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The preventive role of homeopathy and the treatment of headaches and migraine



At the deepest level, homeopathy is preventive in intent. Homeopathic remedies do not wade in and “zap” offending organisms, leaving the immune system less able to cope than before. Quite the opposite. They nudge the immune system – not only the white cell populations of the body but also the mental and emotional states which keep those populations healthy – into greater responsiveness and readiness so that disease is kept away or prevented from recurring. In fact, homeopaths are trained to look for diseases before they happen. When a homeopath prescribes constitutionally, he or she is prescribing not only for the present ailment but for tendencies which have not yet manifested themselves as medically recognised ailments.

The foetus in the womb can be treated homeopathically to minimise imbalances inherited from the mother and father. Homeopathic treatment of childhood ailments lessens the risk of the latent weaknesses they cause being activated in later life – infants and children, with their newly minted immune systems, respond excellently to homeopathic treatment.

Homeopathic immunisation against the graver diseases of childhood is not usually offered unless a child is particularly at risk; most homeopaths prefer to take the route of boosting general resistance to disease.

In adults, prompt homeopathic treatment of minor illnesses can often prevent persistent, and sometimes serious, complaints developing in later life. At all points in the cycle of development, birth, growth and maturity, subtle symptoms of constitutional weakness can be picked up by careful homeopathic analysis and treated before they burgeon into chronic and entrenched disease. The following hypothetical case history shows how a homeopathic physician might approach a case of late-onset asthma.

At nine months old, the future Mrs X develops eczema; the ointment used to treat it leaves her skin very dry. Apart from dry skin and constipation, she is a generally healthy child. At the age of 14, she has a bad fall from a horse. A year later she develops hay fever, which turns into allergic rhinitis (a runny nose all year round). Skin tests show that she is allergic to house dust mites, grasses and horses.

Desensitising injections clear up her runny nose but leave her feeling unwell for some time afterwards.

In the early 20s she is underweight and suffers from an almost continuous post nasal drip (catarrh dripping down the back of her throat). In her late 20s she marries and has two children, both full-term, healthy babies. Apart from dry skin, constipation, occasional nosebleeds and irregular periods, she feels reasonably well throughout her 30s. In her early 40s, she loses two people very close to her, her mother and eldest son. Shortly afterwards, she develops asthma.

She consults a homeopathic physician for the first time. High potency *Natrum mur* is prescribed to help her through the grieving process, and she is advised to cut down on salt and carbohydrates. A month later, the asthma has all but disappeared, but she continues to suffer from dry skin, constipation, and catarrh at the back of her throat; if anything, she reports, her throat feels worse than before; and she feels chilly and irritable, and has had several boils. *Hepar sulph* is prescribed. This clears up the boils and the catarrh, but the runny nose remains. *Allium* ➤



and Arnica clear up the runny nose; Sulphur clears up the dry skin and the constipation. At this juncture the eczema she had as a very young child reappears. Since there is a family history of tuberculosis and allergies, she is given Tuberculinum; this clears up the eczema. She is then advised about her diet. She continues in good health, visiting the homeopath at infrequent intervals, until the age of 75 when she dies of pneumonia.

The homeopathic treatment involves a peeling away of layers of illness, removing symptoms in the reverse order in which they appeared, each time reaching further back into the chain of cause and effect. Unlike many other modes of "health care" which swing into action once health has broken down, homeopathy is based upon helping the organism to resist breakdown.

Headache

Headache is a common pain and is not often an indication of anything serious. They can be a symptom of anxiety, stress, physical tension (especially in the back and shoulders), lack of sleep, over-consumption of caffeine in tea

or coffee or suddenly cutting down caffeine intake, food allergy, eyestrain, fever, hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar, especially if you have not eaten for some time), migraine, drug side effects (especially if you have started a new drug), sinusitis, cervical spondylosis (stiff neck, an ache which extends from spine to top of head, headache made worse by lifting, driving, or turning head slowly) and other spinal problems, premenstrual tension, post-herpetic neuralgia following shingles, malocclusion or sepsis after dental treatment (see your dentist), and high blood pressure. That very common form of headache, the hangover, is mainly caused by dehydration. Temporal arteritis (dull, throbbing headache behind one or both temples) is caused by inflammation of the arteries which supply the scalp.

Headaches may be caused by pain-killing drugs taken to relieve them: if you are constantly taking painkillers, stop them under advice from your GP.

Headaches can also be a symptom of damage to the blood vessels in and around

the brain itself, or of infection to the tissues surrounding the brain and spinal cord. In such cases prompt action and close observation are required.

