

Starting homeopathic treatment

Homeopathy is an effective and scientific system of healing which assists the natural tendency of the body to heal itself. It recognises that all symptoms of ill health are expressions of disharmony within the whole person and that it is the patient who needs treatment not the disease.

As a new patient, these ideas may be new to you, but homeopathy has been established for about 200 years.

What is homeopathy?

In 1796 a German doctor, Samuel Hahnemann, discovered a different approach to the cure of the sick which he called homeopathy (from the Greek words meaning 'similar suffering'). Like Hippocrates two thousand years earlier he realised that there were two ways of treating ill health, the way of opposites and the way of similars.

Take for example, a case of insomnia. The way of opposites, (conventional medicine or allopathy), is to treat this by giving a drug to bring on an artificial sleep. This frequently involves the use of large or regular doses of drugs which can sometimes cause side effects or addiction.

The way of similars, the homeopathic way, is to give the patient a minute dose of a substance, such as coffee, which in large doses causes sleeplessness in a healthy person. Perhaps surprisingly this will enable the patient to sleep naturally.

Homeopathic remedies, properly prescribed, are safe and can be given to pregnant women, babies and children. This is because only a very minute amount of the active ingredient is used in a specially prepared form.

Your homeopath will give you a homeopathic medicine or remedy which matches your symptoms as you experience them. This also takes account of you as a person - your individual characteristics emotionally as well as physically.

How does it work?

Homeopathic remedies work by stimulating the body's own healing power. This stimulus will assist your own system to clear itself of any expressions of imbalance. The aim is to get you to a level of health so that eventually you will need infrequent treatment.

What will your homeopath need to know?

In order to find the right remedy for you as an individual, your homeopath will need to know all about you. A detailed understanding of who you are, along with any complaints and details of how you experience them, is needed to assess your case correctly. So anything you can tell your homeopath that is typical of who you are will help this process. Finding out about your general energy level, your past medical history and the way you live are also important. Anything you say will be treated in the strictest confidence. The initial consultation may last an hour or more.

What will the treatment be like?

Your homeopath will give you a homeopathic remedy, usually in the form of a tablet or tablets, occasionally as powders, which should be allowed to dissolve in your mouth; or you may be given a liquid remedy with instructions. Nothing else should be put in the mouth for 5-10 minutes before or after taking the tablet, not even toothpaste or cigarettes. Your homeopath will usually advise you to avoid coffee, peppermint and preparations containing menthol, eucalyptus and camphor, as these can interfere with the action of the homeopathic remedy. Do make sure

that you understand the instructions before you leave.

If you are given homeopathic remedies to take at a later date be sure to store them in a cool dark place, away from anything with a strong smell. If you travel do not let the remedies go through the X-ray.

Please tell your homeopath about any medicine or supplement that has been prescribed for you by your doctor or that you take regularly. Also mention any recent or immediate dental treatment. These may possibly affect your homeopathic prescription.

If you are taking a homeopathic remedy and you feel that you need to take additional medication – conventional or homeopathic medicine – consult with your homeopath to discuss how this might affect your homeopathic treatment. If you develop a cold, headache, or any symptoms that concern you, please discuss them with your homeopath.

What will happen once treatment starts?

After taking your remedy you may notice some changes. Some patients experience a period of exceptional well being and optimism. Sometimes your symptoms can appear to get worse for a short time. This is a good sign that the remedy is taking effect. Sometimes a cold, rash or some form of discharge may appear as a 'spring cleaning' effect which means your system is going through a cleaning stage. Similarly, old symptoms can reappear, usually for a short period. These symptoms will pass, and must not be treated as they are a very important part of the healing process. If any response to your treatment concerns you, do contact your homeopath as soon as you can, as it is important to know what happens as treatment progresses. You might also want to make notes of any changes and take them with you to discuss at your next appointment.

How long does treatment take?

This depends very much on what sort of illness you have, as well as the other individual characteristics of your case. So it is not realistic for your homeopath to assess this until it can be seen how you respond to the remedies prescribed over some time. It is possible to say that a slowly developing complaint, or one that has been experienced for some years, will not disappear immediately although there may be a response and some improvement quite soon. Other acute complaints may get better more quickly.

Homeopathy cures from the inside, and often outer symptoms such as a skin complaint, are the last to clear. Be patient! In the long term it is much better for you to be cured of both the cause of your illness and its symptoms, rather than merely relieving or suppressing the symptoms. Remember that every case is different, and no two patients are alike.

If you wish to discontinue your treatment for any reason, your homeopath will talk things over with you.

Is there any advice about diet and lifestyle?

A homeopath will ask you about your usual diet and lifestyle, and may suggest changes, especially if it seems that this is contributing to your illness. Of course, a good basic diet is necessary for good health, with less sugars, fats, alcohol and refined foods. There is an increasing awareness of the benefits of foods free from artificial colourings, preservatives and flavourings. Whole foods and organic foods, free from chemical pesticides and fertilisers, are also increasingly available.

What about seeing a GP?

We recommend that you should maintain your relationship with your GP. Your GP will be able to

arrange any tests or X-rays you may need. Homeopathy has an alternative philosophy but by working in this way with your GP the two systems of health care can provide complementary services.

Can I treat myself with homeopathic remedies?

You can use some remedies at home to treat first aid problems such as cuts, stings, minor burns and bruises. Ask your homeopath for further information or find your nearest class or seminar on this subject.

There are a number of good books available such as:
A Guide to Homeopathic Remedies, Paul Houghton, Souvenir Press

Homeopathy, Natural Medicine for the Whole Person, Peter Adams, Element

Homeopathy, New Perspectives, Peter Adams, Element
Illustrated Elements of Homeopathy, Ilana Dannheisser & Penny Edwards, Element

Practical Homeopathy, A Complete Guide to Home Treatment, Beth MacEoin, Bloomsbury

The Complete Homeopathy Handbook, Miranda Castro, Macmillan

Homeopathy Simply Explained

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