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Homeopathy - Five Things to Know before You `Go There'

By Marjorie Geiser, RD, NSCA-CPT

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With natural health care so popular, an area that has shown incredible growth is that of homeopathic medicine. But, although you can find homeopathic remedies on health food store shelves, are you really clear on what a homeopathic specialist is and what these medicines can do? This article will address five things to know before you choose a homeopathic specialist or buy those homeopathic medicines off the shelf.

What are they?

Homeopathic remedies are medicines made by homeopathic pharmacies in accordance with the processes described in the Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States and are regulated by the FDA. These are not considered supplements. The remedies could be made from plants, minerals, animals or even from chemical drugs, such as penicillin or streptomycin. These substances are then carefully diluted, called potentization, until very little of the original substance remains. Because these are very dilute, small doses of medications, and they are available over the counter, many people feel they are safe. However, for serious health problems, a person should seek the advice of a knowledgeable healthcare professional. If they choose, it could be from one familiar with homeopathic medicine.

Are they effective?

The fact that very little of the original substance remains, the question comes up how can they even be effective. According to homeopaths, this is based on similarities. When a similarity exists, a person is thought to have a hypersensitivity to that substance. Thus, while the remedy contains very little, in the practical sense, of the original material, it still contains the essence of the substance, or its energy. It's thought to work by creating a resonance within the body that catalyzes it to begin a healing process.

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How this works and if it's effective is very controversial among traditional medical practitioners. To determine if a particular homeopathic drug is effective, experiments, called drug provings, are conducted. In these experiments, researchers administer continual doses of the substance to a healthy individual until a reaction to the substance is achieved. Once it is known what symptoms a substance causes, then it's known what symptoms and illnesses it will cure. There have been several systematic reviews of placebo–controlled trials on homeopathy that have reported that its effects seem to be more than just placebo. One observational study found that patients were very satisfied with homeopathic treatments and that both they and their physicians noticed significant improvement. There is also evidence from randomized, controlled trials that homeopathy may be effective for treatment of otitis media in children, muscle soreness after running, and attention deficit hyperactivity

disorder. Again, though, I would like to emphasize that it would be wise to consult with a specialist before self–medicating, especially when it comes to children.

Who practices homeopathy?

The practice of homeopathy is incorporated into medical care by a broad range of healthcare practitioners. Medical doctors (MD's) and doctors of osteopathy (DO's) may elect to study homeopathy as a post–graduate specialty. Naturopathic doctors (ND's) study homeopathy as part of their naturopathic school training. Naturopathic medicine is a distinct profession of primary healthcare that emphasizes prevention and the promotion of optimal health. The scope of practice includes all aspects of family and primary care, from pediatrics to geriatrics, and all natural medicine modalities, including homeopathic medicine.

Where did it come from?

Samuel Hahnemann, a German physician who earned his doctorate of medicine degree in 1779 is recognized as the founder of homeopathy. Through experiments on himself, and later with his patients, he developed a system of rules and laws of medicine that he codified into a treatise called the "Organon of rational therapeutics", first published in 1810. The sixth edition, published in 1921, is still used today as a basic homeopathy text. It was brought to the US in 1825 by several doctors who had studied in Europe. Although at one time there were 22 homeopathic medical colleges in the US, and one out of five doctors used homeopathy, by the 1940's there were no homeopathic schools in the US.

Do your homework!

Naturopathic physicians are licensed as healthcare providers in 13 states with legal provisions allowing the practice of naturopathic medicine in several other states. To qualify for a license, the applicant must pass the licensing exam and satisfy all licensing requirements, such as have attended a resident course of 4 years and 4,100 hours of study from a college or university recognized by the state examining board. There are special certifications for various healthcare professionals. For MD's and DO's, there is the Diplomat in Homeotherapeutics (DHt). For ND's, the certification is the DHANP (Diplomat of the Homeopathic Academy of Naturopathic Physicians), and for homeopaths of all professions, there is the CCH (Certified in Classical Homeopathy). What is important to know is that in states without licensure requirements for homeopathy, anyone can claim to be practicing `homeopathic

medicine’.

Homeopathic medicine could be a great alternative to traditional medicine. It's important to look into the background and training of anyone practicing homeopathic medicine, however, as many people promote themselves as an expert without the proper education. The National Center for Homeopathy (<http://www.homeopathy.org>) serves as a resource and training center for the practice of homeopathy. The American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (<http://www.naturopathic.org>) provides information on licensing and education requirements for those promoting themselves as a doctor of naturopathy. For a good overview of the art and science of homeopathy and its basic tenets, suggested reading is *The Emerging Science of Homeopathy: Complexity, Biodynamics and Nanopharmacology*, 2nd edition, by Bellavite P. Signorini.

