

THE **Beginner's Guide** **to** **homeopathy**

continuing our major partwork



LABOUR AND CHILDBIRTH

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For most women, homeopathic medicine can help enormously in the run-up to the birth of a baby and in avoiding or reducing some of the problems associated with labour, as well as in dealing with post-natal symptoms. This is the follow-up to the article 'Common problems in pregnancy', that was published in our Spring issue

False labour

Labour-like contractions may occur in the last few weeks of pregnancy and are felt irregularly, usually in the lower part of the abdomen. These are said to occur because the uterus (womb) is 'toning-up' in preparation for the birth. If the contractions become very frequent or regular, or if there is a 'show' of blood, the doctor or midwife should be called.

Symptoms: Contractions that occur early in the pregnancy. Pain shoots across the abdomen, causing doubling up.

Medicine: Cimicifuga

Symptoms: Contractions that occur in the last few weeks of pregnancy

Medicine: Caulophyllum

Symptoms: Pain goes up the back and into the hips

Medicine: Gelsemium

Symptoms: Colicky, cramp-like pains

Medicine: Viburnum opulus

Dosage: Use the 12c potency. Take every hour until the pains cease.

Preparing for delivery

Taking Caulophyllum in the last weeks of the pregnancy and Arnica before delivery will minimise much of the bruising and bleeding. Caulophyllum is also said to 'tone up' the uterus, helping to produce good contractions and lessening the chances of becoming over tired during labour.

Symptoms: Reduces the bruising and bleeding of normal labour

Medicine: Arnica montana

Dosage: Arnica should be taken in the highest potency you can obtain — the 10m potency powder form if possible. If not,

use the 30c potency in powder form. If you cannot obtain a powder, simply crush one tablet for one dose. Take one dose at the start of labour and one during labour just before delivery. It is useful to take a 30c dose three times a day for three days after the birth of the baby.

Symptoms: Used routinely to help uterine contractions and to bring about a smooth delivery

Medicine: Caulophyllum

Dosage: Caulophyllum should be taken in the 30c potency — three doses on the same day each week from the 34th week onwards. There is no clinical evidence that this homeopathic medicine causes women to go into labour too early. This is specifically mentioned because Caulophyllum in normal — that is, non-homeopathic doses — may cause early labour. Used homeopathically, it is given to prevent premature labour and to help normal labour.

Symptoms: May help if there was heavy bleeding in a previous pregnancy

Medicine: Millefolium

Dosage: Millefolium should be taken in the 30c potency. Take three doses on one day in the last week of the pregnancy.

In early labour

A normal pregnancy lasts for 40 weeks. For a few weeks before the birth occasional painless 'contractions' may be felt in the lower abdomen (see False Labour above). When labour proper begins, the contractions become noticeable but may be infrequent and irregular. As labour proceeds, they become more frequent and occur at regular intervals. They may also produce some discomfort. At first they are often felt in the back. The start of labour may be indicated by a small blood loss called a 'show'.

At some stage the membranes in which the baby is contained will rupture, producing a loss of a watery fluid from the vagina. This is perfectly normal. The actual duration of labour varies tremendously, but is lengthier with a first pregnancy, so there is usually plenty of time in which to get to hospital or for the midwife to arrive if delivery is to be at home.

Symptoms: When the labour pains are frequent but irregular. A good remedy if restless, anxious and frightened and convinced of dying during labour

Medicine: Aconitum

Symptoms: Painful labour, with the pain starting in lower back and radiating to inner part of the thighs. The woman may be over-excited and angry, and resent being examined. Intolerance of pain

Medicine: Chamomilla

Symptoms: Spasmodic irregular pains in the small of the back. Feelings of exhaustion and being out of control

Medicine: Cocculus

Symptoms: Contractions are very painful but ineffective. The woman is restless and agitated.

Medicine: Coffea cruda

Symptoms: Intermittent, relatively painless contractions with little progress. Excessive tiredness

Medicine: Gossypium

Symptoms: Early labour pains in back

Medicine: Kali carbonicum

Dosage: Use the 12c potency. Take every 30 minutes until relief is maintained.

