

Homœopathy for Coughs, Colds and Flu.

'Acute' refers to any condition that is self-limiting and short-lived. There is a period of exacerbation followed by a decline of symptoms and recovery. The body's defence mechanism is usually able to resolve the condition on its own.

As a general rule, if the acute ailment is within the normal range, allow your body to deal with it on its own. This is the best way to develop a strong immune system. However, if your symptoms are severe, you are in pain or you are uncomfortable or the illness does not improve within the time you would expect, then homœopathy may help.

Resist the urge to take any medicine to suppress an acute illness coming on, including homœopathy.

Resist the urge to take a homœopathic medicine at the first hint of sickness. Once your acute illness has fully expressed itself, the symptom picture will be much clearer to help you select the most indicated medicine.

The aim of homœopathy in the treatment of acute conditions is to accelerate the natural processes of the body, to relieve pain and suffering and to help speed up recovery.

The following are examples of homœopathic medicines used in first aid prescribing. It should be noted that it is recommended to complete a Homœopathy in the Home course to learn how to differentiate between medicines and how to apply them in each case. They should be used in conjunction with appropriate regular first aid treatment if indicated.

Always seek medical advice in emergencies.



Common Cold

A common cold is an illness caused by a virus. The virus is transmitted by airborne particles, usually spread by sneezing or coughing. Once the virus enters the nasal passages, it begins to reproduce. Within 8 – 12 hours, the virus has incubated and signs and symptoms will start to develop.

Symptoms include sneezing, runny and/or blocked nose, sore throat, cough and mild general symptoms like headache, feverishness, chilliness, tiredness and feeling generally unwell.

Colds last on average for one week, with the first few days being the worst. Occasionally, severe colds may last up to two weeks. Often people use the word 'flu' when they have a common cold, however there is a big difference. Influenza is much more severe and debilitating (see below).

It is healthy to have a couple of colds a year. They keep the immune system firing and provide the opportunity for some rest and recuperation. It is important to listen to your body, rest, eat good food and stay warm. Usually the body can deal with a cold without external assistance. However, when symptoms are out of the normal range, you are experiencing excessive discomfort or not recovering well, then homœopathy can help. Here are a few suggested medicines and their indications.

Aconite: For the first stage of any cold that has come on suddenly after exposure to a cold wind, becoming chilled or from fright. If given in the first 48 hours after such a causation, it may avert the progression into a fully blown cold. Symptoms include a croupy cough, hot, watery nasal discharge, red, hot and dry sore throat with a choking sensation when swallowing. There is intense thirst for cold drinks and people feel anxious and restless.

Allium cepa: Profuse watery nasal discharge that drips like a tap, burns and irritates the nose and upper lip. The eyes and nose run as if they were peeling an onion. Eyes run, but the discharge is not irritating. Feel worse in a warm room and worse in damp cold weather. Strong hunger and thirst.

Arsenicum album: Thin, irritating or burning watery nasal discharge with sneezing. The nose feels blocked while it runs. People needing Arsenicum feel anxious, chilly and restless. They are needy and demanding and don't want to be left alone. Better for heat and open air. They are inclined to be wrapped up in blankets, with all the windows open. Very thirsty for small sips.

Kali bichromicum: Thick, stringy, yellow-green nasal discharge and post nasal drip. Colds that develop into sinus infections where there is pressure in the sinuses and pain at the root of the nose. The person complains of wandering aches and pains in small spots. Ripe or late-stage colds, with cough where the mucous is hard to expectorate because it is so stringy and thick. Better for heat and motion.

Pulsatilla: For a ripe cold with thick, bland, yellow-green mucous. The child is weepy, whiny and clingy and wants to be cuddled and carried. Lack of thirst and the cold is better for going outside. Nose is blocked and can't smell. Worse in a stuffy or warm room. Desires to eat butter or ice cream.

Coughs

A cough is a natural process of the body to help get rid of irritating substances from the airway. A cough is triggered by an irritant, which sets up a chain reaction that results in air in the lungs being forced out at high pressure.

Coughs may be caused by an infectious disease, such as a viral upper respiratory tract infection, a cold, flu, acute bronchitis, pneumonia or whooping cough. Coughs may also originate from noninfectious causes. These include exacerbations or flare ups of a chronic illness, such as bronchitis or asthma, allergies and emphysema.

Homœopathic medicines can help relieve the symptoms of irritating coughs during the acute phase. They can also be used in chronic conditions to decrease the incidence and intensity of acute exacerbations of their chronic state. This is called constitutional treatment, which helps to build resilience in the person over time and requires a consultation with a professional homœopath.

Always consult a professional homœopath or medical practitioner for assessment if the cough is outside the normal range, is accompanied by fever, chest pain, shortness of breath, exhaustion or thick yellow, green, brown or bloody mucous.

These medicines are a few commonly indicated ones for acute cough. Once you have completed the Homœopathy in the Home course, you will feel confident in understanding how to select the most appropriate one.

For more specific information on whooping cough, please refer to my blog on this topic: [Whooping Cough – Your Comprehensive Resource](#).

Antimonium tartaricum: Loose rattling cough without much mucous coming up. Bronchial tubes are full of mucous with rapid, short, difficult breathing. People needing Ant tart tend to be irritable and whining and want to be left alone. They hate to be looked at or touched. The cough is accompanied by overpowering sleepiness. Better for getting the mucous out and better for cold open air.

