

Colds & Flu—A Homeopathic Perspective

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SHARE

by Nancy Gahles, DC, CCH, RSHom(NA)

A recent recall of over the counter cold and cough medicines has left parents scurrying to find a stop gap treatment measure for their children and themselves. Nancy Gahles, DC, CCH, RSHom(NA) discusses specific homeopathic remedies and their benefits and suggests that the recall of these cold medicines opened the door for other avenues of healing.

Unequipped with information about alternative therapies that can be effective for common viral syndromes, some people are simply trying anything from the over the counter products that are available. Adverse side effects and no relief are driving people back to the doctor's office with the hope of "something else". Often, medical doctors are either not trained in any specific alternative modality themselves, not educated enough to recommend one or do not have a referral base of qualified practitioners to refer to. Too frequently, patients are told that they have a virus and there is nothing they can do for it.



Homeopathy offers a system of healing that is safe for people to use with a bit of understanding about the nature of the homeopathic remedies and about their own nature. Homeopathy is unique in that it addresses the state of the person who is ill with respect to the symptoms that they suffer with at the time and takes into account the dynamic interconnection of the whole person as a complex system.

For instance, when a person becomes ill, there is often a precipitating cause. Perhaps it is a seasonal change, a traumatic occurrence in their life, environmental factors or dietary indiscretions. Each person has their own sensitivities and will be susceptible to factors that another person would not be. It can happen that everyone in your office is sick with the flu and you never get it. It may be that your susceptibility lies in another sphere. It may be that

your immune system becomes run down or overwhelmed when you are under stress. Again, it will be a particular type of stress that triggers your response and the way in which you respond will determine what remedy you choose for treatment. When we decide how we are going to treat the illness we must also remember that we are treating the whole person. That is why homeopaths treat the individual not the diagnosis.

“Self care is the new health care” is a slogan that has been bandied about recently with the advent of insurance plans that feature health savings accounts (HSA) and Flex Spend plans. These plans allow you to use your own health savings accounts for medical care. The idea was supported by corporations who wish to give their employees more responsibility for maintaining their own health. Of course, education is implicit in attempting to treat oneself and should only be done so when the condition is a self limiting one. Colds and flus do fit the bill.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”, as the wise Ben Franklin once said. The most obvious way to prevent colds is washing hands often, with soap and under running water for at least 30 seconds. Getting enough sleep, eating a balanced diet of whole, organic foods and drinking plenty of fluids is key to building a strong immune system along with maintaining relationships that nurture you.

At the first sign of a cold, I recommend taking the homeopathic remedy Aconite. This is for the cold that comes on suddenly, often after exposure to a cold wind. There is much sneezing with the nose feeling stopped up and dry or with thin watery discharge. Generally, remedies are taken 2-3 times in one day in potencies according to the intensity of symptoms. You are advised to stop taking the remedy when you feel relief or if after 24 hours there is no relief, then switch to another remedy that matches the symptoms more closely.

Allium Cepa is a remedy for cold symptoms that look like the ones you get when you chop an onion. Watery runny nose with an acrid burning and bland discharge from the eyes is a sign that you may need Allium Cepa.

In the case where your symptoms are not too descriptive or you are not sure which remedy fits best for you, try a combination remedy. Bottles are commonly labeled as COLDS; HEAD COLD; COLDS AND COUGHS and are available over the counter in many health food stores. These work equally as well for immediate relief as do single homeopathic remedies. As you become more proficient in understanding how to use homeopathy, you can select more appropriate medicines that fit your case more closely.

The flu, which is known for its hallmark sudden onset of muscle aches, cough, fever and prostration, is one of the viruses that is most responsive to homeopathic treatment. In her book, *THE HOMEOPATHIC TREATMENT OF INFLUENZA*, Sandra Perko, Ph.D.,C.C.N., describes the astounding success rate of cures by homeopaths during the 1918 Influenza epidemic.

At the first sign of exposure to a flu or when the onset is more gradual, the remedy Oscillococcinum, a product made by Boiron, is very useful. Take 1 dose and continue as needed for the first 24 hours. Research shows that the virus is often averted or the symptoms decrease in severity and duration.

Influenzinum is a homeopathic preparation of the vaccine that is manufactured each year. It is suggested that you take it once a week during the flu season and more often if you are exposed in an office situation or by direct contact with an infected person. At the first sign of symptoms developing you can take it 2-3 times a day and stop once symptomatic

relief is obtained.

Another remedy to think of when the symptoms are vague and not fully developed yet there is a low grade fever is Ferrum Phosphoricum. This will either take care of the problem or allow a new symptom picture to present itself for evaluation.

The very worst flu is the one for which Eupatorium Perfoliatum works brilliantly. The pains experienced are as if your bones were breaking. The muscles of your back and neck ache as well. There is a severe fever and a raw feeling in the pit of the throat. A characteristic symptom is the desire for cold water even though you feel very cold. This flu can develop in persons recently exposed to very cold temperatures or in the person who has run himself down with “partying”. Perfectly suited to those who fall ill after the holiday reveries.

Gelsemium is a remedy that is characterized by great weakness. It is even difficult to keep the eyelids open. This flu comes on slowly with a feeling of great prostration and dizziness. The mental dullness, trembling and weakness is like that experienced before taking an examination or during stage fright. Thus, this is a good selection for children of school age who become ill after mid-terms or final examinations or for anyone after a grief or receiving bad news. Gelsemium is also a very important remedy to consider in one who is never well since the flu. In a case where the weakness lingers after the flu, take another dose or two of Gelsemium to complete the case.

We are all familiar with the flu that has us running to the bathroom all night. Arsenicum Album is a remedy to think of when there is burning diarrhea, the type that excoriates the skin. The person who has this type of flu is very restless to the point of experiencing great anxiety over his health. They are indeed worse at night when they are more irritable. In general, these are oversensitive people who tend to be fastidious and do not like things out of order. The pain is maddening to them and they suffer great anguish to the point where they think they may die from this flu.

The stomach flu is one that has both vomiting and diarrhea. Spasms of the stomach and intestine are the characteristics of the remedy NuxVomica. This remedy is particularly suited for the person who has these symptoms and has a nervous and excitable temperament. This is the person who is an ambitious type with a love of power and who can be angry and impatient. They love stimulants and good food and wine. This person may develop the stomach flu after overindulgences. Again, we might find the stomach flu prevalent after the holidays.

There are as many remedy pictures to select from as there are personalities in people. These are only a few that we tend to see often in practice. In self care, all you really need to do is to take a look at your own sensitivities and note “what makes you sick and what makes you tick”. Intuitive wisdom will direct you to the relative ballpark of remedies to choose from. You can consult a professional homeopath for more guidance or you can read any number of homeopathic books written for the lay person. A good book for beginners is EASY HOMEOPATHY by Edward Shalts, MD. I recommend that every family have a simple kit of remedies for home use. Cindy Crawford recently appeared on the Oprah Winfrey show brandishing her homeopathy kit and “how-to” book exclaiming that she is the doctor in her family and wouldn’t go anywhere without it. I recommend Washington Homeopathics (www.homeopathyworks.com) for kits, single and combination remedies and books.