Immediately after delivery

The mother's main problems after the birth will be related to bruising in the birth passage and surrounding organs, such as the bladder and urethra.

With a prolonged labour, especially one that has caused much sleep deprivation, fatigue can also be a problem, but this is easily remedied by a good night's sleep. The main problems after a birth by Caesarean section tend to be those that can occur after any surgical procedure.

Most of these complications are unlikely, however, if the woman has been treated with Arnica and Caulophyllum, as described above. See also the section on After-pains below.

Symptoms: Difficulty passing urine. Restless, sleepless and frightened

Medicine: Aconitum

Symptoms: Constipation. Rectum feels sore and anus itches. Even a soft stool is passed with difficulty

Medicine: Alumina

Symptoms: Problems passing urine

Medicine: Arsenicum album

Symptoms: Irritation of the vulva. Cramp-like pains occur in the uterus (womb), mainly at night

Medicine: Caladium seguinum

Symptoms: Retention of urine, especially after a long labour

Medicine: Causticum

Symptoms: Nervousness and restlessness

Medicine: Chamomilla

Symptoms: Excited, oversensitive and suffers from insomnia. Abdominal pains

Medicine: Coffea cruda

Symptoms: Painful piles

Medicine: Collinsonia

Symptoms: Flatulence and abdominal colic

Medicine: Nux moschata

Symptoms: Back pain

Medicine: Phosphoric acid. Itching between the breasts. Apathy

Symptoms: Piles and anal prolapse occur

Medicine: Podophyllum

Symptoms: Total exhaustion and overheating

Medicine: Secale cornutum

Symptoms: To aid healing if there has been catheterization or an episiotomy

Medicine: Staphysagria

Dosage: Use the 12c potency. Take three times a day for five days.

After pains

These pains are similar to labour pains and may occur after childbirth. They are a result of the uterus (womb) contracting as it reduces to its size before the pregnancy.

The pains are more likely to occur to breastfeeding mothers as breastfeeding causes the pituitary gland to release the hormone oxytocin, which helps with milk production, and may also stimulate some uterine contractions.

Symptoms: Used routinely after all labours, especially if labour has been protracted

Medicine: Arnica montana

Symptoms: After pains with a headache, flushed face, nervousness, restlessness

Medicine: Belladonna

Symptoms: Soreness felt all through the pelvis, making walking and standing painful.

Medicine: Bellis perennis

Symptoms: Severe, cramp-like pains

Medicine: Camphora

Symptoms: Spasmodic pains occur which move across the lower abdomen, especially after a prolonged and exhausting labour. Quite specifically for after-pains.

Medicine: Caulophyllum

Symptoms: Severe pain causing great irritability

Medicine: Chamomilla

Symptoms: Intense pains like electric shocks in the groin. Agitated and intolerant of pain

Medicine: Cimicifuga

Symptoms: Pains which feel as if they are in the intestines rather than the uterus

Medicine: Cocculus

Symptoms: Extreme pain causing sleeplessness

Medicine: Coffea cruda

Symptoms: Distressing after-pains after pregnancy that is not the first

Medicine: Cuprum metallicum

Symptoms: Anxious, apprehensive, sleepless

Medicine: Gelsemium

Symptoms: Severe after-pains shoot down the thighs and are worse on the right. Pain appears to be in the rectum or the bladder

Medicine: Lac caninum

Symptoms: Large blood clots may be passed. Much flatulence

Medicine: Nux vomica

Symptoms: Pain shoots forwards from behind

Medicine: Sabina

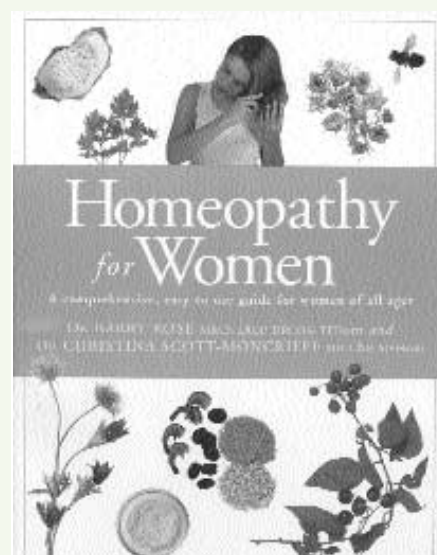
Symptoms: Pain radiates upwards. A sensation of a weight in the lower bowel. Pelvic organs feel as though they are about to drop out

Medicine: Sepia

Symptoms: Use this if there are not other symptoms and no other homeopathic remedy seems to fit

Medicine: Xanthoxylum

Dosage: Use the 30c potency. Take four times a day for two days after delivery.



