

Understanding Homeopathy

A brief look at its practical application

(2nd edition)

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AT HOME CARE FOR SIMPLE ILLNESSES...

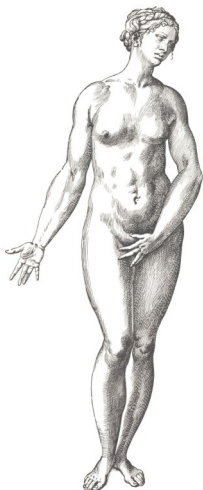
This booklet is aimed at individuals who want to use homeopathy to treat simple illnesses for themselves, their family members and companion animals. For the purposes of this booklet, simple illnesses include:

Indisposition: A minor complaint where one feels “lousy”, but the condition usually resolves itself of its own accord (e.g. hang-over). The real treatment is to remove the cause (e.g. don’t drink to excess).

Simple First Aid: A condition that arises from trauma caused by external forces (e.g. insect bites, 1st degree burns, sprains). Trauma can be physical, emotional or have aspects of both (e.g. shock from an accident).

Uncomplicated Acute Maladies: These conditions (e.g. winter flu, chicken pox) usually last between 7-10 days and generally have a pattern of development (e.g. incubation stage, early symptom stage, late symptom stage) and resolution. Such illnesses will resolve without treatment, but could lead to complications (e.g. major acute or chronic disease) if one is not careful.

Homeopathy is a holistic alternative (or complimentary) health system that can be easily applied in the home to self-treat simple or common ailments.

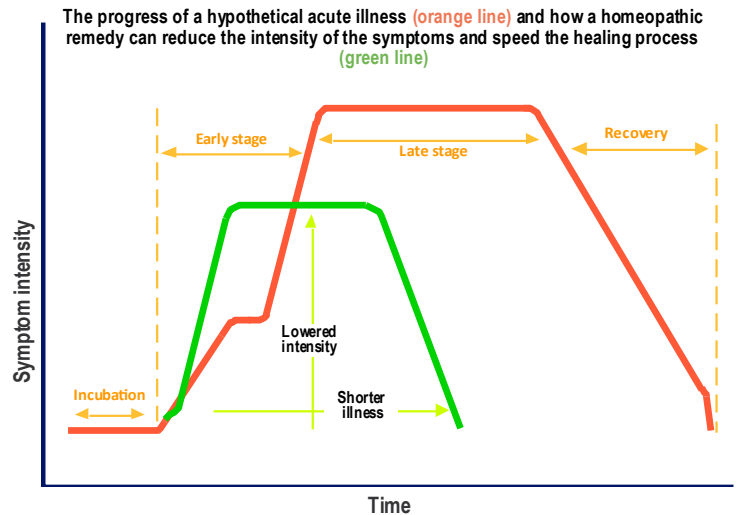


For the sake of clarity, simple illnesses do NOT include:

Serious Trauma or Complicated Acute Maladies: While homeopathy can help in life threatening situations, emergency medical help should always be sought.

Chronic Conditions: Homeopathy is often a very successful therapeutic option for chronic conditions, particularly where a diagnosis cannot be made or there is no known cause. In these situations, the individual should seek help from a qualified and experienced homeopathic practitioner.

Although simple illnesses can resolve themselves without either conventional or alternative medical treatment, homeopathy can help by **reducing the intensity of the symptoms and/or speeding up the healing process** (as illustrated in the figure to the right).



WHERE HOMEOPATHIC REMEDIES COME FROM...

Homeopathic remedies are made from all sorts of things that can be found in our environment, including:

- Healthy plants and plant parts e.g. Belladonna (or deadly nightshade)
- Altered plants or plant parts e.g. Carbo vegetabilis (or charcoal)
- Healthy animals and animal parts e.g. Apis mellifica (or bee venom)
- Diseased animals or animal parts e.g. Carcinosinum (or cancerous tissue)
- Micro-organisms and viruses e.g. Morgan pure (or bowel flora)
- Natural minerals e.g. Kali carbonicum (or potassium carbonate)
- Man-made chemicals e.g. Kreosotum (or creosote)
- Electromagnetic radiation e.g. Sol (or sunshine)

More than 4,000 remedies are now available, and each is made by professional homeopathic pharmacists to exact internationally-recognised standards.

Homeopathic remedies can be purchased off-the-shelf in New Zealand from pharmacies and health shops in the 30c potency or lower (more about potency later). Some homeopaths also provide a dispensing service. Dedicated homeopathic pharmacies (located in Wellington and Tauranga) ship remedies by mail order.

