

What is Homeopathy?

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HOMEOPATHY IS A COMPLETE THERAPEUTIC SYSTEM THAT HAS been in use around the world ever since German physician Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843) developed it in the early 1800s. Hahnemann rediscovered and tested an ancient principle, called the Law of Similars, and employed his findings as the foundation for a healing modality that he named *homeopathy*. The Law of Similars states that if a substance can cause particular symptoms in a healthy person, it will cure those same symptoms in people who are ill. In homeopathy, medicines are selected for the individual person according to the Law of Similars, in addition to a holistic view of their needs.

“Less is more” is one of the principles that homeopathy truly brings to life. Homeopathic medicines are highly diluted and are created using a method called *potentization* that involves alternately diluting and vigorously shaking the medicinal preparation. In the United States, homeopathic medicines are FDA regulated and are sold over the counter in health food stores, pharmacies, and by mail order. However, they act quite differently from regular medicines. Rather than forcing chemical changes upon the body, homeopathic medicines catalyze the body’s self-healing abilities—without side effects and without danger of overdose, toxicity, or drug interactions. Homeopathy can be used for ailments of all kinds, in both people and animals. It is safe for everyone to use, including babies, pregnant women, the elderly, and the very sensitive.

Unfortunately, the word “homeopathy” is sometimes misused to mean *any* natural or holistic therapy. While homeopathy *is* a natural and holistic therapy, it is a distinct system of medicine in its own right. Indeed, homeopathy is one of many natural complementary and alternative therapies, including, for example, herbal medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, water therapies, vitamin and mineral supplements, and so on. Homeopathy is distinct and different from all of these other modalities, however, because it is the only one that employs the Law of Similars and potentized medicines. Homeopathy is often called an “energy” medicine because potentized remedies address the vital force (the energy that animates the living organism), and when the vital force is healthy, it produces healthy functioning throughout the organism.

Homeopathy can be used for home care as well as in professional settings. Most people find it easy to learn homeopathic self-care for acute and first aid purposes. With a little bit of training, a book or two, and a home remedy kit, you can effectively address colds and the flu, sprains and strains, minor injuries, and other ailments that don’t necessarily need a doctor’s care. However, it takes more knowledge to address chronic ailments. In the hands of a trained professional, homeopathy can ease the symptoms of a wide variety of conditions that we might otherwise feel we “just have to live with.” In fact, there are studies that have established homeopathy’s effectiveness in a wide variety of ailments, settings, and populations.

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Chamomilla

"Last week we were going on a drive and locked ourselves out of our van. We called a locksmith who had just retired and he agreed to help us out. He arrived and helped us, but with much difficulty since two fingers had been paralyzed for 16 months. I asked him how that had happened, and he said he had had a fall, hitting his head severely, and then was sent to the hospital. No one could agree if the neck was actually broken, but while in the hospital he lost sensation in and the use of the two last fingers of the right hand. Well, we ended up trading his services for my *Hypericum* 30C to be taken twice daily. He just called pleased as punch. 95% of sensation and 100% full use of the fingers has returned since he began taking the *Hypericum* a week ago. Yay for Homeopathy!"

—J.S. Sedona, AZ

The Difference Between Conventional and Homeopathic Treatment

AMALIA PUNZO, MD

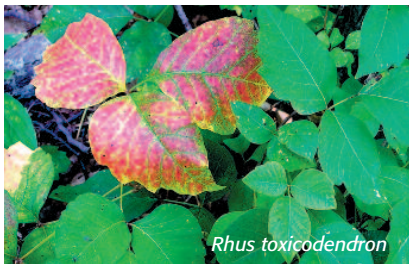
PEOPLE OFTEN ASK ME THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN mainstream medicine and homeopathy. I usually say, "Well, that's a bit like asking about the difference between a steam-roller and a butterfly!" Believe it or not, there is very little that the two medical disciplines have in common.

The foundation of homeopathy is the Law of Similars. In fact, that is the derivation of its name: "homeo" (similar) "pathy" (suffering or disease). Another way of thinking about this law is "likes treat likes." A homeopath treats people with a highly diluted substance from nature—a substance that is known to cause a similar symptom complex in healthy people when it is given in its crude or undiluted form. When a diluted homeopathically-prepared substance is administered, the entire complex of symptoms of the patient is addressed. In other words, homeopathy treats all of the patient's symptoms at once—physical as well as emotional and mental symptoms. Indeed, most of the time, we give just one homeopathic medicine to address all of these symptoms. This alone is a huge difference from conventional or mainstream medical treatment.

