feel worse? Remember, this may be very different from what makes a particular symptom better or worse.

Diet. Be ready to describe the kinds and approximate amounts of food you usually eat. In addition, you'll be asked to list the foods you crave or have strong preferences for (even if these are foods you don't think are good for you) and foods that you strongly dislike.

Sexuality. Understanding your sexuality can be an important part of health awareness, and the homeopath will ask you to describe the usual level of sexual energy you feel. You are welcome to discuss your sexuality as fully or as little as you feel comfortable.

Emotional patterns. Finally, the homeopath will want you to discuss your mental/emotional nature. What are the most characteristic emotional patterns you experience? During what activities or in which situations do you feel most happy? What emotional patterns most limit your ability to fully express yourself or reach your full potential? How expressive of emotional states are you, and in what ways do you express them? What about your memory, clarity of thought, and so on?

Remedies

Based mainly on the information you provide, a remedy will be recommended that suits you best in a total way.

Taking the remedy. Be sure to avoid strong odors or direct sunlight when you pour out the dose. Never touch the globules with your hands, as they have no protective coating. Pour the globules into the cap of the vial, then onto or under your tongue; be sure that you do not touch your tongue to the cap. Do not take water with the remedy. There should be no strong taste in your mouth; allow about 15 minutes before eating or one hour after meals or the use of any strong flavored substances, such as toothpaste, tobacco, menthol, mouthwash, or herb teas. If directed to take your remedy in the morning, do so before putting anything else in your mouth.

Action of the remedy. Each individual experiences the reaction to the remedy in a different way. Usually the effects are gentle and gradual, though at times, more rapid or dramatic changes may occur. Since the remedies work to better your general health, you should not be concerned if specific symptoms do not change right away. The remedies do not produce side effects. However, if you have a reaction you do not understand, please contact your practitioner.

Intensification of symptoms or recurrences of previously experienced symptoms sometimes occur. These are not side effects of the remedy, but an indication that the body is responding to the remedy stimulus. If any reaction occurs that concerns you, don't hesitate to call.

Repetition of the dose. The most important rule regarding how often to take the remedy is this: the remedy should not be repeated until the healing reaction it has started is over. As long as any changes continue (especially if improvement is taking place), you must wait to take more of the remedy.

People with long-standing problems are given one or very few doses at the outset of treatment. Experience has shown that if the remedy is chosen correctly, this is sufficient to cause a healing response in the body that normally lasts at least a month. Therefore, in accordance with the above principle, follow-up visits are usually scheduled at about six- to eight-week intervals. Follow-up visits provide a full review of any changes that occurred, which is important in order to make the correct decision about repetition or change of the remedy.

People improve over widely varying periods of time. The improvement is usually proportionate to how long you've had the problem or condition, and how severe it is. You may have ups and downs and particular symptoms may not resolve for many months in some cases, but your general health should get better, and you should feel steady, gradual improvement in your energy and well-being.

Certain substances may interfere with the action of homeopathic remedies. These include camphor, coffee, tea tree oil, standard medications and strong herbs. If you use any of these substances, discuss their continued use with your practitioner. It isn't necessary, in general, to stop using these products. Dental work, sleeping with electric blankets, or taking mineral baths can sometimes interfere, so please mention your plans concerning these activities.

Note that camphor is found in products such as Chapstick, Tiger Balm, Vicks products, BenGay, Mentholatum, Campho-Phenique, room sprays, Calamine lotion, Noxzema, and other cosmetics and medicinals.

Storage and Handling of Remedies

Store remedies:



In a cool, dark place; out of the sun and away from heat over 100 degrees Fahrenheit.



Away from strong-smelling medicines or lotions, especially camphor.

Preparing the dose:



Do not expose remedies to each other or to strong smells of smoke, cooking, mothballs, perfumes, etc., or sunlight.



Do not have more than one remedy vial open at a time.