

Centre for Integrative Medical Training  
In Association with the Centre for Integrative Care &  
The Academic Department, Royal London Hospital for Integrated Medicine



# Foundation Course in Medical Homeopathy

A Blended Course in Homeopathic Medicine for Healthcare Professionals

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## Therapeutic Pointers: *Coughs and Colds*

Part 4.9

## *Homeopathy & Viral Conditions*

### 4.9 COUGHS & COLDS

It is one of the paradoxes of homeopathy that the simplest conditions can sometimes be tricky to treat effectively.

This is because simple 'one sided' conditions often yield sparsely differentiated symptoms and this makes individualisation difficult.

Viral upper respiratory tract infections are the most common conditions presenting in primary care. We tend to approach these as minor, self limiting problems. Symptomatic drugs tend to be prescribed without a second thought, although there are studies which suggest that paracetamol based drugs are counter-productive in the treatment of rhinovirus infections.

In certain circumstances symptomatic drugs may actually impair the host defence response. Even though they serve to ameliorate viral symptoms for a few hours, those few hours occur at a time in the disease process where fever is part of an adaptive response. Drug interference can effectively lose those few hours to the host in terms of its immunological response to the virus. Cough suppressants and antipyretic drugs can therefore prolong the time to recovery and may mask the emergence of more serious secondary infection.

It is therefore highly desirable to avoid drug 'manipulation' of the host during acute infections. If the patient is showing signs of improvement at the time of presentation it is also inadvisable to attempt to 'push' the recovery process along with treatment (homeopathic or orthodox). Better to leave them alone to recover (and 'learn' immunologically in the process). If the patient is getting worse, or simply failing to make progress on their own, the best approach is to facilitate a more efficient host response using a well chosen homeopathic remedy.

The more unwell the patient is, the more accentuated are the inefficiencies in their own response: too high a fever, too low a fever, too much catarrh or tenacious catarrh (that traps secondary bacterial infection) inappropriate bronchospasm, excessive cough causing mechanical damage to the larynx or cords.... these accentuated symptoms help us to individualise the case, differentiate properly between the possible remedies and find an acute similimum.

In acute cases, the clinical responses to treatment should be rapid, and if the patient is failing to show a clear response after one or two repetitions of the remedy, you should seek an alternative remedy. Don't be afraid to change your treatment in acute conditions and follow the dynamics of the case.

We have listed some of the most useful remedies for upper respiratory infections. The respiratory keynotes for each is given. Do not try to memorise these details, but use the lists and tables as a reference. You may choose to copy these sheets and have them handy in your desk drawer for quick reference.

## Quick reference list of Remedies for Coughs

### *Aconitum napellus*

excellent first line treatment - give as quickly as possible



**SUDDEN** onset after **exposure to cold dry winds**.

Constant short **dry cough**, with a feeling of suffocation  
or **dry hard ringing cough** which is worse after exposure to cold dry wind.

Spasmodic cough, as in **croup** or whooping cough, which wakes  
patient from sleep.

Anxiety and **fear**, restlessness.

Worse at night.

No expectoration except a little watery mucus.

Sudden fevers.

## *Antimonium tartaricum*



- secondary remedy for incipient chest infections
- at this stage you will be using this as an adjunct and not a stand-alone treatment.

Persistent cough with rattling respiration,  
great accumulation of sticky phlegm.  
Great difficulty in expectoration,

sudden sensation of suffocation - must sit up.  
Sickly pale face.

### **Activity:**

Listen to a presentation on the materia medica of *Antimonium tartaricum* by Dr Todd Rowe

[https://youtu.be/IIPLYT\\_09Ds](https://youtu.be/IIPLYT_09Ds)

## *Arsenicum album*

- consider this for asthmatics who get wheezy with viral infections



Wheezing respiration,  
much frothy phlegm, cannot breathe freely or fully.

**Worse from midnight to 2 am.**

Very restless and anxious; utterly prostrated.

Also consider the remedy *Justica*

## *Belladonna*

- first line treatment in the child with a sudden viral fever.



### **SUDDEN ONSET**

**Dry**, tickling cough in violent paroxysms, great **dryness** in the larynx.

Coughs seem to **burst** open the head, fit or coughing ends in sneezing or whoop.

Child begins to cry just before the coughing fit.

Attacks can also end in sneezing. Heat and redness.

## *Bryonia alba*

- frequently used remedy for persistent coughs
- use when the modalities fit



Hard, **DRY spasmodic cough** which shakes the whole body,  
associated with stitches / soreness in the chest (including pleuritic pain)

Bursting headache.

Worse dry weather,

worse at night,

after eating and drinking and **least movement**.

Peevish, **wants to be left alone**,  
very **thirsty for cold drinks**.

Holds on to both chest and head when coughing.

### **Activity:**



Watch a short video on the botany of Bryonia  
<https://youtu.be/XNCHORmONrk>



For those wishing to learn about the constitution, subacute and chronic indications for this remedy a rapid-fire video summary by Dr Ravi Doctor can be found here:

[https://youtu.be/Q\\_nk999FAJY](https://youtu.be/Q_nk999FAJY)

The constitutional picture of Bryonia is not part of the PHCE curriculum.

