



Homeopathy is a Smart Choice for the Cold and Flu Season

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When your nose is running, your eyes are watering, your throat feels as though you've just swallowed crushed glass, and you're coughing hard enough to rearrange a few internal organs, you're particularly susceptible to the soothing claims of conventional medicines. Yes, you want to sleep well, you want your nasal passages to stop running like a faucet, and you are desperate to quiet those coughs. Because you're so vulnerable when you're ill, the best time to decide on a cold and flu remedy is while you're in good health and thinking clearly.

Consider homeopathy the next time the cold and flu season claims you as a casualty. A gentle and effective system of medicine, homeopathy works with your body to heal itself and does it without side effects. In contrast, many common prescription and over-the-counter cold and flu remedies merely suppress superficial symptoms, an approach which actually thwarts your body's ability to fight these viruses.



Defining cold and flu

We know how cold and flu viruses make us feel. But what exactly are they? The common cold is a viral infection of the upper respiratory tract, nose, throat, and upper airways, which inflames the mucous membrane that lines those areas, according to *Worst Pills, Best Pills II*, from the Public Citizen Health Research Group. The viruses that cause colds are parasitic infections tinier than bacteria. These viral infections settle into healthy cells and

start multiplying. The most common symptoms of colds are runny nose, sneezing, and sore throat. Fortunately, this generally mild illness typically only lasts a few days.

Influenza is an acute infection by a particular group of viruses of the respiratory tract. The flu is characterized by a runny nose, cough, high fever, general weakness, and muscular aching, explains *Everybody's Guide to Homeopathic Medicines*, by Stephen Cummings, M.D., and Dana Ullman, M.P.H.

The severity of the flu varies from person to person. In a healthy, young adult, the flu can be debilitating for three to five days but leave no permanent damage. However, in children, the elderly, or individuals already weakened by disease, the flu can actually be life-threatening. When the body has already been weakened by the flu, a person is more susceptible to bacterial infections, pneumonia, and ear and sinus infections.

Why homeopathy?

Paradoxically, homeopathic remedies work because they don't suppress symptoms. In *The Science of Homeopathy*, author George Vitoulkas points out that when disease overwhelms an individual's "vital force" or innate health, the body's immune functions go right to work, creating symptoms that help fight the illness. In other words, symptoms are your body's efforts to defend itself, explains Dana Ullman, M.P.H., in *Discovering Homeopathy: Your Introduction to the Science and Art of Homeopathy*.

Unfortunately, many advertisers play into the public misconception that symptoms are the "bad guy" that they are the illness itself. Popular medications promise to suppress

these uncomfortable symptoms, leading you to believe that they are treating the actual illness. But nothing could be further from the truth. Our good health depends on symptoms.

For example, that annoying runny nose is your body's effort to detoxify your system. Nasal discharge is mostly made up of dead viruses, dead bacteria, dead white blood cells, and mucus, according to *Discovering Homeopathy*. If a runny nose is promoting your body's internal housekeeping, why suppress this natural drainage with nasal sprays, decongestants, and antihistamines?

Another symptom, coughing, is how your lungs clear themselves out. Mucus usually lines the walls of the lungs and traps foreign particles such as inhaled smoke and infectious virus particles, reports *Worst Pills, Best Pills*. A productive cough rids the airways of phlegm and other waste.

Fever is another ally in your recovery. When you feel like you're "burning up," your body is heating up its internal environment so the virus can't grow. During a fever, white



blood cells rally for combat, and your body starts producing more interferon, a natural protein that keeps viruses from replicating.

(Note: See a doctor if your temperature exceeds 102 degrees F. Prolonged high fever can cause dehydration, malnutrition, and weakened immune function, warns *The New Encyclopedia of Common Diseases*, by the editors of *Prevention Magazine*.)

Homeopathy works because it strengthens your body's defenses instead of disarming them. By helping your body fight unwelcome invaders, homeopathic remedies actually treat the underlying illness. In addition, homeopathy relieves your viral miseries without the side effects common to many cold and flu medications.