Marjorie Geiser has been teaching health, fitness and nutrition since 1982. She is a nutritionist, registered dietitian, certified personal trainer and life coach. As the owner of MEG Fitness, Marjorie's goal for her clients is to help them incorporate healthy eating and fitness into their busy lives. To learn more about her incredible 30–Day Fitness Focus program for nutrition and fitness analysis and

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What Is Natural Health?

By Kathy Browning

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Quite simply, natural health means maintaining good health naturally through the air we breathe, the water we drink, the foods and fluids we consume, and also through our daily physical movement and activities, rest and sleep, and interactions with other people. In summary, it is how we live in our bodies on a daily basis.

Natural healing involves moving from a state of non–health into health using only natural means. If we fast to cleanse the body of mucous, seek massage therapy to ease aching muscles, or take herbal formulas to soothe an irritated throat, we are using a natural healing modality.

Natural health modalities such as homeopathy, herbology, iridology, bioenergetic methods, and nutrition, are non–invasive methods of health practice, which are designed to stimulate and maintain the body's intrinsic self–healing processes. Let's take a brief look at each of these modalities.

Homeopathy – Homeopathy, as founded by Samuel Hahnemann, is based on the concept of "like cures like" with the idea that remedies and symptoms sharing certain similar characteristics work together to aid the healing process.

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Iridology – Iridology is the study of the colored part of the eye, the iris. According to Iridology, the iris contains fibers and pigmentations, which possibly indicate states of physical and psychological health. By determining the placement of fibers and variations in pigmentation in the iris, physical strengths and weaknesses due to environmental reactions, past physical reactions, emotional patterns, and inherited physiological qualities can be used to maintain and improve general health.

Herbology – This is a health practice, which utilizes the therapeutic applications of herbs and other botanical substances, such as roots, leaves, bark or berries of plants. These substances can be made into various forms of tablets, capsules, teas, lozenges, or poultices, and are generally sold over-the-counter in health food stores and neighborhood pharmacies.

Holistic Nutrition – Holistic Nutrition is the science of using natural, whole foods and nutritional supplements to detoxify, rebuild, and balance the whole person, with an awareness of how these dietary choices are interrelated with the condition of our body, emotions, spirit and the environment.

Energy – Energy work is a general term, which includes several healing modalities, including Reiki, Therapeutic Touch, Healing Touch, and other similar methods. Commonly known as "laying on of hands" in some traditions, energy work may be used to assist in the balancing of physical, emotional, and spiritual energies. It may help the body as it balances or heals itself from the challenges of our everyday lives, stress, and disease, and as it strives to maintain a healthy homeostasis. Our bodies are imbued with life energy, life force, chi, ki, or prana, connecting us to universal life force, or divine life energy. Energy work can also be used as a path to help us remain more connected to our inner selves, our spirits, and support us in our growing, healing, and transformative paths as we evolve physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) are therapies considered by mainstream Western medicine to be nontraditional measures used as complements to allopathic (conventional) medicine.

Traditional Western medicine excels in the treatment of infectious disease, acute illnesses, and trauma. However, this system does not adequately address prevention, optimal wellness, or chronic disease.

Certain systems of CAM such as Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine surpass conventional medicine in these areas. Other systems address the energy of our body in a gentle manner, such as homeopathy, rather than harsh energy medicine such as radiation oncology.

CAM embraces such mind/body techniques as hypnotherapy, yoga, and biofeedback.

Acupuncture is an example of a nonbiomedical system of healing that has few complications or adverse reactions.

We live in a fast-paced society filled with stress and environmental pollution. We have been conditioned to expect fast results and told it is acceptable to pop a pill whenever we have the slightest amount of discomfort. Marketing companies have spent billions in advertising to convince us to eat junk food.

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Incorporating natural health modalities into your life can assist you in achieving radiant health, balance of body, and emotional stability, but internal and external changes will need to be made. Good health begins by obtaining and applying knowledge. You can take charge of your health and begin living a healthy lifestyle.

About the author - Kathy Browning is a healing arts practitioner and wellness coach. She is also the Editor-In-Chief of "The Art of Living Well", an ezine focused on the mind, body, spirit connection and the author of "Feng Shui for Abundant Living". Be sure to visit <http://www.cancercomfort.com> for more information.

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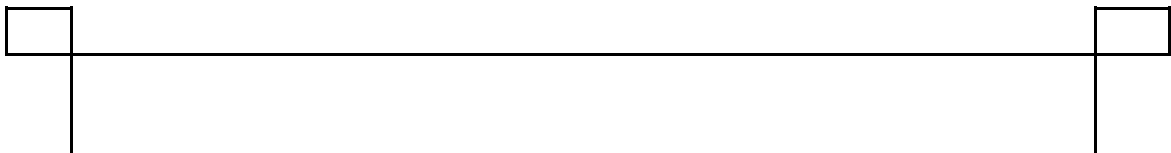
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