Some retailers carry brand-name combination homeopathic products. A combination product includes a number of homeopathic remedies that is often indicated for the particular condition for which the product is being sold. While the product may be used successfully, it is probable that only one of the remedies included in the combination is the remedy that is actually required. This means that more medicine will be taken than is actually needed. This goes against the philosophy of homeopathy (particularly that of classical homeopathy) and not generally advisable.



MAKING A HOMEOPATHIC REMEDY...

The process of making a remedy includes both **dilution** and addition of “energy” through a very active mixing process called **succussion**. Succussion is literally holding the mixing bottle and sharply striking it against a firm surface such as the heel of the palm or a book.

The **potency** of a remedy indicates the number of times the starting material (e.g. plant) has been diluted and succussed. As the potency increases, the starting material gets more and more dilute and more and more energy is added.

Homeopaths use several scales to designate a remedy's potency.

The **c scale** is the one used most often in New Zealand, EU and UK. For this scale, the starting material is diluted 1 drop into 99 drops at each step. So for example, a remedy that is at 30c potency has been diluted 1 drop into 99 drops for 30 times.

The **x scale** is the one used most often in the USA. For this scale, the starting material is diluted 1 drop into 9 drops at each step. Occasionally, remedies prepared via the x scale will be found in New Zealand.

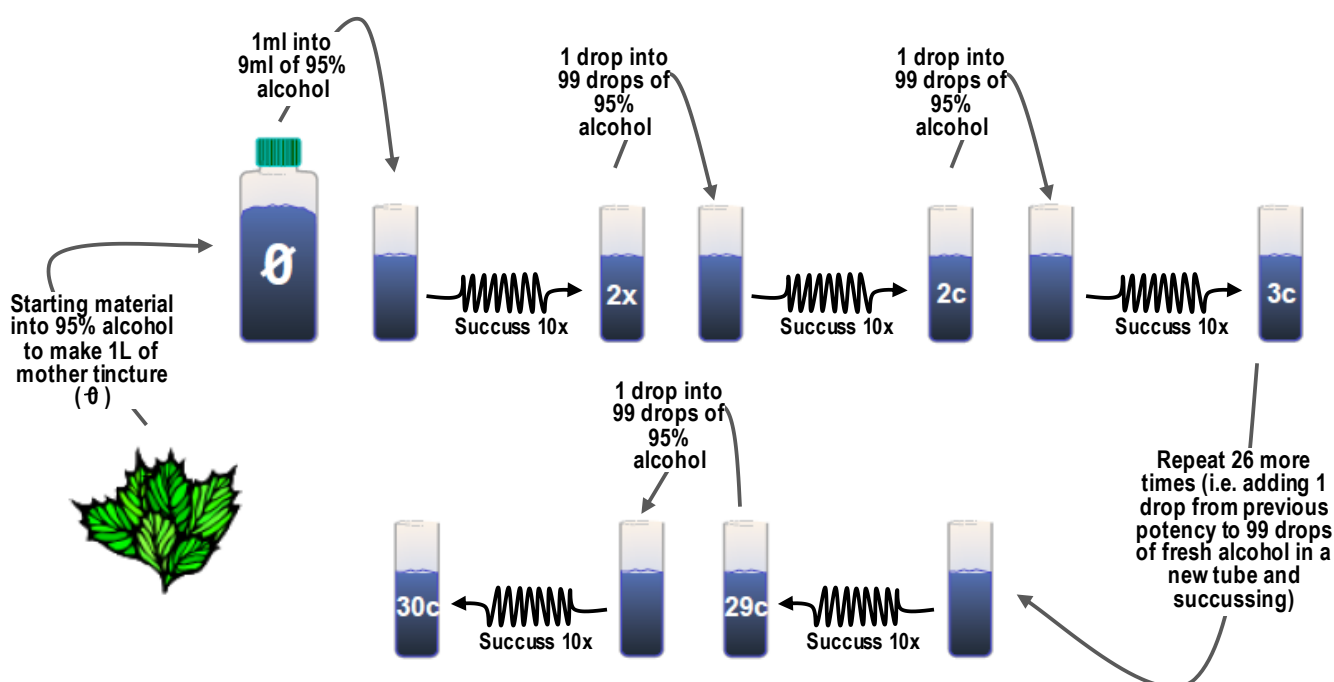
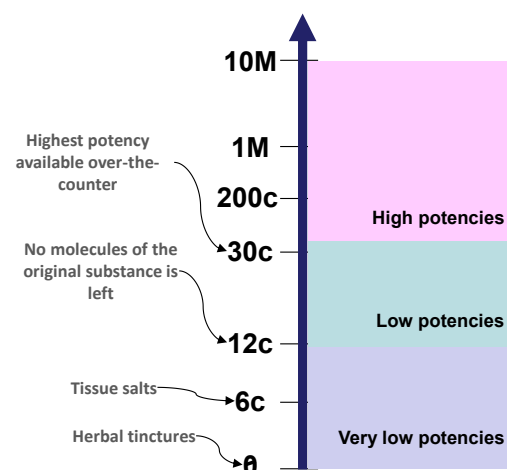
The two scales are not entirely convertible. Although 24x and 12c are equivalent in terms of dilution, they are different in terms of the number of times they have been succussed. To date, no one has done a robust study to determine if this difference is important.