Another difference between homeopathy and conventional medicine is how the medicines affect the body. The natural substance administered in homeopathic treatment does not actually *kill* anything (viruses or bacteria, for example). Rather, a homeopathic medicine stimulates a reaction within the body, and it is this *reaction* to the homeopathic medicine that is healing. This is not very dissimilar from how vaccinations work, except that vaccinations deliver the very *same* substance that you are trying to provide immunity against. As a result, vaccinations have a very narrow therapeutic window of prevention and safety. Also, vaccines are often prepared using substances that may have toxic properties (mercury derivatives as a preservative, for example).

Homeopathy, in essence, stimulates the body to heal itself. That's it. This philosophy of healing is ancient and has stood the test of time—over 220 years and going strong. Homeopathic medicine is widely practiced throughout Europe, North and South America, India and Pakistan, and has an international consumer base. There is a great deal of contemporary research to demonstrate both the safety and effectiveness of homeopathic medicines for a wide variety of clinical conditions..

In contrast to homeopathy, conventional medicine administers large "pharmaceutical" doses of synthetic substances to kill foreign agents like bacteria and viruses, and to suppress symptoms (such as pain, fever, swelling, anxiety, depression, etc.). Indeed, most popular conventional medications are actually prescribed in accordance with the Law of Opposites. Conventionally-trained physicians use "anti-histamines" and "anti-depressants," "antibiotics" and "anti-anxiety" drugs, "anti-inflammatory" agents, "anti-hypertensives," etc. And since these conventional medica-



Rhus toxicodendron

"Homeopathy works on old problems. About 25 years ago I sustained a severe ankle sprain. Since that time, whenever I was on my feet too long, I had to wear an elastic bandage and limped for two or three days. Two doses of *Rhus tox* cleared the problem. The ankle is only slightly painful on rare occasions."

tions, which palliate, suppress or hide single symptoms with large doses of synthetic substances, often cause toxic side effects, it is frequently necessary to counteract these side-effects with yet other medications. Thus begins a vicious cycle of patients being prescribed medication after medication.

Another difference between homeopathy and conventional medicine is duration of treatment. Homeopathy's goal is complete cure—a goal that may be achieved, even in so-called chronic disease illnesses. In contrast, once a person is prescribed conventional medications for a chronic condition, they are often prescribed for life. Indeed, the administration of these multiple medications over time does not typically cure chronic disease. It just stems the tide or tsunami of symptoms. Conventional medicine is, however, very helpful during emergencies such as shock or heart attacks, in trauma, or in life-threatening illnesses or surgical emergencies when palliation and suppression of the immediate situation can be life-saving.

Unfortunately, there is frequently a price to pay for repeated and long-term suppression of disease symptoms with strong medications, and most people do not get healthier over time. Homeopathy, in contrast, does not suppress illness when properly prescribed. It

has the ability to heal on very deep levels and people usually become healthier mentally, emotionally, and physically over time.

Another difference between homeopathy and conventional treatment is the patient's experience of the process of cure. One of the first things that people often notice when receiving good homeopathic treatment is that they have more energy, more resilience, a better mood, and improved immune function. They feel happier and more hopeful. These subtle but very real changes are signs that a homeopathic medicine or remedy is working on a very deep level. It may take time to address a long-standing physical illness, but if someone is improving mentally and emotionally and their energy is returning, it is usually a very good indicator that their physical symptoms will improve over time as well. In contrast, suppression of disease with synthetic drugs may provide dramatic results temporarily, but the effects are usually short-lived and may cause more harm than good over the long haul. With homeopathy, one has to be attentive to more subtle, "invisible" signs of improvement. Long-standing symptoms may not be cured overnight and healing may happen in stages and layers, but patients sense that their health overall is improving.

Please note that for treatment of a chronic illness, you must find a well-trained classical homeopath (see <http://www.national-centerforhomeopathy.org/resources/practitioners>). And the more you understand about homeopathic treatment, the easier it will be for you and your homeopath to find the most effective remedy.

Homeopathy has changed my life and the lives of those I have treated and loved in profound ways. I am grateful each and every day for having been exposed to homeopathy and for having the privilege to practice this healing art and science early in my medical career. I cannot imagine my life or my career without it.

Homeopathy, in essence, stimulates the body to heal itself.



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How Are Homeopathic Medicines Prescribed?

EDWARD CONWAY and CATHERINE DOW, Rph

THE SELECTION OF A HOMEOPATHIC REMEDY FOR A PATIENT can be a complicated process. It begins with an initial appointment, where the homeopathic practitioner obtains details about all the physical, emotional, mental, and behavioral signs and symptoms (the “totality”) presented by the patient. This process can often take one or two hours, especially in a case of chronic disease, and is known as “taking the case.”

