

## Homeopathy

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Homeopathy, also known as homeopathic medicine, is a form of health care that has been practiced in the United States since the early 19th century. It was developed in the late 1700s by Samuel Hahnemann, a physician, chemist, and linguist in Germany. Homeopathy is the second most widely used system of medicine in the world. Its growth in popularity in the United States has enjoyed a 25 to 50 percent increase throughout the last decade. Homeopathic practitioners are commonly called homeopaths.

Homeopathy takes a different approach from conventional medicine in diagnosing, classifying, and treating medical problems. Homeopathy works by stimulating the body's defense mechanisms and processes as to prevent or treat imbalance. Homeopathy works in harmony with your immune system, unlike some conventional medicines that suppress the immune system. In homeopathy, a key premise is that every person has energy called a vital force or self-healing response. When this energy is disrupted or imbalanced, health problems develop. Homeopathy aims to stimulate the body's own healing responses.

Homeopathic remedies are normally based on natural ingredients. Treatment in homeopathy is individualized (tailored to each person) and holistic. It treats all the symptoms presented in a patient's history and current condition, which in practical terms means that it addresses the cause, not the symptoms. Homeopathic practitioners select remedies according to a total picture of the patient, including not only symptoms, but also lifestyle, emotional and mental states.

In homeopathic medicine, there is a belief that "like cures like," meaning that small, highly diluted quantities of medicinal substances are given to cure symptoms, when the same substances given at higher or more concentrated doses would actually cause those symptoms. Similar principals forms the basis of conventional allergy treatment, where the allergic substance is given in a small dose, and in vaccines where an impotent form of the virus is given to bolster the immune system against that particular virus.

Remedies are often prescribed in high dilutions. In most cases, the dilution may not contain any molecules of the original agents at all. As a consequence, homoeopathic remedies, at least when applied in high dilutions, cannot act by pharmacological means. The theory of homeopathy is inconsistent with firmly established laws of chemistry and physics, since it states that extreme dilution makes remedies more powerful. Many homeopathic practitioners do not accept current, empirically verified ideas on the causes of sickness, such as the germ theory of disease. Homeopath see a sick person as having a dynamic disturbance in their "vital force," and so reject the standard medical diagnoses of named diseases.

Homeopathy can be extremely effective. When the correct remedy is taken, results can be rapid, complete and permanent. This often means that symptoms tackled with homeopathy do not recur. But, there are two main barriers to the effective use of homeopathy. Prescribing the right homeopathic remedy takes a little more time and patience than conventional medicine. According to classical homeopathy, exactly the right remedy must be taken for your symptoms. The remedy you take has to be matched to your particular symptom - where it occurs, what brings it on, what type of pain it is, what aggravates it, what makes it feel worse, your state of mind and what other symptoms you experience. There are specific instructions that your homeopath will give on the proper mode of taking a remedy, what to expect and how long it will last. For instance, since homeopathic medicine is a form of energy medicine, the assimilation of the remedy needs to be in a “pure energy field”. This means practically that you ingest nothing else by mouth when taking a homeopathic remedy.

There are also “combination remedies” available to the consumer today that utilize more than one homeopathic ingredient in the preparation. These are available over the counter in health food stores and usually say what they are best used for. Obviously, the combination remedy practice does not fall under the category of classical homeopathy.

## Patient’s Guide

### How do I use Homeopathic Medicine?

Your first appointment with a homeopathic physician may be over an hour. You will be asked many questions about your habits, your history and your symptoms. Usually you will be prescribed a remedy that may last from weeks to months. Your follow up visits can be months apart, to give the remedy enough time to exert its effects. The remedy is most often given in the form of tiny sugar pellets, infused with the remedy, that you dissolve under your tongue.