This article is taken from *Homeopathy for Women* by Dr Barry Rose and Dr Christina Scott-Moncrieff, published by Collins & Brown, price £14.99, and available from all good bookshops. *Health & Homeopathy* readers, however, can purchase the book at the special price of £12.99, with free p&p, by phoning 01403 710851 and quoting offer code V-12.



“It’s like a window that will simply open of its own accord. The room goes cold, and we can do nothing but shiver. But it opens a little less each time, and a little less and one day we wonder what has become of it.” *Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden*

Coming to terms with loss

Anne Pettigrew discusses how homeopathy can be used to help people face up to the death of loved ones

Grief is among the most difficult of human sufferings that we all have to face. Before I discovered the joys of homeopathy I found grieving patients the most difficult to treat. Now I am pleased to say I know of

many homeopathic medicines which help alleviate the anguish of grief. The pain of loss can be caused by missed opportunity or an unfaithful lover, but none can compare with the bereavement experienced after the death of a close friend or relative. The

following case illustrates that a heavy heart can last for many years, silently concealed, and can cause physical illness as well.

Jean was 74. She came complaining of severe pain from the middle of her back to her thigh and knee. It could make her gasp at times and was burning and excruciating. Heat helped to alleviate the pain as well as pressure and massage. She felt worse when moving and had been treated by a physiotherapist to no avail.

Orthopaedic experts labelled the problem “wear and tear”, but offered no solution. She had also had investigations for upper tummy pain and burping, particularly when anxious. All tests were negative. She had tried treating herself with Rhus tox and many conventional pain killers, none of which had helped. She had had both backache and stomach pain in the past, though never simultaneously and she was on medication for an under-active thyroid.

My first impression of her was how sad and thin she looked. Jean’s general symptoms were as confusing as her specific ones. She was a bit chilly but didn’t like hot weather. She didn’t enjoy her food apart from fruit and chocolate and she was always thirsty, preferring lemon juice and cold water. She slept only on her left side but was waking hourly with the pain.

She seemed anxious to please with her answers to my questions but was also rather guarded. She rarely went out now, admitted no interest in company and read books when she could be bothered. The trigger to her story of grief was the simple question,

why did she not go out now?

Her brother-in-law had died. He and his wife used to accompany Jean and her husband everywhere, holidays included. She had not thought before about dying, but now she was discouraged and despondent. She was only living for her grandchildren. She kept her sadness from her husband, felt she was bad company and so kept away from people.

Before her pains she had worked actively for charity and was "very sensitive" to the suffering of others. She had lived a full life. Now she had trouble concentrating and being her usual responsible, organised self. She was anxious about trifles and had lost confidence.

This change in personality seemed a very extreme reaction to the death of someone who was not even a blood relative or spouse. I had never seen such misery for so prolonged a time in a patient of her age, previously showing no tendency to depression.

She admitted no other physical symptoms apart from a tendency to a runny nose and an occasional bout of cystitis. However, when I asked Jean about operations and pregnancies, she thought for a long time. With faltering voice she unfolded a story which moved me greatly and made me realise the depth of her grief, submerged for 34 years. She had never discussed how she felt; she thought no one would be interested and in those days she had felt chastised for her grief.

Jean had given birth to a child with incurable medical problems who had been taken to a hospital miles from her home. As she had a toddler to care for, she could not visit.

The baby had died, aged twelve weeks, and the staff of the hospital had seemed surprised that Jean had wanted to see the child to say goodbye. She had been left alone in a sluice room with the baby in a metal tray. Since then, not a day had gone past when she hadn't thought about this child and what might have been. She grieved in silence. When she had tried to speak of it once, a friend had told her it was best not to talk about it.

