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Introduction to homeopathic home prescribing

This handout is designed to give you a bit of background information about home prescribing with homeopathic remedies. Homeopathic remedies can be safely used at home for straight forward first aid and acute illnesses as long as you have a little bit of knowledge – the most obvious remedy that many people know is Arnica for knocks and bruises. Remedies for home prescribing can be obtained from high street chemists and many health food stores- and also from Neal's Yard. The first thing is to decide whether or not the situation- the illness or condition- is within the scope of home prescribing or whether you need some expert help. As a rule of thumb, you could have a go at treating simple acute illnesses yourself but should seek help with more intense or complex acutes or with acutes that repeat e.g. repeated bouts of earache, colds or sore throats. Also seek help with chronic illness. Here's a brief explanation of the difference:

Acute and chronic illness

Acute illnesses are those that have a definite cause e.g. an accident, injury or an infection. They usually start quite suddenly and they're the sort of thing that the body can recover from by itself- although it may need a bit of help to speed up or ease the recovery process. So acute illnesses also have a definite end- hopefully recovery. Examples of acute illnesses that you might consider treating yourself with homeopathy include minor accidents such as minor burns, bruises and sprains and infections such as coughs, colds, sore throat and tummy upsets. Some acute illnesses such as pneumonia, meningitis, nephritis (when cystitis goes to the kidneys), whooping cough can be serious and even, rarely result in fatality. These are beyond the scope of a home prescriber and expert advice should always be sought.

Chronic diseases are long-term illnesses that generally develop slowly and are more deep-seated. They are often accompanied by a general deterioration in health and it's not usually possible to say how long they might last. These need expert advice from a qualified homeopath or other medical practitioner and include conditions such as arthritis, eczema, IBS, mental illness cancers etc. etc.

If you're starting out as a home prescriber the best way to start is with simple 'first-aid' type conditions. Good examples are remedies that can speed up recovery from bruises, strains and sprains, insect bites, minor burns, wounds, upset stomachs etc. Generally, the more definite and obvious the cause the easier to treat!

Choosing the right remedy

Homeopathic remedies have what we call '*remedy pictures*' which we need to match to the '*symptom picture*' in order to decide the correct remedy. Let's take a cough as an example. There are different remedies that would suit different types of coughs- some coughs are hacking, some are barking, some are dry some tickling etc. These symptoms help us choose the right remedy. We also take into account what we call the *modalities* e.g is the cough worse for lying down? worse in the morning? better for fresh air? etc. But homeopathic remedies also have an emotional picture e.g the child who's become clingy and weepy with her cough might need Pulsatilla whilst someone with a Bryonia type cough might want to be left alone and may not want to move around – they might be grumpy if they're disturbed.

Doses and Potency

Potency: Homeopathic remedies come in different potencies. High street chemists and health food stores tend to stock 6C and 30C potencies though you might come across 6X, and 12C too. An X potency is lower- less strong- than a C potency and then the bigger the number the higher the potency and the stronger the action of the remedy. So in order of potency- lowest strength to getting higher- is 6X, 6C 12C and 30C. These potencies are all fine to use in home prescribing.

Dose: As a rule of thumb the more intense, urgent and serious the condition the more often you will need to repeat the dose. For a minor bruise or a minor burn you might need just one dose. To aid the healing of a sprain you might take 3 doses a day and for really bad, painful earache you might need to repeat as often as every 10- 30 minutes.

Dosage guidelines

- If you have prescribed between 3-6 pills according to the seriousness of the case and there is no improvement then stop- you probably have the wrong remedy and need to reassess or seek help.
- As improvement begins repeat less often as the patient continues to improve.
- When you see a definite, marked improvement STOP REPEATING the dose and WAIT. This is directly opposite to a lot of conventional medicines where you keep repeating until you've finished the course of treatment.
- If the same symptoms get a little worse again or stop improving repeat the dose.
- Change the remedy if the symptom picture changes.

But start by practising with the less serious, less intense conditions to get a feel for what homeopathy can do and always seek advice when you're not sure.

Importantly, if a condition is not too painful, or causing discomfort and the patient looks like they're getting better by themselves then don't treat!! I personally think this is especially important with minor childhood illnesses. As long as a child is making good recovery, with a bit of rest, and is not in too much pain or discomfort, then

allowing their bodies to heal by themselves will help to build their immune system. In our quick- fix society we sometimes reach for the medicines too quickly!

More information

My favourite books on home prescribing are written by Miranda Castro:

“The Complete Homeopathy Handbook: A Guide to Everyday Health Care” and
“Homeopathy for Pregnancy, Birth & Your Baby's First Years”. If you're interested in home prescribing I strongly recommend these.

Homeopathic remedy kits can be bought from Helios Pharmacy. If you get into using homeopathy at home more regularly these are good to have and contain a good selection of most of the remedies that you might need for common illnesses and minor injuries.

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