

## Homeopathy

Translated from the Greek *homois* and *pathos*, the word homeopathy means 'the cure is like the disease'. The cornerstone of homeopathic philosophy is the Law of Similars. This law or principle is based on a long held belief (by ancient healers like Paracelsus) that substances that produce symptoms in a healthy individual can be used to treat similar symptoms in a sick person. Homeopathic medicine deliberately mimics or provokes the symptoms of a patient's disease to strengthen the body's ability to heal itself.

A good example of this principle at work is coffee. Coffee can aggravate some people who are sensitive to its stimulating effects. These people may experience increased mental and physical alertness, along with an exaggerated response to stimuli. People who present at a homeopathic clinic with symptoms of insomnia, headache, irritability and an overstimulated nervous system will find that a dose of *Coffea cruda*, prescribed by a practitioner and prepared according to homeopathic principles, will settle their symptoms.

Practitioners believe that symptoms are signs that the body is fighting illness. Homeopathic treatment strengthens a person's health, acting as a catalyst, stimulating and directing the body's ability to fight infection as well as resolving any underlying susceptibility to disease. According to homeopathy, the healing process follows one or more basic directions; symptoms may disappear:

- From the top of the body down
- From the inside of the body out
- In reverse order of appearance.

### A range of disorders

Homeopathy aims to treat the whole person – taking into account personality, lifestyle and hereditary factors as well as the history of the disease. Disorders that can be treated by homeopathy include:

- Allergies
- Asthma
- Eczema
- Hayfever
- Headaches
- Respiratory infections
- Stress.

### Very small doses

Modern homeopathy was founded in the 18th Century by a German physician, Dr Samuel Hahnemann. He believed that:

- Disease stemmed from a disturbance to the energy field of the body, which he called the 'vital force'.
- The best cure could be achieved by using 'energised' medicine.
- As the size of the dose decreased, the potency of the substance increased.

Homeopathic medicines are made from a variety of sources, such as plants, animals and minerals. The basis of most medicines is the 'mother tincture'. This is usually made from plants or minerals. Herbal tinctures are made by soaking or boiling the plant, then straining the mixture. Tinctures from minerals are made by grinding the substance in a mortar and pestle, then making it into a solution. These medicines then undergo a progressive series of dilutions, which includes shaking the bottle between each dilution. Medicines are dispensed as granules, powders or liquids.

After the twelfth dilution, the homeopathic medicine goes beyond what is called 'Avogadro's limit' and there is no discernible trace of the original substance left in the medicine. Although conventional scientific methods cannot explain how they work, many clinical trials have found homeopathic medicines to be effective in treating a range of disorders.

### The medicines are delicate

It is important to handle homeopathic medicines with care and to take them in the right way. In general, you should not touch the medicine, but use a spoon instead. The dose should be dissolved under the tongue instead of swallowed like a conventional drug. Your homeopathy practitioner might advise changes in diet, such as avoiding spicy foods, and suggest that you not smoke or drink. Sometimes, symptoms get worse before they get better. This may be a sign that the medicine is working, and that the body is strengthening its efforts to fight the disease, but you should always check with your practitioner. According to the homeopathic philosophy, conventional drugs that suppress symptoms are only driving the disease deeper into the body.

### Special considerations

Never stop taking conventional drugs without the knowledge and approval of your doctor. Always tell your doctor if you are planning to start a course of homeopathic medicine for your condition. Always tell your homeopath what conventional drugs you are taking.

### Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Homeopathy practitioner
- Australian Homeopathic Association, website <http://www.homeoptahyoz.org>.

### Things to remember

- Homeopathy means 'the cure' is like the disease.
- Symptoms are interpreted as a sign that the body is fighting against disease.
- Homeopathy brings about healing by administering a substance that mimics or provokes the symptoms, thereby strengthening the body's ability to heal itself.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by Australian Homeopathic Association. The Better Health Channel is part of the Department of Human Services, Victoria