



# Homeopathy

## Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

by Jennifer Schraag

Homeopathy is a 200-year-old concept. Manufacturers are bringing yesterday's concepts to today's market for tomorrow's benefit.

**H**omeopathy is a natural pharmaceutical science effective in treating individualized symptomatic ailments using natural ingredients such as plants, minerals or animals in extremely small doses.

The homeopathic practice is formulated to treat the "whole" patient. The concept is to prescribe a remedy to all factors that may play a role in the patient's ailments.

Homeopaths study not only patients' physical symptoms, but their emotional and mental states, lifestyle, nutritional habits and overall environment as well.

Homeopathy uses the Law of Similars or "like cures like." The term homeopathy comes from the Greek words "homeo" meaning similar, and "pathos" meaning suffering or disease. The concept of homeopathy is similar to vaccines and allergy therapies. For example, in vaccinations a small amount of dead virus is given to incite the body's immune system to build natural antibodies against the virus. A similar theory is used in homeopathy.

Homeopathic physicians believe the body's natural defenses are the cause of the symptoms the patient is experiencing. For example,

the body's way to rid the lungs of mucus is to cough; the body also will run a fever to combat a bacterial or viral infection. When something is disrupting the body's homeostasis—its natural balance—symptoms are part of the body's homeostatic mechanism to cure itself. Homeopathic medicines stimulate the body's homeostatic mechanism to encourage the body to heal

itself by dealing with the illness behind the symptoms.

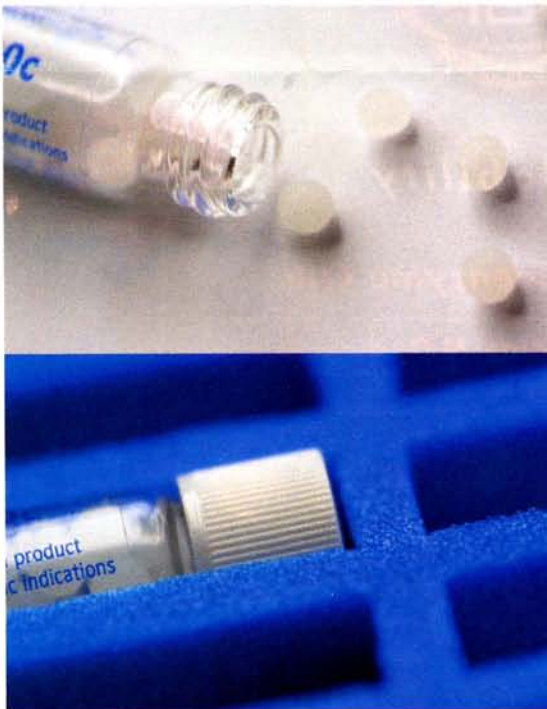
Homeopathic medicines are formulated for specific symptoms. They are used to stimulate the body's natural defenses by giving a substance, in very small doses, that causes the same symptoms in a healthy person as in someone who is ill. In other words, if a substance induces in a healthy person the same symptoms seen in an ill person, homeopaths believe the substance will aid in curing the ill person by acting therapeutically against the symptoms.

For example, while cutting an onion, most people begin to tear and a clear, burning, runny discharge will begin to flow through the nasal cavity. If a patient's allergy symptoms are similar (i.e. watery eyes, a clear, burning discharge in the nasal cavity, etc.) then very small, diluted doses of onion would be the homeopathic remedy used to treat the allergic patient.

Remedies are as varied as the conditions for which they are prescribed, according to the National Center for Homeopathy ([www.homeopathic.org](http://www.homeopathic.org)). Homeopathic substances are used for conditions ranging from intestinal distress, arthritis, infections, injuries and chronic diseases to emotional disorders, wakefulness and low energy. Substances used for homeopathic remedies are made from plants such as dandelions; minerals like arsenic oxide; animals, including the venom of poisonous snakes or the ink of the cuttle fish; or from traditional drugs such as penicillin or streptomycin.

Homeopathic medicines work on a bioenergetic level. Bioenergy is a useful renewable energy produced by organic matter. Therefore, the effectiveness of a homeopathic medicine is based upon its ability to provoke a cellular reaction, not on the quantity of the product taken.

Homeopathic remedies are prepared by a process of serial dilution and shaking known as potentization. Homeopathic substances are repeatedly diluted until infinitesimal amounts of the original remain. Many homeopathic remedies are so highly diluted that not one molecule of the original natural substance remains.