If a headache follows a head injury, and the person is drowsy, nauseous and vomiting, the cause may be an extradural brain haemorrhage; in either case call your GP or 999 immediately and give Arnica 30c every 15 minutes until help arrives.

A bad headache, with a temperature of more than 38°C and intolerance of light, may be meningitis; pain behind one eye, with blurred vision, may be acute glaucoma or iritis; if any of these conditions is suspected, consult your doctor if no improvement within two hours.

Where a headache has lasted for several days, seems worse in the mornings, and is accompanied by nausea or vomiting, consult your doctor; high blood pressure, stress, or a brain tumour might be the cause.

Constitutional treatment is recommended for recurrent headaches caused by stress, anxiety, or tension. However, if you know or suspect that a headache is a symptom of

another condition, which does not require prompt medical attention, look up the remedies for that condition, then compare the symptoms listed with those given against the remedies below, to be taken every 10-15 minutes for up to 10 doses.

- Headache comes on suddenly, feels worse in cold or draughty surroundings, person apprehensive, headache feels like a tight band around head or as if brains are being forced out of head: Aconite 30c.

- Head feels bruised and aching, pain occasionally sharp, made worse by stooping: Arnica 30c.

- Stinging, stabbing or burning headache, rest of body feels bruised and tender, symptoms worse in hot, stuffy surroundings: Apis 30c.

- Throbbing, drumming headache, flushed face, dilated pupils, distinctly worse in hot sun: Belladonna 30c.

- Head feels bruised, sharp, stabbing pain made worse by slightest eye movement: Bryonia 30c.

- Head feels full and swollen, face purple and congested-looking, expression dull and heavy, dilated pupils, limbs weak and shaky: Gelsemium 6c.

- Violent headache in which every heartbeat sets up an answering thump and throb in the head, made worse by stooping or shaking head: Glonoinum 30c.

- Bursting, aching headache, hypersensitive scalp, worse in damp, foggy weather: Hypericum 30c.

- Headache described as tight band across forehead or as nail being driven out through side of head: Ignatia 6c.

- Person often irritable, prone to dull, dizzy, bruising headaches which are rather like being beaten around the head, worse first thing in the morning but better when

person gets up: Nux 6c.

- Pressing, bruising headache associated with fatigue, made worse by reading, alleviated by rest: Ruta 6c.

Migraine

Occasional severe headaches, usually confined to one side of the head, associated with nausea and vomiting, blurred vision, and other visual disturbances, intolerance to light and occasionally numbness and tingling in the arms. In a severe attack, the only thing to do is lie down in a darkened room until the symptoms wear off. Attacks are often heralded by abnormal tiredness, nausea, or flashing, shimmering or distortion of objects towards edge of visual field; once the headache comes on, these symptoms tend to disappear.

The immediate cause of migraine headaches is constriction, then swelling of the arteries which supply the brain, but why the arteries suddenly behave in this way is not known. Stress, hypoglycaemia, and certain foods are the most frequently cited "trigger factors" of this miserable complaint. Incidence and frequency of attacks tends to tail off in middle age, though they may worsen during the menopause in women.

Homeopathic treatment of migraine is constitutional; however, the remedies listed below are recommended for use in emergencies, to be taken quarter-hourly for up to 10 doses, if possible at the first signs of an attack.

- Blurring of vision before headache comes on, tight feeling in scalp, headache right-sided but less insistent if person moves around, vomit mostly bile: Iris 6c.

- Headache worse on right side, feels as if temples are being screwed into each other,

trying to concentrate makes pain worse, dizziness: Lycopodium 6c.

- Throbbing, blinding headache, warmth and moving around make headache worse, head feels overstuffed and congested, attack preceded by numbness and tingling in lips, nose, and tongue: Nat mur 6c.

- Headache worse in evening or during a period, aggravated by rich, fatty food, head feels as if it is about to burst, person easily bursts into tears: Pulsatilla 6c.

- Headache worse in the morning, bursting pain which is right-sided and seems to start at back of head, with pain extending into right shoulder, some improvement later in day: Sanguinaria 6c.

- Pain starts at back of head, then shifts and settles above one eye, aggravated by cold, alleviated by wrapping head up warmly and tightly, person prone to head sweats: Silicea 6c.

- Sharp, darting, severe pain over left eye, pain seems to pulse with every heartbeat, stooping or moving suddenly makes pain worse: Spigelia 6c.

- Left-sided headache, as if head is being pierced by a nail: Thuja 6c.

If you sense an attack coming on, splash your face with cold water for a few minutes, then lie down somewhere quiet for an hour or so; for some sufferers this has the effect of fending off an attack altogether. Some people find that just working through the headache, or not giving in to it, gets rid of it.