

Is Homeopathy for you?

By Rodd Stockwell, MD

Living in the US in the 21st century, there is an opportunity to benefit from therapies used in many different cultures. One of them is homeopathy.

Homeopathy was developed by Samuel Hahnemann, MD approximately 200 years ago. When first introduced, it was well known and respected. In the late 1800s, one in five physicians in the US used homeopathic medicines. Homeopathy is still popular in Europe, India, and other parts of the world. Many celebrities and dignitaries use homeopathic medicines—the most famous being the Royal Family of England.

Homeopathic medicines work with the body's own mechanisms for healing. A way to understand this is to think of the common cold. Doctors know that the root of the problem is a virus that has entered the body and the immune system tries to eradicate it. None of the symptoms of the cold – runny nose, cough, fever, rash, mucous—are caused by the virus. These symptoms are a result of the body's own healing systems working to get rid of the virus. Over the counter cold medicines do not work with the body—they suppress symptoms but do nothing to get rid of the virus. In contrast, homeopathic medicines help the body's own immune system do a more effective and more efficient job of getting rid of the troublemaking virus. In this way homeopathic medicines help the body to heal itself.

In my practice I have used homeopathic medicines for nine years and I have found them to be much safer than prescription medicines. Many prescription and non-prescription medicines are effective, but not safe. This often leaves a patient stuck trying to balance the desired result (for example: pain relief) with the undesired side effects (for example: constipation or stomach irritation). This problem does not arise when a patient chooses homeopathy. While homeopathic medicines occasionally intensify prior symptoms for a short period, they do not cause new symptoms or side effects.

When patients visit a homeopathic physician he/she will be asked many detailed questions about symptoms and preferences. It is essential that the physician hear enough details about the patient's symptoms to form a clear picture of how the disease is expressing itself. Then the medicine can be chosen, for homeopathic medicines are determined according to symptom patterns rather than type of disease. In homeopathy, there is one medicine for back pain that is worse in the morning, another medicine for pain that is worse with exertion, another if it is worse in middle of the night, and another if it is worse shortly after mealtimes. Instead of being chosen for the cause of

the back pain, homeopathic medicines are given according to symptom patterns. An advantage to this approach is that the cause of pain does not need to be known in order to find effective treatments. Once the correct homeopathic medicine is found, relief can be quite dramatic.

Homeopathic medicines are very useful in treating symptoms associated with pain, or other chronic conditions, such as low mood, foggy thinking, decreased energy, and constipation. The greatest benefit from homeopathic medicines often lies in enhanced function and being more able to participate in day-to-day activities. In my practice I find that homeopathic medicines often give the body just the added boost it needs for the patient to gain control over the illness. People experience more ease in their day and more control in their life.

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