Homeopathy asserts this process can maintain a substance's healing properties regardless of how many times it has been diluted. Chemically, the substance becomes more and more dilute. Clinically, however, it has been found that the more a substance was potentized, the less often it needed to be given to the patient to produce a curative action, and the deeper its effect. After the ingredient has been properly diluted, the medicine can be administered in one of many forms including tablets, pellets or liquid dilutions for internal use, and salves, tinctures and ointments for external use.

### Where It All Began

The practice of homeopathic medicine dates back 200 years, but it was a late 18th-century German physician, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann—a linguist, chemist and surgeon—who is the first documented physician to evolve homeopathy while he studied, refined and practiced homeopathy on himself and his patients.

His meager earnings and growing disgust for bloodletting and other medical practices of the time led Hahnemann away from practicing as a physician for many years. He instead supported his large and growing family by translating scientific journals. It was in 1790, while translating a series of journals by Dr. William Cullen on *materia medica*, that Hahnemann began his preliminary studies of homeopathy. Hahnemann was intrigued by Cullen's observations of Cinchona bark (*Cortex peruvianus*) which was used at that time to cure malaria.

Hahnemann experimented by ingesting the bark twice daily. He

began experiencing the same symptoms seen in malaria patients, later returning to a healthy state upon dismissing the dosages. Hahnemann thus realized the impact of the Law of Similars and he thereafter studied many drugs and specifics on himself, his family and his colleagues. In 1810, he published *Materia Medica*, a book that contained a list of more than 200 substances, with their symptom profiles. The book became the basis for the modern formation of homeopathy practiced today.

### Homeopathic Medicines Today

Homeopathic medicines are required to meet certain legal standards for strength, quality, purity, and packaging in the United States because they are classified as drugs under the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act in 1938. As homeopathic remedies are recognized as over-the-counter (OTC) medications, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates the manufacture and marketing of homeopathic products.

The official manufacturing manual for homeopathic remedies is the *Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States* (HPUS). HPUS is authored by a nongovernmental, nonprofit organization of industry representatives and homeopathic experts, and lists guidelines for homeopathic remedies. The HPUS, which is available at most libraries, also includes provisions for testing new remedies and verifying their clinical effectiveness.

In 1988, FDA required all homeopathic remedies list the indications for their use (i.e., the medical problems to be treated) on the label. FDA also requires labels to list ingredients, dilutions, and instructions for safe use. This is due mostly to the many users of

homeopathy who treat themselves with homeopathic products and do not consult a professional.

People get sick, or have some pain, or are stressed out and want to self-treat themselves and save on the doctor's visit. Cost efficiency and product safety make homeopathy a perfect choice for these "self-treaters." A statistical study conducted in January 1991, by CNAM, a French health care insurance agency, stated homeopathic treatment costs one half as much as care from a conventional physician.

Homeopathic remedies are generally considered safe, generally lack side effects, and have few reported complaints recorded by FDA. There are no contraindications or adverse drug interactions between homeopathic remedies and other OTC or prescription medications.

## Marketing Homeopathic Medicines

Homeopathic medicines can be packaged as single medications with one active ingredient, which are used for individualized syndromes, or as combinations, or formulas, as Dana Ullman, M.P.H., terms them. Ullman is a health professional, author, the director of Homeopathic Educational Services and president of the Foundation for Homeopathic Education and Research. Homeopathic formulas possess multiple active ingredients—usually two to 10 homeopathic medicines mixed together.

Formula products are prescribed more in common ailments and conditions and are more popular with those less educated in homeopathy, according to Ullman. Single remedies, on the other hand, are more popular with those with some knowledge of homeopathy.

Combination medicines sometimes offer a less expensive solution for more complex problems that may produce many symptoms such as those associated with a cold. Boiron's ([www.boiron.com](http://www.boiron.com)) specialty medicines such as Coldcalm for colds offer an easy solution for people who are not familiar or don't have the time to research homeopathic medicines. These combination medicines safely combine several single homeopathic medicines to cover the maximum number of symptoms.

The most popular homeopathic remedies are for colds and flu, pain remedies, for stress or sleeplessness, and for first aid. These are the same categories that are most popular for OTC medicines. There are many different combinations of homeopathic ingredients in accepted materia medica that can be put together to solve these problems.

