



What is homeopathy?

Homeopathy is a safe, effective system of natural medicine, used by millions of people worldwide for more than 200 years. Homeopathic medicines are prepared from natural sources, are used in extremely small amounts, and are recognized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. They are non-toxic and, when properly administered, can be safely used with infants, children, adults, and animals.

How does homeopathy differ from conventional medicine?

Homeopathy is based on the principle that “like cures like.” That is, if a substance can cause symptoms of disease in a healthy person, then it can cure a sick person suffering from similar symptoms. Suppose a person has hay fever, with watery eyes and a burning nasal discharge. Instead of giving an antihistamine to dry up the discharge, a homeopath might prescribe *Allium cepa*—a tiny dose of onion, specially prepared by a homeopathic pharmacy in accordance with FDA-approved guidelines—because onion is known to cause watery eyes and a burning nasal discharge.

Homeopathy regards symptoms as the body’s healthy attempt to restore itself to balance. A homeopath will choose a remedy that supports the symptoms—rather than opposing them or suppressing them as in conventional medicine.

Homeopathy recognizes that each person manifests illness in a unique and slightly different way. That is why two people with the same illness will not necessarily receive the same homeopathic remedy. A cold sufferer with a stopped-up nose and dry eyes would receive a different remedy than a cold sufferer with a runny nose and watering eyes. Unlike the “one size fits all” approach often used in conventional medicine, a homeopath chooses a remedy that matches a person’s unique symptom profile—including physical, mental, and emotional symptoms.

What is homeopathy’s history?

The principles of homeopathy were developed into a system of medicine by the German physician, Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843). Homeopathy spread quickly throughout Europe and the rest of the world, including the U.S. The exact mechanism by which homeopathy works is unknown, but 200 years of clinical experience along with research published in such medical journals as *The Lancet*, *Pediatrics*, and the *British Medical Journal* have confirmed homeopathy’s effectiveness.

Homeo-Speak

acute illness: A condition that is usually brief in duration and self-limiting; that is, either the illness runs its course or the patient dies—as opposed to chronic illness that usually develops more slowly, lasts indefinitely, results in deterioration of health, and does not resolve without some sort of healing intervention. Examples: acute illness—colds, flu, ear infections; chronic illness—arthritis, hypertension, diabetes.

characteristic symptom: a symptom of an unusual nature—strange, rare, peculiar—that gives the case a pronounced individuality (i.e., “characterizes” the case). For example, chilliness with desire for ice cold drinks, or dizziness that is better from motion. Such a symptom often points directly to the curative remedy.

chronic illness: (See acute illness.)

common symptoms: Symptoms that are commonly found in a particular disease, for example, spots in measles or swollen glands in mumps.

constitutional treatment: Treating the whole person, rather than the symptoms alone, thereby attempting to enhance the general level of health rather than just getting rid of the symptoms.

materia medica: Latin for “materials of medicine.” A reference book listing homeopathic medicines and their therapeutic actions/indications. This information comes primarily from the provings of the medicines; also from clinical observation.

miasm: a block to health, usually left by a disease. This can be inherited or acquired and is an obstacle to cure.

Organon: *The Organon of Medicine*, by Samuel Hahnemann, founder of homeopathy, is the book in which he set down the fundamental principles of homeopathy. He wrote 6 editions, the last in 1842; current homeopaths refer primarily to the 6th and sometimes the 5th editions.

potency: The strength of a homeopathic remedy according to the number of times, during preparation, it has been diluted and succussed (i.e., potentized). Potency is represented as a number attached to a remedy name (e.g., *Aconite* 30c or *Arnica* 6X—the letter c or X refers to two different methods of dilution during remedy preparation).

proving: The testing of a substance, either in crude form or in potency, on healthy volunteers to discover the symptoms it is capable of producing, and therefore able to cure. Participants in a proving record their symptoms; the symptoms are collated and used as therapeutic indications for prescribing that substance.

repertorize: To look up symptoms in a repertory, in order to determine which remedy or remedies is common to the presenting symptoms.

repertory: An index to the materia medica; an index of symptoms (based on the materia medica) with a list of remedies indicated for each symptom.

rubric: A symptom listed in a homeopathic repertory.

simillimum: The “most similar” remedy corresponding to a case; the remedy that most closely matches the totality of the symptoms of the patient, and therefore, is curative according to homeopathic principles.

suppression: The driving inward of disease symptoms, so that a person experiences more serious symptoms than they originally had.

vital force: Term used by Hahnemann to describe the energy that animates all living beings. The vital force is stimulated by the homeopathic remedy to enable the body to heal itself.

The above definitions were largely adapted from the following excellent references: *The Complete Homeopathy Handbook (its glossary)*, by Miranda Castro, FSHom, CCH, and *Yasgur’s Homeopathic Dictionary and Holistic Health Reference*, by Jay Yasgur, RPh, MSC.