A third scale is the **Q scale** (or also known as the **LM scale**). For this scale, the starting material is diluted 1 drop to 49,999 drops at each step. This scale is most often used when the individual is highly sensitive and needs a very gentle medicine or when the remedy needs to be taken daily for a long time or when the remedy is being taken along side particularly powerful conventional medication (e.g. during chemotherapy).

Typical working potencies are so dilute that no measurable molecules of the original starting material are left! This use of infinitesimally dilute and energised remedies is one of the differences between homeopathy and conventional medicine.

The diagram below shows how a homeopathic remedy from a plant is made. Similar processes are used for remedies made from other starting materials such as minerals and animal parts.

C scale dilution



HOW TO STORE AND HANDLE REMEDIES CORRECTLY...

Store remedies in a cool, dry place away from strong odours and direct sunlight and other electromagnetic radiation (e.g. refrigerators and computers).

Shake pillules into the container cap for transfer to mouth or drink bottle. Avoid touching the pillules directly because the remedy can be absorbed through the skin. If you handle the remedy when giving it to someone else (like a family member or pet), you will also be “taking” it when you don’t need to.

PROVING REMEDIES...

When a remedy is made from a new substance for the first time, we don’t know what symptoms the remedy can mirror (and therefore what disease* it can treat). To learn this, the remedy is taken by a group of healthy adult human volunteers**. As symptoms begin to appear in each individual volunteer, these are noted down and compared among the whole group of test subjects. This process is called **proving**.

The assemblage of all the key symptoms arising among test subjects during a proving creates a **remedy picture**. The remedy picture tells us about the “essence” or “personality” of that remedy.

These remedy pictures are catalogued into books called **material medica**. The counter part to the material medica is a **repertory**, which is a book that lists symptoms and all the remedies that can generate those symptoms.

Homeopaths use the material medica and repertory together to select the remedy whose remedy picture best mirrors the individual’s symptom picture.

In recent years, the materia medica and repertory texts have been converted to electronic formats and information databases, making the matching of symptoms to remedy that much quicker and easier.

A professional-level material medica and repertory are far too complicated for treating simple ailments at home. Instead, obtain a homeopathic therapeutic book which lists leading remedies and their typical symptom pictures for a number of common ailments. These therapeutic books can be found in most local bookshops. For your own peace of mind and safety, chose books that give clear and straightforward advice, not only as to which homeopathic remedy to use, but also when emergency or professional medical help should be sought.

A proving is the principle of “like cures like” in action...what can cause the symptoms in a healthy individual can treat the same symptoms in a sick individual.

* “Disease” is used here in the homeopathic context, referring to the situation where an individual is experiencing ill health. It is not intended to refer to precise conventional medical definitions of particular health conditions.

** Homeopathic remedies are never tested on animals or sick people.

HOW TO SELECT THE BEST REMEDY...

The key to good remedy selection is **good observation**. Take a step back, look at your family member and ask yourself, “What stands out about his/her illness?” or “What is different about him/her compared to when he/she is well?”

Is his/her manner or behaviour changed? Is he/she irritable or out-of-sorts when normally easy going? Or is he/she droopy and tired when normally quite energetic? Or is he/she whiny and clingy when normally more self-sufficient?

Does he/she want to drink a lot of fluids? Or take only little sips ? Or does he/she have no interest in





drinking anything at all? Does he/she crave particular foods or types of drinks?

Are there discharges of any kind? E.g. Lots of saliva? Runny nose? Discharge from the ear? What colour is the discharge? Is it thick or watery? Does it have a particular odour?

Do any affected body parts have a different appearance or visible change? e.g. Red throat? Swelling? Bulging eardrum? Swollen glands?