## ***Causticum***

- the adult (usually) whose voice starts to go shortly after the onset of a viral infection



Hard cough racks whole chest (and quickly traumatises the vocal cords into a swollen state).

Chest feels as though full of mucus which is **very hard to expectorate**.

The sense that they can't expectorate keeps them coughing sacrificially until they are **exhausted**.

Rawness in throat and hoarseness of voice.

**Better for cold water.**



## *Drosera rotundifolia*

- viral laryngo-tracheitis, and some cases of whooping cough



Crawling in larynx with provokes coughing.  
Violent **tickling in the larynx** which wakes patient.  
Spasmodic **cough until he retches and vomits.**  
Cough comes from deep down in the chest; this provokes pain - must hold chest until cough stops.  
Oppression of the chest so that the breath cannot be expelled.  
Clutching, cramping, constricting and burning in the larynx.  
Cough worse at night.

One of the sub-acute remedies for cough that won't go away.

### **Activity:**

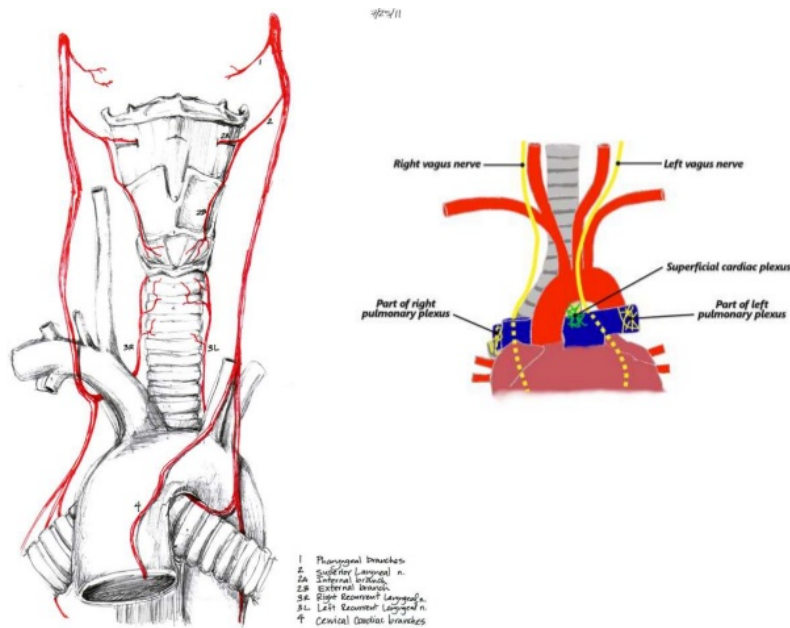


Listen to Dr Todd Rowe presenting the remedy and its keynote indications

<https://youtu.be/nP6Klf1YI7c>

## *Ipecacuanha*

- bronchiolitis, moist cough in some asthmatics, some chest infections



Heightened cough reflex due to vagal stimulation

The vagus (or pneumogastric) nerve has afferent and efferent functions in the larynx, respiratory tree, cardiac and gastrointestinal systems.

### **Presentation**

Sensation of constriction in the chest, which feels full of phlegm.

Hoarseness

(effect of coughing causing superficial trauma on the cords, with swelling of the vocal folds and the confounding effect of local catarrh)

Associated nausea

Some patients bleed easily (cf. Phosphorus).

Moist tongue

May be catarrhal in both the nasopharynx and small airways.

Suitable as a standby prescription for individuals who are prone to recurrent colds and coughs, and who appear to be sensitive to moist, warm weather conditions.

Patients requiring Ipecacuanha tend to cough in long paroxysmal attacks until they vomit (after which the cough usually settles for a while).

## *Nux vomica*

- violent acute coughs which are painful and 'racking'



Dry, tearing or **spasmodic** cough, with gagging and retching.

Painful laryngospasm.

Feverish but cannot move or uncover without desperate **chilliness**.

Bursting **headaches** caused by cough.

Irritable and **hypersensitive**.

Tiny stimuli evoke another episode of cough.

## *Pulsatilla*

- indicated in both mild viral infections and more severe chest infections



Viral upper respiratory infections  
with **moist sounding cough**  
and **bland creamy nasal discharge**.

Chest infections  
with **mucopurulent expectoration**,  
facial flush,  
short relapsing cough with spells of **gagging and choking**.  
Worse: in warm room, evening and **lying down**.  
**Thirstless** fever.

## *Rumex crispus*

- viral laryngitis



Cough from tickling in the throat.  
Worse: touch, talking, cold air, night.

### **Activity:**



Listen to Dr Todd Rowe outline the materia medica of *Rumex*.