“A friend’s daughter had cut her eye with a knife, barely missing the cornea. She was taken to the doctor immediately, and he said there was nothing he could do, but he wanted to see her again the next day to see how it looked. Heather was not in much pain, but she was quite frightened at first—‘hysterical’ was how her mother put it. She felt as if something was in her eye when she closed it. Dr. Panos, author of *Homeopathic Medicine at Home*, refers to one remedy as ‘the *Arnica* of the eye.’ The fear, combined with the eye injury, along with the sensation of something in her eye, added up to the perfect picture of the remedy. Had the injury been from a blow, I would have considered *Arnica* or *Symphytum*, but in this case, *Aconite* filled the bill. When she saw the doctor less than 24 hours later, he was amazed to find the cut already healed.

—S.A. Westlake, OH

At this meeting, the practitioner will ask the patient to describe their symptoms or conditions of concern as well their current and past medical history. The patient will also be encouraged to describe their preferences or dislikes regarding various environmental or lifestyle factors (such as foods, weather conditions, temperature, thirst, sleep, etc.) and how these factors impact the patient. In addition, the patient will be asked about how they experience themselves emotionally, mentally, socially and sexually.

After completing the case-taking phase, the remedy-selection phase begins. Any remedy may be selected for any condition if the symptoms generated by the remedy (in previously-conducted experimental trials called *proving*s) match the symptoms being experienced by the patient.

During the remedy-selection phase, the practitioner will summarize the patient’s case and develop a list of pertinent symptoms that will likely lead to a good remedy choice.



These symptoms will then be compared to the characteristics of available homeopathic medicines in order to identify the medicines that best match the patient’s symptoms. This process, called *reper-torization*, is accomplished by using various texts (such as the *Materia Medica*) and tools available to the practitioner, most of them available today on computer software. The list of homeopathic medicines identified as a result of this matching process are then scored and analyzed in order to determine the best remedy choice.

As an illustration of the complexity of this process, consider remedy choices for ailments as common as the flu or a cold. Whereas a conventional medical doctor will use the same treatment or medicine for every patient, a homeopath may choose one of dozens of different remedies, depending on the unique symptoms being experienced by a patient.

For example, the remedy *Aconite* or Wolf’s Bane, is thought of in any case in which the symptoms come on suddenly—especially if exposure to cold wind or a fright might be a causative factor. There might also be a cough or sneezing, but the main guiding symptom is the suddenness of disease onset. Emotionally, the *Aconite* patient is fearful, and especially fearful that he will die. For example, a child who was out playing in the snow might awaken screaming at 2 a.m. (a common time of aggravation for this remedy) with a cough and high fever. Or a man who had been out shoveling snow, or perhaps after becoming frightened, might suddenly come down with a very high fever and become fearful that he will die. Both cases call for *Aconite*.

Another remedy characterized by suddenness of onset is *Belladonna*, made from Deadly Nightshade. Its symptoms are characterized by redness and heat. The fever is high, the face is red, the pulse can be seen in the veins of the neck. The eyes are dilated. The *Belladonna* patient is also very sensitive to slight movement and noise. Many old-time doctors, when seeing a suspected case of *Belladonna*, would bump against the bed to see if the patient was sensitive to this slight movement. *Belladonna* patients are sometimes almost delirious and think they see monsters. Their throat is usually swollen, the glands are swollen, and their ears might also be involved. For many children’s earaches, *Belladonna* would be a top remedy choice—especially if the ache is throbbing and on the right side.



Aconitum napellus

How Are Homeopathic Medicines Made?

EDWARD CONWAY and CATHERINE DOW, Rph

HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINES ARE DRUG PRODUCTS MADE BY HOMEOPATHIC pharmacies in accordance with the standards and processes described in the *Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States (HPUS)*—the official homeopathic manufacturing manual for the United States. Homeopathic medicines are regulated by the FDA and homeopathic pharmacies must comply with the FDA's current Good Manufacturing Practices. The substances used to prepare homeopathic medicines include plants (such as Wolf's Bane, Deadly Nightshade, dandelion, or plantain), minerals (for example, iron phosphate, arsenic oxide, or sodium chloride), or animal products (e.g., the venom of a number of poisonous snakes, or the ink of the cuttlefish). There are even a few homeopathic medicines prepared from chemical drug substances such as penicillin or streptomycin.

The technique for making a homeopathic medicine involves repeated dilution of a specific substance until little of the original substance remains. When manufacturing a homeopathic medicine from a plant, for example, the first step involves cleaning and preparing the plant with alcohol and water, as prescribed in the HPUS, to make a tincture. This tincture is then diluted and strongly shaken. This step is repeated over and over to create increasing potencies of the medicine.