What can your family member say about his/her illness? What are the sensations he/she might be feeling? Does he/she experience:

- Pain? – What does it feel like? (e.g. stinging, stabbing, burning, sore, extending to other parts)
- Heat? – Where? How much? Does the heat

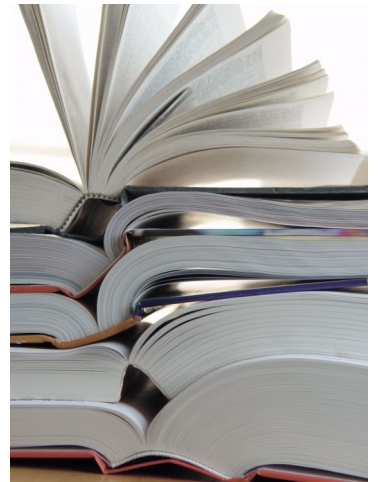
actually feel cold?

- The sensation on only one side of the body? – Which side? Has the sensation moved to the other side?

Does anything – e.g. warm drinks, cold applications, fresh air – make him/her feel better? Does he/she feel better or worse at different times of the day? (e.g. evenings, middle of the night, morning, after eating).

Is there anything else that stands out to you?

Now compare your observations with the descriptions of the remedies in your homeopathic therapeutics book to find the best match.



REMEDY ADMINISTRATION...

In classical homeopathy, only one remedy is taken at a time. This ensures that the action of the remedy can be clearly observed, the potential interaction between multiple remedies in a mixture is avoided, and the individual receives the correct amount of therapeutics for effective treatment.

Remedies can be purchased in liquid or dry form. There are a number of ways that adults and children can take a remedy. These include:

- **Dry method:** Allow 1-2 pillules to dissolve on a clean tongue.
- **Liquid method:** Add 1-2 drops into a small amount of water and drink entirely.
- **Drink bottle method:** Add 3-4 pillules or 3-4 drops of liquid remedy to a drink bottle (e.g. 500ml or 750ml) filled with clear water and recap. Shake bottle vigorously 10 times and take a small drink. Repeat a small drink as often as needed. If required, refill the bottle with clear water and duplicate the above.

In acute situations, the remedy may need to be repeated frequently (every 10-15 min) during more intense phases of the illness. In these cases, the *drink bottle method* is very economical and an easy way to give multiple doses quickly.



For very young children, a remedy can be given through the milk bottle (similar to the “drink bottle” method). Or if a remedy is supplied in a dry form, it can be added to a small amount of

water and applied as a drop to the young child's lips. For pets, a remedy can be given in the water supply, on the food or treats or by parting the fur and applying a drop to the skin.

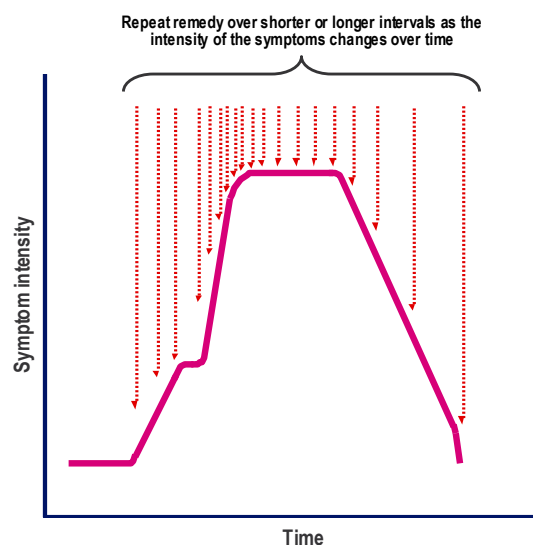
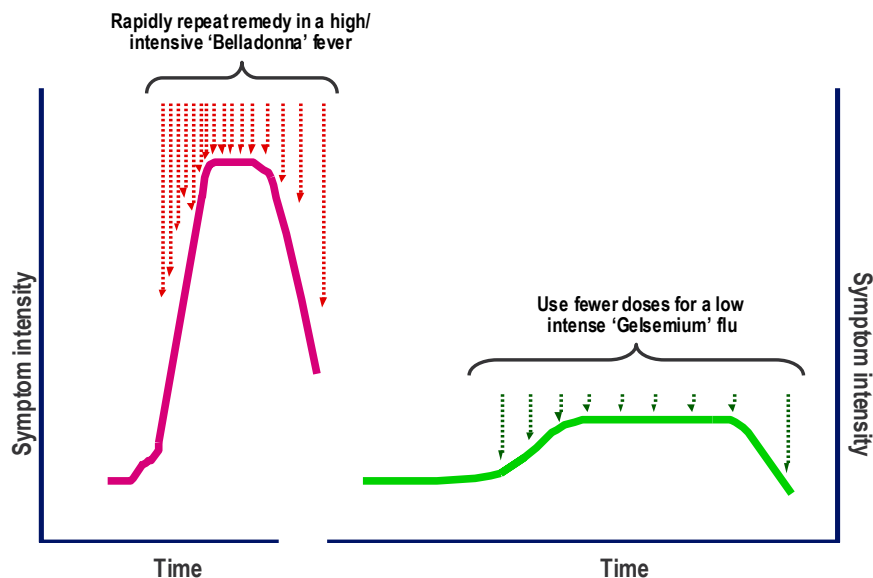
What is important in homeopathy is not the amount of remedy that is taken at any one time, but the **number of repetitions**. For example, 10 pillules taken all at the same time is one dose. But one pillule taken every 5-6 minutes for an hour is 10 doses.