Bryonia: Hard, dry cough that is worse for the slightest movement. Motion or coughing causes pain in the chest, so people needing Bryonia tend to hold onto their chest to stop it moving when they cough. Cough with shortness of breath and a desire to take a deep breath, but it makes the cough worse. Lips and mouth are extremely dry and there is great thirst for cold drinks.

Drosera: Violent fits of hard coughing with choking; can barely breathe while coughing. Dry, barking, croupy, spasmodic cough that ends in gagging or vomiting. There is a sensation of dryness and irritation in the larynx – as if from crumbs. Cough is worse lying down in bed and worse at night and after midnight. It is one of the medicines you would think of for Whooping Cough.

Hepar sulphuris: Cough after exposure to cold or from getting chilled. For croupy, barking or whooping cough. The cough is dry or loose, but difficult to bring up mucous. The person feels very chilly and extremely irritable and restless. The cough is worse for cold drafts or cold air and better for rugging up.

Rumex: Coughs come in fits, with constant, dry, irritating tickling. There are pains in the chest, which are burning, sore and stitching. The throat feels raw. The cough is worse lying down and for breathing in cold air, fresh air or a change of temperature from warm to cold; worse for talking, for uncovering and in the morning on waking. The sensitivity to cold is noticeable in that people will cover their mouth and head so that only warm air is inhaled. Mucous coughed up gets stuck in the back of the throat.

Spongia: Barking, dry, hollow-sounding cough. Comes in fits, is irritating and tickly. Breathing is difficult and the chest feels sore and bruised from coughing. The voice is hoarse to crowing and people feel better after eating or drinking – especially warm things. The cough is worse after a sleep and worse with exercise. Also indicated for bronchitis, where the bronchial tubes are inflamed.

Influenza (flu)

Influenza is an infectious viral illness that infects the upper airways and lungs. It is an airborne virus and is spread by infected people coughing or sneezing. Symptoms usually appear one to four days after being exposed to the virus and people are infectious one to two days before they become unwell and up to five days after symptoms develop.

Symptoms include fever and chills, dry cough, muscle and joint aching, tiredness to extreme exhaustion, headache, sore throat and a runny or stuffy nose (usually less than the common cold). Recovery is usually within seven to ten days, however, tiredness and cough may persist for longer. Some epidemics have accompanying nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea and tend to be called 'gastric flu'.

The flu virus is unstable and changes its structure continuously. There are many new strains each year. The flu vaccine comprises three strains from the previous year. For this reason, it is generally acknowledged that vaccination does not guarantee immunity.

From a homœopathic perspective, not everyone exposed to the flu will 'catch it'. You are more likely to contract it if you are run down or depleted in some way. Homœopathic medicines can greatly relieve the symptoms, ease suffering and speed up recovery. However, as the illness progresses, the medicines may change according to the symptom progression. For example, Gelsemium may relieve the symptoms of aching, malaise and headache. But should the illness progress to the chest, then this will require a different medicine that matches the new totality of symptoms.

Here are a few medicines you would consider for the flu.

Arsenicum: Is the medicine you'd think of when there are gastric symptoms with the flu and great chilliness, extreme restlessness and prostration. They feel so unwell that they think they may die. These are terrible patients. Nothing pleases them and they complain about everything.

Eupatorium perfoliatum: Flu with deep aching in the bones and muscles; sore and bruised as if the bones are broken. Feel restless but need to keep still as it hurts to move. With sneezing, headache and cough. Chills occur between 7-9am and make them feel

better. Worse for cold air and coughing and the sight and smell of food. Better for company and perspiration. Desire for cold food and drinks.

Gelsemium: One of the most prescribed medicines for flu where there is exhaustion and aching muscles throughout the body. The mind feels extremely dull, with dizziness, drowsiness. The body feels heavy – even lifting the eyelids is difficult. They just want to lie down and sleep. There is dull pain and chills up and down the spine and extreme chilliness where you just can't get warm.

Oscillocochinum: If taken at the first sign of flu, before symptoms have started to emerge, this medicine may help prevent the onset. It is one of the well known flu prevention medicines. There is a fear of contagious disease, with frequent washing of hands. Headaches are throbbing and bursting; earache like needles; fever and chills and muscle aches. Eyes are inflamed and the nose is blocked and clear alternately. They feel better for heat and rest.

Rhus toxicodendron: Flu with extreme muscle aching and stiffness and a constant desire to move and stretch to find a comfortable position. Flus that come on from overexertion or getting cold and wet. Muscles ache, but feel better with continued motion. People feel worse for staying in one position for too long and better for heat and movement.

Summary

These are a few of the most commonly prescribed medicines for the above conditions. For anyone who has completed the Homoeopathy in the Home course, some of these medicines you will recognise as old friends. There are also some new ones that may not be in your first aid kits. If you are an experienced home prescriber and would like to add any of these to your kit, please let me know and I will arrange to get them for you.

For any acute complaint that presents differently to the suggestions above, or if you are unsure about dosage, see a registered homœopath for an individualised prescription. If you feel too unwell to leave home for a consult, please call and arrange a phone or skype call.

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