The trouble with drugs

As we discussed, drugs often suppress symptoms, the very responses we need for healing. But muffling symptoms is just one of the drawbacks of many popular medications.

Unlike homeopathy, many cold and flu medications come with undesirable side effects. One popular cold treatment, antihistamines, do more to lighten your pocketbook than improve your health. The *Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics* states, "Despite early claims and persistent popular belief, histamine-blocking drugs [antihistamines] are without value in combating the common cold." In addition, anti-histamines may cause drowsiness, blurred vision, dizziness, loss of appetite, nausea, upset stomach, low blood pressure, headache, and loss of coordination, according to *Worst Pills, Best Pills*.

Aspirin may actually be a dangerous response to fever. When used for flu symptoms, aspirin has been linked to Reye's Syndrome, a rare but potentially fatal neurological condition.

Nasal decongestants have been linked with jitteriness, sleeplessness, and potential heart problems.

Nasal sprays can be addictive, says *The New Encyclopedia*. Although they're effective for a while, users reach a point where the spray works

for shorter and shorter periods of time.

Antibiotics are often wrongly prescribed for colds and flues. In fact, these drugs are only effective against certain bacterial infections, and are virtually useless against viral diseases. In addition, they have been associated with stomach irritation, diarrhea, and kidney and liver problems.

Unfortunately, adults aren't the only unwitting victims of cold and flu medications. *Discovering Homeopathy* tells us that the vast majority of drugs typically used for infant and child health problems have not been adequately tested on pediatric populations. And a report from the American Academy of Pediatrics admitted that "possibly as many as three quarters of the drugs used in hospital pediatric practice are not officially approved for the purpose for which they are commonly employed."

Clinical study backs homeopathy

A clinical study explored the therapeutic impact of a homeopathic cold and flu medicine, manufactured in France. In this experiment, half of a group of 60 flu sufferers received the homeopathic combination formula and half received a placebo. For the duration of the trial, the test subjects did not take prescription anti-flu medications such as fever reducers or pain relievers.

After ten days, 93 percent of the homeopathic group described the treatment as successful, in contrast to only 40 percent of the placebo group. All the patients reported a considerable decrease in stiffness, fever, bronchial congestion, coughing, and runny nose. However, the homeopathic group experienced the greatest reduction of those symptoms. In successful cases, the patients who took the homeopathic formula noticed improvement within an average of \$5.99 days. No one reported any side effects from the homeopathic treatment.

Interestingly, the researchers who conducted this trial did not practice homeopathy. The homeopathic formula used in this study contains Arnica montana (leopard's bane),

Belladonna (night-shade), Eucalyptus globulus (fever tree), Gelsemium sempervirens (yellow Jessamine), Aconitum (friar's cap), Bryonia (wild hops), Drosera rotundifolia (sundew), Eupatorium (ague weed), Cinchona officinalis (peruvian bark), and Senega officinalis (snakeroot). Let's highlight a few of these important ingredients:

- Arnica montana treats sneezing, sore throat, coughs, and stuffy nose.
- Belladonna is the most commonly prescribed homeopathic medicine for people with fever.
- Eucalyptus globulus alleviates sore throat and high fever.
- Gelsemium sempervirens is recommended for fatigue, weakness, and a sensation of heaviness.
- Aconitum should be used after a sudden onset of sore throat, high fever, and thirst.
- Bryonia treats dry, spasmodic coughs.
- Eupatorium is prescribed for a severe aching and pain deep inside the bones.

The homeopathic formula used in this study is now available in health food stores throughout the United States.

Although traditional homeopaths prefer single-ingredient remedies, homeopathic formulas can effectively treat a broader range of related symptoms. In addition, combining natural compounds appears to increase their total therapeutic impact. Dana Ullman, M.P.H., stated, "I have personally found that combination [homeopathic] medicines are valuable for many acute, non-life-threatening conditions."

Planning ahead

Hopefully, cold and flu season will leave you unscathed. But if you are one of its victims, don't muffle your symptoms at the cost of your health. Homeopathic combination formulas work in concert with your system to combat the virus, not silence your body's alarms.