The loss of a child she had never held was a wound which had never properly healed. The death of her brother-in-law had re-opened the scar. The window in the Japanese metaphor had never closed. However, homeopathy edged it shut.

This lady had many features of that wonderful grief remedy, *Natrum muriaticum*. I even learned that craving lemon was attributed to it as well as chocolate. Within days of taking the medicine she was sleeping soundly and noted that she felt more optimistic. Her pains eased and her consumption of pain killers was dramatically reduced. She had cried and discussed the dead child with her husband instead of weeping alone as she had done before. After a few months and some high potency doses of *Natrum muriaticum* she was going out for meals and had arranged a holiday with her husband.

Jean suffered an extreme case of grief, but there are many homeopathic medicines which can be easily used in the early stages of grief. *Aconite* is the remedy for shock, and *Ignatia* is unsurpassed to reduce the awful weeping and inappropriate laughter that

afflicts some at this difficult time. If patients have prolonged symptoms it can be a challenge to choose a remedy and professional advice should be sought. Without specialist knowledge it can be difficult to decide amongst the many remedies listed under Grief in the repertory.

Examples include the exhausted, apathetic and forgetful picture of *Phosphoric acid* and the paralysing numbness after a traumatic loss of those who may benefit from homeopathic *Opium*, one of the few homeopathic remedies only available on prescription.

Compassionate friends may recognise the stages of a grieving process by instinct: the numb shock, the denial, the guilt about something the bereaved could have done to prevent the death. It seems a pity to me that so often we are all too busy to understand and support bereaved friends and neighbours.



If people show signs of remaining stuck in one stage of grieving or repress their grief or do not re-awaken to the joys of life, we should be ready to steer them towards medical help. We must also hope that medical help will include homeopathic remedies. They can be wonderfully helpful in such situations as Jean would certainly agree.

Anne Pettigrew MFHom, a West of Scotland GP for 22 years, has found homeopathy invaluable in her practice especially in women's health and psychiatry. Patients appreciate its low cost and lack of side effects.

Anne is also GP representative on the Council of the Faculty of Homeopathy and a regular columnist with *Doctor* magazine.

Homeopathic treatment of children

Many of us first experience the potential of homeopathy when treating ourselves or our families. We usually start with some simple remedies for minor problems such as bruises. However, as *Bob Leckridge* points out, the potential for homeopathy is much greater and it is a useful treatment for many of the more chronic and more serious problems that occur in childhood . . .



The problems I see frequently in the outpatients' department of the homeopathic hospital where I work include asthma, eczema, behavioural and sleep problems (including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Aspergers and Autism), epilepsy and bowel problems such as chronic constipation. Homeopathy can often provide answers to these problems where other approaches have failed. It is in the treatment of chronic children's diseases that I have experienced a greater potential for homeopathy. It can be used where there are no other even partial solutions available. It can also be used successfully in partnership with the necessary drugs such as inhalers, steroid creams or anti-convulsants and can lead to significant reductions in the need for these types of drugs.

In practising medicine with children, improvements in their symptoms can have consequences which go way beyond the relief of the suffering of the individual child . The impact of a child's daily sickness or disorder on a whole family and even on a whole class of schoolmates can be enormous. If a sleepless child begins to sleep through the night, the parents can be better rested and better able to deal with the day's problems. If a disturbed child settles and becomes calm then the learning experience of the whole class can be improved.

I once saw a three-year-old girl who was referred to me because of frequent infections. In fact she had already had two admissions to hospital for treatment of pneumonia. I always greet children with a smile but this little girl who looked very sulky only scowled back at me. I commented to mum, saying "She's not very happy, is she?"

Mum replied that she had actually never smiled. Never in her life. Not once. She also said that she was very clingy to mum but would never let dad hold her or cuddle her. Even as a little infant she would cry if dad held her. Dad was upset but couldn't do anything about it. Mum also told me that her daughter was

very lazy about walking. She would cry to be lifted up and carried after just a few steps. If left sitting in a room she would be in exactly the same position when mum returned, waiting to be picked up.