Thus, just as you want to match the choice of the remedy to the symptoms of the illness, you will want to match the 'strength' of the remedy to the 'strength' of the illness.

At home, you may use remedies at only 30c or lower potencies. Because you don't have the range of potencies that a professional homeopath might use, you should match the 'strength' of the situation through repeated doses of the selected remedy.

For example, in a droopy '**Gelsemium situation**' (i.e. classical flu where the individual feels extremely tired and has a low fever and chills, repeat the remedy infrequently (see diagram above). Contrast this to a high impact '**Belladonna situation**' (i.e. intensely hot rapid-onset fever, delirium and convulsions) where the remedy needs to be repeated very frequently.

The 'strength' of the situation may change over time ...sometimes in a matter of minutes. For example (see diagram to left), a strong onset of the illness can shift lower as the illness continues or as the remedy begins to act. When this happens, begin to space the remedy out accordingly.



SO, SOME RULES OF THUMB...

Situation	Example case of the flu...	Suggested repetition
Very low situations	Extremely sleepy...can do nothing but lay in bed dozing.	1 dose every 6 hours
Low situations	Lethargic but awake and quietly reading.	1 dose every 3-4 hours
Moderate situations	Moderately up and about, but can settle for naps.	1 dose every 30- 60 minutes
High situations	Restless and needs to keep active.	1 dose every 10-15 minutes
Very high situations	Very restless and fidgeting, high fevers with agitation and delusions.	1 dose every 1-2 minutes



HOW TO KNOW YOU HAVE PICKED THE RIGHT REMEDY...

A **well-selected remedy will cause a change** of some sort. The medical condition may not resolve immediately, but the current symptoms the individual is experiencing should become less intense. For example, a high Belladonna fever will come down below 42 degrees Celsius. Or the child with a grumpy Bryonia flu (i.e. where even moving her eyes hurts!) may relax enough to pick up a book and quietly read until falling asleep.

Alternatively, the change may result in something useful happening. For example, the hung-over adult with persistent nausea (e.g. a feeling like “if only I could vomit I’m sure I would feel so much better...”) takes Nux vomica and 10 minutes later vomits and finds relief (plus there is less alcohol for his system to process).

Other changes can include improved disposition, desire to sleep, increased appetite or thirst levels.

Anything that looks or feels positive is a good indication that the remedy was well chosen and should be continued as needed.

If you give a remedy for 3-4 doses and no change or improvement is seen, then stop that remedy and move on to your second choice.

For acute illnesses where there are several stages, you may need to change remedies as the illness moves into a new phase.

Remember to:

- Reduce the number of repetitions as the intensity of the symptoms decrease.
- Stop repeating the remedy when the condition has resolved.
- Move onto another indicated remedy if there is no initial improvement (because it was the wrong remedy) or no further improvement (because a new remedy is needed).

WHAT CAN INTERFERE WITH THE ACTION OF THE REMEDY...

Some people have found that strong tastes (e.g. peppermint and wintergreen), strong odours (e.g. camphor, Vicks, menthol and eucalyptus), and mood altering substances (e.g. coffee, energy drinks and recreational drugs) can interfere with the action of the remedy.



THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY...

To better understand the history, philosophy and theory of homeopathy, read ***Understanding Homeopathy: A brief look at its history, philosophy and theory***, also by this author.

SOURCE BOOKS...

Cummings, S and Ullman, D (1997) *Everybody's Guide to Homeopathic Medicines*. New York, USA: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.

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SOURCE PHOTOS...

Royalty free photos from 123RF (www.123rf.com) and Dreamstime (www.dreamstime.com)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR...



Lora Hagemann is a registered member of the New Zealand Council of Homeopaths. She provides personalised services to her clients to help them achieve their positive health goals. Positively healthy people live full and satisfying lives despite the inevitable ups and downs because they have reserves of physical, mental and emotional resilience.

Lora welcomes working with other professionals (in both conventional and alternative therapies) to provide integrate health solutions that are effective and safe.

