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Healing with Homeopathy

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Photography by: Carin Krasner



Millions of Americans swear by homeopathic remedies to treat almost any ailment, and it's easy to see why. This 200-year-old holistic healing system is inexpensive, completely natural and rarely has side effects. It's said to work according to the principle of "like cures like." For example, a remedy made from highly diluted coffee may cure your insomnia, and barely perceptible traces of onion can ease allergic, watery eyes. "Giving a person a remedy that matches her symptoms slightly magnifies the existing disease process and encourages the body to react to this stimulus by activating its own power to heal," explains Kathy Thorpe, M.A., a certified homeopath in Boulder, Colo.

Quite a few studies back up Thorpe's views, including one published in 2010 that might put to rest Western medicine's biggest criticism of homeopathy: How can it work when the remedies appear to have nothing of substance in them? Using an EEG to measure electrical activity in the brain, researchers in Germany showed that the brain responds strongly to homeopathic treatments. Ironically, the more diluted the remedy, the greater the impact. And in a double-blind 2004 study published in the journal *Rheumatology*, homeopathic remedies for fibromyalgia outperformed a placebo.

Choose a remedy that addresses your most intense symptom(s) as well as your emotional state, advises Dana Ullman, M.P.H., co-author of *Everyone's Guide to Homeopathic Medicine* (Tarcher). If it doesn't work within the prescribed time, simply try a different one. The idea, he says, "is to give as few doses of the remedy as possible, but as many as necessary." Some people like single-ingredient, under-the-tongue dissolvable pills; others prefer combination remedies. Here are several options.

Allergies

Mary Aspinwall, author of *A Basic Guide to Homeopathy* (Helios Homeopathics, Ltd.) and founder of Homeopathy World (homeopathyworld.com), suggests taking one dose and repeating it if the same symptoms return.

Arsenicum album Violent sneezing; watery, burning eyes and nose; you feel anxious about being unable to breathe.

Nux vomica Violent sneezing; your nose may run during the day but be stuffed up at night; you may feel irritable, headachy, chilled and sensitive to noises.

Sabadilla Sneezing; red, watery eyes; itchy eyes, nose, ears, throat and roof of mouth; your ears may be blocked.

Combination solutions Hyland's Seasonal Allergy Relief (\$7; amazon.com); Similasan allergy relief formulas (\$11; similasanusa.com)

Anxiety

Self-prescribed remedies work well for in-the-moment anxiety, but more serious distress requires the attention of a professional homeopath. Margo Marrone, a pharmacist and homeopath and founder of The Organic Pharmacy, suggests taking one of these remedies up to four times a day during an anxiety attack.

Aconite For sudden-onset anxiety and intense fear following a traumatic event.

Argentum nitricum For performance anxiety, fear of heights or claustrophobia, generally accompanied by stomach cramps and loose stools.

Ignatia For acute anxiety and depression, especially after a breakup or death in the family.

Combination solution Bach Flower Essence's Rescue Remedy (\$13 for 10 milliliters; bachflower.com)

Colds

Thorpe suggests taking one of the following every hour for three doses, then once every three hours.

Aconite For the first 24 hours of a cold that appears suddenly after exposure to cold or wind; you feel hot and dry, anxious and may be very thirsty.

Allium cepa For the early stages of a cold when there is a lot of sneezing; clear, watery nasal discharge; and profuse tearing; you feel worse in warm rooms and better outside.

Pulsatilla For the later stages of a cold when there is thick yellow-green mucus and changeable symptoms; you do not feel thirsty.

Combination solution Dr. Hauschka's Agropyron Cold Relief (\$14; drhauschka.com)

Fatigue

Aspinwall suggests taking one dose and repeating it if fatigue returns.

Arnica Best following extreme physical exertion like giving birth or running a marathon; also helps with recovery from jet lag.

China For exhaustion brought on by dehydration; helpful after diarrhea, vomiting or a sweaty fever.

Phosphoric acid For nervous exhaustion and brain fog brought on by intense mental activity; you may feel a heaviness or burning sensation in your spine and limbs.

Headaches

Ullman suggests taking three doses 30 minutes apart, then one dose three times a day.

Belladonna For throbbing pain aggravated by noise, light, touch, motion or lying down; pain is relieved by cold compresses or firm pressure.

Nux vomica For headaches resulting from drinking too much coffee or alcohol or working too hard, often accompanied by constipation and extreme irritability; pain is relieved by applying warm compresses, sitting quietly or lying down.

Pulsatilla For headaches aggravated by heat, stuffy rooms or overeating; may be relieved by being in the open air or applying cold compresses.

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