

# *Homeopathy – A Guide to Self-Prescribing*

## *What is homeopathy?*

Homeopathy has been in existence for more than 200 years and is one of the most widely used forms of medicine in the world today. The fundamental principles for its use have remained virtually unchanged. For the home prescriber a basic understanding of these principles is extremely helpful for it to be used effectively.

Homeopathy works by triggering the body's own healing mechanisms and works on the principle known as 'law of similars'. This law states that a substance which can cause symptoms in a healthy person can also be used in minute doses to relieve those symptoms. An example of this is the common Stinging Nettle. Contact with a stinging nettle usually results in a red, itchy skin rash. The homeopathic preparation of nettle, known as *Urtica Urens*, can be helpful in relieving skin conditions with the same characteristics.

Many and varied substances are used to make homeopathic preparations, including plants and minerals. The remedies are prepared in a homeopathic pharmacy using a process of repeated dilution and vibration known as 'potentisation'. The potentisation process intensifies the healing power of the substance whilst at the same time removing any toxic effects.

Homeopathic remedies are available in a number of different strengths known as 'potencies'. The number before the letter 'C' denotes the potency. So for example *Arnica 30C* denotes the remedy *Arnica* in a 30C potency. The 30C potency is the most commonly used in acute conditions and first aid situations.

## *What can homeopathic self-treatment be useful for?*

Homeopathy can be used safely and effectively by anyone including babies and children. Self-treatment is safe for simple, uncomplicated conditions such as colds, coughs, sore throats, indigestion and teething babies. For anything more serious, if symptoms persist or if you are in any doubt always seek professional advice.

Homeopathy can also be helpful in minor first aid situations such as bruises, sprains, insect bites and stings. It can be used in some more serious first aid situations until help arrives but never delay calling an ambulance or seeking medical advice if necessary.

Homeopathy can be used alongside conventional medicine, however never make changes to your medication without first consulting your GP.

## ***How to prescribe***

Each remedy has a unique 'picture' i.e. a particular set of symptoms and conditions which are characteristic of that remedy. The success of homeopathy relies on individualisation. No two people will experience an illness, or even the same symptoms, in exactly the same way. In order for the remedy to work effectively you need to select the remedy which most closely matches your individual combination of symptoms. It is best to base your remedy choice on symptoms that stand out clearly and strongly rather than those which are vague or unclear. However, if you are finding it difficult to decide which remedy to use the less clearly defined symptoms may help you to differentiate.

When deciding on a remedy for your condition first make a note of the most noticeable symptoms. Examples of things to consider include:

**State of mind** – anxiety, fear, grief, depression, panic, agitation.

**Location in the body** – left or right sided headache, pains moving up or down.

**Characteristics of the symptoms** – is the pain stabbing, burning, nagging, aching? Does skin feel hot, cold, itchy? Is the cough loose or dry?

When symptoms first appeared and what brought them on – getting cold or overheated, a shock such as bad news, injury.

What makes symptoms better or worse – hot or cold environments, specific time of day, motion, touch, noise, eating certain foods.

Once you have made a note of your symptoms carefully read through the remedy pictures on the website and select the remedy which most closely matches.

## ***Taking the remedy***

Remedies are supplied in the form of small, white pillules. The pillule should be sucked until it completely dissolves in the mouth. For babies and small children a few pillules can be stirred into a glass of spring water and a teaspoonful given as a dose.

Avoid food and drink (other than water) for fifteen minutes before and after taking the remedy.

Avoid handling the pillule if possible, tip the remedy into the lid of the bottle or use a clean spoon.

The frequency of the dose depends on the severity of the condition. In relatively minor complaints where there is not a great deal of discomfort take one dose every two to three hours. For more urgent conditions accompanied by unpleasant symptoms such as nausea or moderate pain take a dose every one to two hours. If there is a great deal of distress or pain the remedy can be repeated every 5-30 minutes.

As symptoms start to improve the time between doses can be gradually increased. The aim is to trigger the body's own healing systems to take over and then to taper down the dose accordingly.

If improvement continues stop taking the remedy. If symptoms return the dose can be repeated.

If absolutely no improvement is seen after six doses it is likely that it is the incorrect remedy. In which case review the symptoms and select a different remedy. If the original symptoms have improved but the picture has changed slightly or new symptoms have appeared you may also need to change to a different remedy.

### *Care of remedies*

As with all medicines, homeopathic remedies should be stored in a cool, dark place out of the reach of children.

Avoid strong smelling substances such as mint, menthol and camphor as these may interfere with the action of the remedy. It is also advisable to avoid coffee for the duration of treatment as this is known to antidote remedies in some people.

Avoid opening remedies in the presence of strong odours such as perfumes and air fresheners.

Keep remedies away from magnetic or electrical fields such as televisions, computers and mobile phones. If possible it is best to avoid taking remedies through x-ray machines at airports.