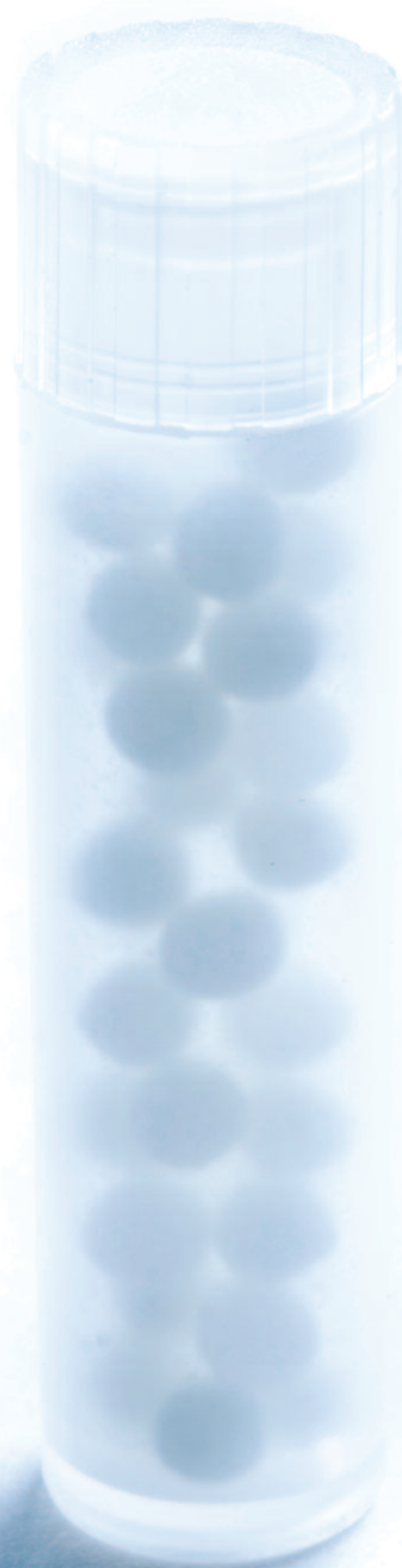
For example, one drop of a plant tincture may be mixed with 9 drops of alcohol (to achieve a ratio of 1:10), and the mixture will then be strongly shaken—a process known as *succussion*. The resulting homeopathic medicine is labeled with a potency according to the number of times this has been done. For instance, a substance that has been diluted 1:10 and succussed six times will be labeled 6X, and contains 1 part of the original substance in 1 million parts of the diluent.

Homeopathic medicines are available in various dosage forms and potency ratios. Two of the most common dosage forms are pellets and tablets, which are composed of sugar and lactose saturated with the liquid dilution. The most common types of potencies available are X (1:10 ratio), C (1:100 ratio), and LM or Fifty Millesimal (1:50,000 ratio). (Note that a 1M potency is simply an abbreviation for 1000C.)

Like traditional medicines, a homeopathic medicine can be designated as a prescription or non-prescription drug. Most homeopathic medicines are non-prescription, unless they a) have limited use for serious conditions; or b) are made from a toxic substance and are low enough in potency (dilution) that they contain a potentially harmful amount of this substance.



Calendula officinalis



Regulation of Homeopathic Drug Products

MARY BORNEMANN and JAY BORNEMANN, PhD

HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINES HAVE BEEN CLASSIFIED AS DRUGS by the federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FDCA) since 1938. They are among the best-selling over-the-counter drugs in the United States, yet the process by which they are regulated is not familiar to most people.

Official homeopathic drugs are those that have monographs—official listings of drug data—in the Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the U.S. (HPUS). The HPUS is prepared by the Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia Convention of the U.S. (HPCUS), which oversees the regulatory approval of homeopathic drugs and the development and publication of general pharmacy practices and standards.

In order to be included in the HPUS, the HPCUS must determine that a homeopathic drug is safe and effective and is prepared according to the specifications of the HPUS general pharmacy section. The clinical benefits of a new homeopathic drug can be established in several ways. However, the only criterion currently in use is the “proving” of the drug (a trial in which healthy subjects are given the drug in order to determine its effects), and establishment of two adequate clinical studies.

Potential monographs go through an extensive review. If acceptable, the monograph is granted final approval for inclusion in HPUS, and the drug becomes an officially approved drug within the meaning of the FDCA.

Homeopathic drugs are subject to the FDCA and regulations issued by FDA, including those pertaining to manufacturing, labeling, marketing, and sales compliance rules. These rules, with three exceptions, are functionally identical to the rules for conventional medications. Good Manufacturing Practices standards



for homeopathic and allopathic drugs are the same, as are advertising oversight.

In summary, homeopathic drugs in the U.S. are subject to well-defined regulatory processes that closely resemble those that apply to allopathic or conventional medications.

See: “Regulation of homeopathic drug products,” originally published in 2006, by John P. Bornemann and Robert I. Field.



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