**Hyland's Teething Tablets** is currently the top selling oral analgesic for children, according to JP Borneman, chairman and chief executive officer of Hyland's ([www.hylands.com](http://www.hylands.com)) and Oscillocochinum® is America's best-selling flu medicine in health product stores, according to John Durkin, Boiron's vice president of sales and marketing. Additionally, Oscillocochinum is the overall best-selling OTC flu medicine in Boiron's home country of France. Five of Boiron's best selling products include: Oscillocochinum 6-Dose, Oscillocochinum 6+6 Bonus Pack, Arnica 30C Pellets, Coldcalm and Arnica Gel.

According to Ullman, the most common homeopathic individual remedies include:

- **Arnica Montana**—the most commonly used homeopathic medicine worldwide—treats soreness and bruising caused by injury, overexertion and acute trauma.
- **Belladonna**—fever, headache, nosebleeds, menstrual cramps, teething and toothache.
- **Chamomilla**—teething, stomach cramps, and nerves.
- **Nux Vomica**—gas, heartburn, indigestion, headache, menstrual cramps, and constipation.
- **Pulsatilla**—an herb called windflower—commonly used for various women's complaints from premenstrual syndrome to vaginitis to allergies and headaches.

With over 1,200 drugs in the homeopathic pharmacopia today, manufacturers are faced with the challenge of communicating to the consumer the efficacy and validity of their products.

"We really are trying very, very hard to connect in a very personal way with our customers," Borneman said, "but that gets difficult when a retailer is the 'middle man,' so to speak, between the manufacturer and the end user."

Education is key, according to Durkin. He said Boiron provides product literature to help their retailers better serve their customers. Last fall, Boiron launched new materials to facilitate choosing an appropriate medicine including Boiron's retailers including a new consumer guide for \$1.50 that explains and simplifies the use of homeopathic medicines. "The manufacturer should also support retailers by providing point-of-purchase materials, and off-shelf display materials, as well as hosting educational programs on homeopathy for retailers and their staff," Durkin said.

Hyland's ([www.hylands.com](http://www.hylands.com)) also educates store staffs, pharmacists and doctors, and writes articles to educate consumers. A good example Borneman shared was the marketing and educational materials Hyland's uses in its earache product for children. Hyland's placed a brochure in the box explaining why children get earaches, including how the eustachian tube is formed and how drainage is compromised in youthful years. The brochure includes technical terms and medical terminology on the other side for patients to take to their doctors. "We take highly technical clinical information from randomized controlled trials, literature and cost effectiveness trials and we turn this information into something that can be understood," Borneman said.

Technical names create confusion, Ullman added. "Use user-friendly names," he advised. Allowing the public to become familiar with products through their common name will be much more beneficial. The technical terminology needs to be translated.

Labeling changes in the past 25 years has gone from highly technical labeling to very consumer-friendly labeling, according to Borneman. "Drug facts boxes have done incredible amounts to allow us to communicate to consumers," he said. It allows companies to spell out what each ingredient treats, in a very clear, precise way and it allows for listing specific clinical indications for use.

Seagate Products ([www.seagateproducts.com](http://www.seagateproducts.com)) works diligently on the reinvention of homeopathy. "What we are doing is reinventing the presentation of homeopathic ingredients to the consumer," said Richard Lentz, owner of Seagate Products. Seagate is packaging its products in user-friendly dispensers—i.e. nasal sprays, throat sprayers, burn remedy atomizers, etc.—with the active ingredients clearly defined. "We look like the OTCs, sit on the counters next to OTCs, but are in fact very effective natural formulations having no chemical side-effects," Lentz said.

Boiron recently redesigned product packaging to be more consumer-friendly as well. After identifying the top symptoms for which consumers seek OTC treatments, the company bundled two to three of its most useful single medicines per symptom to offer a total of 12 kits. Consumers can quickly and easily choose one of these "CareKits" based on symptoms. The CareKits also introduce consumers to the more traditional pellet form of homeopathic medicines.

Borneman is a fourth-generation homeopathic manufacturer. Hyland's is 101 years old, and he said some things simply never change—the need to listen to the consumer. "Talk to the consumers, and when I say talk I mean both talk and listen," he said. "Manufacturers need to hear what they say to us and figure out a way to solve their problems. Homeopathy can do amazing things, we just need to figure out a way to get it to the customer in a way they understand it. Try to crack that code. Our (Hyland's) best product designs came from ideas from feedback we've received from testimonials."