

What is homeopathy?

Homeopathy is a system of medicine which is based on treating the individual with highly diluted substances given in mainly tablet form, which triggers the body's natural system of healing. Based on their experience of their symptoms, a homeopath will match the most appropriate medicine to the patient.



It works on the principle of “like cures like” - that is, a substance that would cause symptoms in a healthy person is used to cure those same symptoms in illness. For example, one remedy which might be used in a person suffering from insomnia is coffea, a remedy made from coffee.

Scientifically it can not yet be explained precisely how it works, but new theories in quantum physics are going some way towards shedding light on the process. What we do know is that a carefully selected homeopathic remedy acts as a trigger to the body's healing processes.

Homeopathy is a complementary therapy

Homeopathy has been widely used throughout the world for more than 200 years. In 2000, the House of Lords' Select Committee on Science & Technology cited homeopathy as one of the five Group One therapies, having “an individual diagnostic approach” along with osteopathy, chiropractic, herbal medicine and acupuncture. (1)

Homeopathy can be safely used alongside most conventional medicines.

How long has Homeopathy been used?

Homeopathy has been used in the UK for over two hundred years, but has an honourable tradition dating back to ancient Greece. It was Samuel Hahnemann, a brilliant doctor working in 1796 who developed the scientific and philosophical foundations of this gentler way of healing. These scientific principles form the basis of successful homeopathic practice today.

Are homeopathic remedies safe?

Homeopathic remedies are a unique, potentised energy medicine, drawn from the plant, mineral and animal worlds. They are diluted to such a degree that not one molecule of the original substance can be detected (after the 12c potency).

They work by gently boosting the natural energy of the body, and are very safe, even for pregnant and sensitive patients. There is no danger of addiction or toxicity.(2)

How are the remedies discovered?

The clinical indications of our medicines are discovered in all of three ways:

- The toxicity symptoms (or poisoning picture, eg. vomiting and diarrhoea caused by arsenic)
- The ‘signature’ of the medicine, an ancient medical idea based on the ‘affinities’ of certain substances (eg. Deadly Nightshade, *Atropa belladonna* has large shiny black berries that resemble the dilated pupils of the eyes in high fever)
- The ‘proving’, in which the highly diluted substances are tested blind on a group of healthy volunteers who then record the symptoms they experience. Where there is agreement amongst provers, the symptoms are documented in a Repertory.

All this information is used to match the remedies with your symptoms.

How are the remedies made?

There are five regulated homeopathic pharmacies in the UK (see **Find a Pharmacy**). The raw extracts (from plants or animals) or triturations (from minerals and salts) are made into a 'tincture' with alcohol which forms the basis of the dilution procedure. Dilutions are made up to either 1 part tincture to 10 parts water (1x) or 1 part tincture to 100 parts water (1c). Repeated dilution results in the familiar 6x, 6c or 30c potencies that can be bought over the counter: the 30c represents an infinitesimal part of the original substance.

If they are so dilute, how can they work?

After each dilution the mixture is vigorously agitated in a machine that delivers a calibrated amount of shaking. This is called succussion. It is thought that this process imprints the healing energy of the medicinal substance throughout the body of water (the diluent) as if a message is passed on. The message contains the healing energy. Even in ultra-molecular dilutions, information specific to the original dissolved substance remains and can be detected. (3)

What can homeopathy treat?

Homeopathy has a wide application, from acute fevers, sore throats and toothache, to chronic illnesses such as arthritis, eczema, asthma, anxiety, mild depression and chronic fatigue syndrome. There has been some very good research evidence to support this (see Research section).

What happens when you see a homeopath?

Your homeopath understands that establishing good health involves treating both mind and body, so time is taken to listen to your emotional and physical symptoms. To stimulate your body's own healing process, a remedy closest to your individual symptom picture is prescribed. Healing begins from within your body, strengthening your health and immune system, without any danger of damaging side effects. (2)

References:

- (1) House of Lords Select Committee on Science & Technology. 'Complementary & Alternative Medicine.' Session 1999-2000, 6th Report. The Stationery Office, 2000
- (2) Dantas F, Rampes H. Do homeopathic medicines provoke adverse effects? A systematic review. *Br Hom J* 2000;89,p.35-8
- (3) Belon P, Cumps J, Ennis M, et al. Histamine dilutions modulate basophil activation, *Inflammation Research* 2004: 53; 181-188