<https://youtu.be/VKSCPwBAe0s>

## *Spongia tosta*

Dryness and hoarseness with barking, croupy cough.  
Better eating and drinking.  
Worse cold air, stuffy room and lying down.  
Cough associated with heart failure (cf. Naja).  
Cough seems to stem from a spot in the chest.  
Goitre. Often anxiety and fear,  
with exhaustion and heaviness in the body, particularly chest.

The final remedy in Boenninghausen's Croup Powder Series.  
(Aconitum (acutely) moving to Hepar sulph (inflammatory) moving  
towards Spongia tosta (congestive))

Used when simple viral upper respiratory infections extend to the chest  
with the appearance of congestive lung symptoms and corollary  
cardiovascular symptoms.



### **Activity:**

View keynotes for Spongia tosta presented by Dr Todd Rowe  
<https://youtu.be/8f4gEZkhlWU>

### Homeopathic TREATMENT OF COUGHS - a summary

Remedy	Type of Cough	Type of Mucus or Phlegm	Time of Day	Better or Worse	Other
<i>Antimonium tartaricum</i>	Feeling of suffocation Persistant rattling.	Large amount of sticky phlegm difficult to expectorate.	Worse evening	Better sitting up	Weakness, Drowsiness
<i>Aconitum napellus</i>	Short Dry cough or hard ringing cough	Mucus membranes dry Nose stopped up	Worse at night & after midnight. Sudden onset	Worse exposure to cold dry winds. Better open air.	Acute onset anxiety
<i>Bryonia alba</i>	Dry hard spasmodic painful cough	Tough mucus in trachea	Worse at night & for warmth of room	Worse for movement. Cold, dry weather. Better rest & pressure.	Thirsty for cold water. Irritable mood.
<i>Causticum</i>	Hard cough, racks whole chest. Loss of voice	Inability to expectorate Swallows phlegm		Better for cold drinks. Worse cold dry winds.	Burning, rawness and sore are characteristic
<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>	Tickle in larynx brings on deep spasmodic cough with retching	Yellow expectoration	Worse at night	Better open air Worse lying down	Hoarseness
<i>Ipecacuanha</i>	Spasmodic suffocating cough - wheezing. Sudden attack	Blocked nose, chest seems full of phlegm, does not yield to coughing.		Worse for moist warm wind, lying down	Particularly useful for young people's acute symptoms. Nausea not relieved by vomiting.
<i>Phosphorus</i>	Dry, hard, tickling cough.	Chronic catarrh with slight haemorrhage.	Worse evenings.	Worse change of temperature. Worse talking and when active.	Tightness of chest, headache. Patient nervous and anxious
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Spasmodic dry cough.	Tough, stringy phlegm.	Worse lying down at night and on waking in am.	Worse cold air. Better head under bedclothes.	Hoarseness and constant desire to hawk.

## Homeopathic TREATMENT OF COLDS

REMEDY	NOSE	EYE/MOUTH	BETTER/WORSE	OTHER
<i>Aconitum napellus</i>	Frequent sneezing. Nose stopped up	Thirsty	Worse in stuffy atmosphere	Colds of sudden onset from chilling.
<i>Allium cepa</i>	Much sneezing. Nose streams	Eyes stream. Lips sore. Hot and thirsty	Worse in warm room. Better fresh air.	Rawness may extend to throat and chest.
<i>Arsenic album</i>	Sneezing frequent and painful. Thin watery discharge, burning.	Thirsty for small amounts of water. Lips sore.	Worse cold air and after eating.	Extremely chilly. Intense tickle in nose at one particular spot.
<i>Belladonna</i>	Nose swollen red, sore and hot. Not much discharge.	Throat raw, sore and hoarse.	Worse lying down and for noise and draught.	Violent headache. Very thirsty. Restless.
<i>Bryonia alba</i>	Much sneezing, then tendency to spread to chest.	Eyes red and watery. Lips and mouth dry and great thirst.	Better lying down and keeping still.	If onset delayed and symptoms slow in developing.
<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Sneezing severe	Eyes red and sore throat	Worse in cold room	Neck stiff, pains in back and limbs.
<i>Gelsemium sempervivens</i>	For influenza-type cold. Discharge makes nostrils sore.	Eyelids heavy. Coated tongue.	Better near a fire. Often caused by change in weather.	Headache and chills. Tickling, tearing cough. Frequent need to pass water.
<i>Hepar sulphuris calc.</i>	Much sneezing. Watery discharge, later becomes thick yellow & offensive.		Worse in the least draught.	Peevish and hyper-sensitive.
<i>Nux Vomica</i>	Much sneezing. Nose alternately blocked and running.	Mouth dry.	Better out of doors.	Extremely chilly; cannot get warm; excessively irritable.
<i>Phosphorus</i>	Nose alternately blocked or running. Or one nostril blocked and other discharging.	Throat sore, voice hoarse.	Worse for change of temperature.	Cold begins in the chest or throat. Streaks of blood in handkerchief.
<i>Pulsatilla</i>	Nose stuffed up. Thick yellow discharge.	Chapped peeling lips. Loss of appetite.	Better out of doors. Worse coming into warm room.	Cold is persistent. Pains in face and nose. Chills.