These observations and comments led me to consider the teaching of Jan Scholten of Holland whose approach to the mineral remedies has been invaluable in my practice. People who walk about permanently dissatisfied, are never happy, who walk around as if they have a bad smell under their nose, may need one of the ammonium salts. Children who have difficulties with their fathers, who are a bit slow or lazy and “just sit” may require one of the carbonate salts. Putting all this information together raises the idea of the remedy “ammonium carbonicum”. I gave this girl a 30c of ammonium carbonicum.

When she was brought back to see me two months later she came skipping into my room with a beautiful smile. Apparently she had been smiling since the day after the remedy and, what's more, she lets dad pick her up now and even goes to him for a cuddle. Happily, the presenting problem of recurrent infections was also resolved and she managed to get through the winter without any chest infections for the first time in her life.

Finding the best homeopathic medicine for any individual is a matter of seeing the clear distinguishing pattern in the individual. In adults this is often complex and difficult because they have learned to hide symptoms. In children, as in the case of the little girl who never smiled, the picture is often right in front of the doctor as the child demonstrates their pattern with vivid behaviour or speech.

Let me give you another example of this. At the Sick Children's Hospital in Glasgow I saw a little girl who was born with a brain defect. She had frequent full-blown fits, did not sleep through the night and her behaviour was extremely difficult. When her mother brought her into the consulting room she was already screaming and objecting

violently. In the first few minutes she thrashed around on the floor shrieking, kicking and trying to bite anyone who came near. As I watched, and as mum tried unsuccessfully to calm her down, the little girl actually bit a piece out of her own clothing. It was impossible at this stage to have any significant conversation with mum or to obtain a “homeopathic history”.

I turned to my repertory and looked up the rubrics “Shrieking”, “Kicking”, “Biting”, “Biting her clothes” and “Convulsions”. The only remedy to appear in all these rubrics was “*Tarantula hispania*”. I then asked mum what she normally did to try and settle her daughter when she was so upset and she said that sometimes she could hold her and the other thing which helped was music. This is in fact a strong feature of the remedy “*Tarantula hispania*”. I only managed to ask another few questions because of the little girl's distress but I had already seen all I needed to see. I gave her a dose of “*Tarantula hispania*” in a 30c potency and asked her mum to bring her back in a month.

The next visit was strikingly different. She came into the room happily and sat on a chair next to her mum, eating a packet of crisps throughout the whole consultation. Over the next few months not only did her behaviour settle, but she began sleeping right through the night with increasing frequency, her anti-convulsants were withdrawn by the paediatricians, and she eventually became fit-free.

There are more and more cases of hyperactive children these days. Homeopathy has an excellent role to play here. The spider remedies (like *Tarantula hispania*) are common in the restless hyperactive children. The other, “*Belladonna*”, is probably one of the most common families and includes remedies like *Stramonium*, *hyoscyamus* and *Belladonna* itself. Indeed, this latter group is more commonly indicated in those with more violent behaviour disturbance.

Acute conditions

Homeopathy is a safe and effective form of treatment for a wide range of childhood problems and illnesses which are difficult to treat with orthodox medicines.

Most parents would benefit from a knowledge of a small range of remedies which may be of use in common mild childhood ailments. Best known include the *Colocynthis* for infant colic. There is a simple test to predict whether or not *Colocynthis* will help. If the colic is relieved by firm pressure on the baby's tummy then it is more likely that *Colocynthis* will be effective. You can see this by noticing if the baby settles when held against the parent's chest, looking over the shoulder, or held facing the floor with the tummy supported by the parent's arm.

Chamomilla is the great remedy for teething and again it is more likely to be effective if you notice that child has one red cheek, is angry and fractious and settles when carried around.

Belladonna is great for the sudden fevers where the child gets a red face, dilated pupils, dry mouth and is agitated. It is particularly effective for the fevered child who is hallucinating.

Aconite, *Spongia* and then *Hepar sulph* is a well established sequence of treatment for croup. *Aconite* at the outset, especially if the croup comes on suddenly after exposure to dry cold winds. *Spongia* follows well if the croup progresses and there is redness and soreness of the throat. If the croupy cough becomes loose and moist sounding and the child is more irritable then *Hepar sulph* may settle the problem.

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