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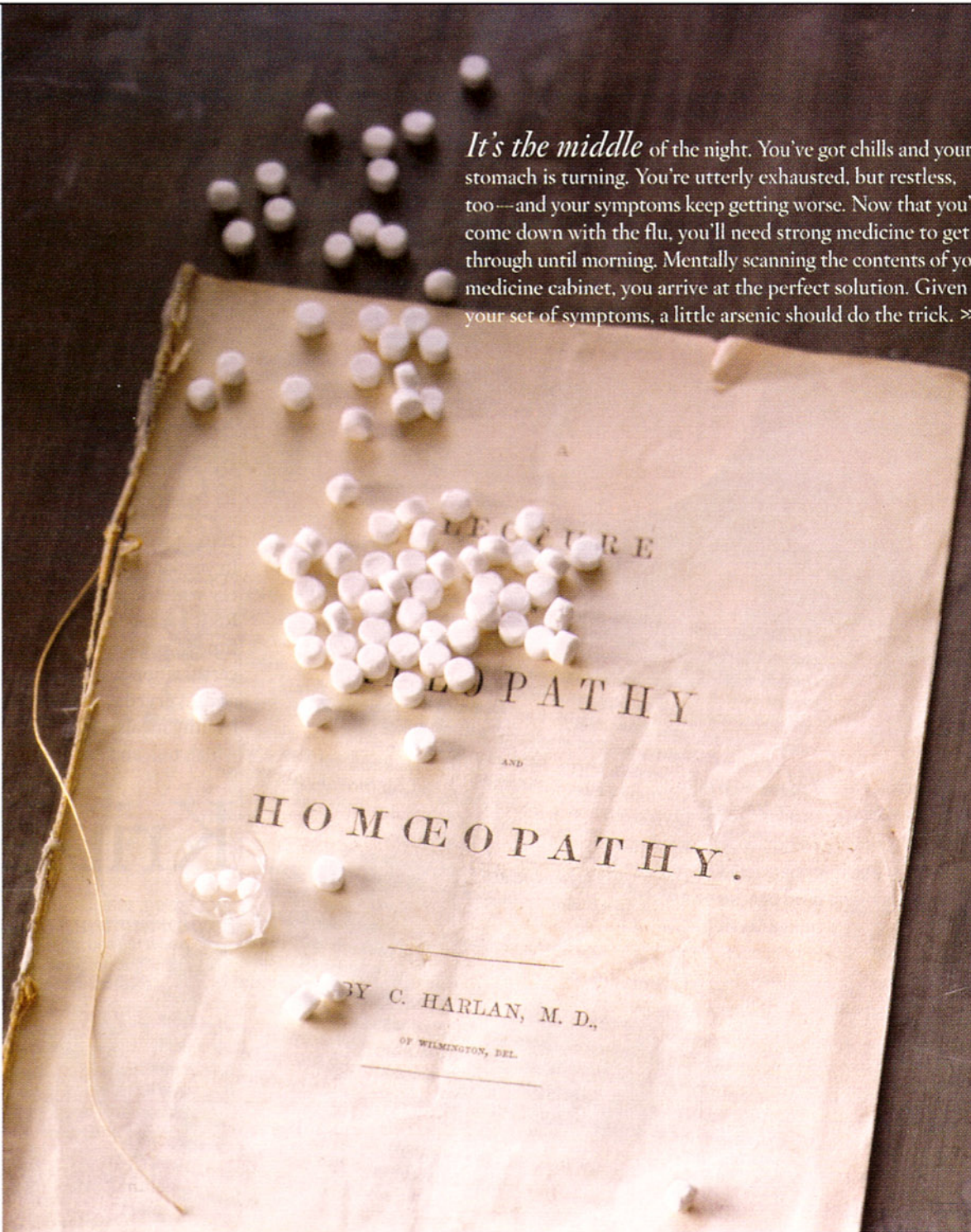


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# Flu Fighters

by Linda Knittel

Match your cold or flu symptoms with the right homeopathic remedies for safe, effective relief



*It's the middle* of the night. You've got chills and your stomach is turning. You're utterly exhausted, but restless, too—and your symptoms keep getting worse. Now that you've come down with the flu, you'll need strong medicine to get through until morning. Mentally scanning the contents of your medicine cabinet, you arrive at the perfect solution. Given your set of symptoms, a little arsenic should do the trick. >>



Of course, ingesting straight arsenic would cause the very problems you're trying to eliminate—or worse. But the super-diluted homeopathic remedy *Arsenicum album* accomplishes quite the opposite: According to homeopathy's proponents, it helps the body heal itself. The theory behind the 200-year-old system lies in this paradox—the same plant-, mineral-, and animal-derived materials that produce adverse reactions in large doses actually, in minuscule amounts (one part remedy to, say, one trillion parts water), stimulate the body to heal itself of these same disease-causing symptoms. This “Law of Similars” is commonly accepted in

countries like France and Germany, where nearly a third of all physicians prescribe homeopathic remedies.

If homeopathy has its detractors (and it does), it's due in part to the extremely diluted nature of the remedies. For instance, a remedy marked 200C (one part substance to 100<sup>200</sup> parts water) would contain very little, if any, of the original substance. For skeptics, this puts homeopathy squarely in the placebo realm. But proponents state that the essence, or “memory,” of that substance remains in the solution and has the power to heal. In fact, according to homeopathy, the more diluted a substance is, the more potent its effects.

Deriving its ingredients from sources as varied as wild yam and barium carbonate, homeopathy comprises about 2,000 remedies, each aimed at treating a specific set of symptoms. The system is specialized in this respect, taking into account even seemingly irrelevant aspects of the patient's demeanor. “For instance, a homeopath might ask a patient what types of emotions she's feeling or what sleep positions she favors,” explains renowned homeopath Dana Ullman, author of nine books on homeopathy, including *The Consumer's Guide to Homeopathy*. “The patient's answers help the practitioner get a sense of the

**Cold + Flu Fighters** The following remedies target different types of colds and flu. Follow manufacturer's instructions when deciding how much to take. Remember that a lower number (6C, for instance) indicates a less diluted—and therefore less potent—dose than a higher number (like 30C). More-intense symptoms require higher doses. If you don't improve after a night's rest, consider another remedy.

| Ailments                                 | Patient may feel/appear   | Remedy                        | Source               | Symptoms treated  |
|--|---|-------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Dry Fever/<br>Colds                      | Restless, anxious, thirsty  | <i>Aconitum napellus</i>      | Monkshood            | Good for colds only during the first 24 hours; works best when symptoms come on suddenly, especially after exposure to cold temperatures. Also helps treat colds with fever, chills, burning pains, or a dry cough. |
| Colds with<br>Hay Fever<br>Symptoms      | Worsening of symptoms in the evening and while sitting  | <i>Allium cepa</i>            | Onion                | Prolific and sometimes burning nasal discharge that irritates the nostrils, frequent tearing of the eyes, and frequent sneezing, all of which worsen in warm or stuffy rooms.                                       |
| Colds with<br>Burning Nasal<br>Discharge | Aggravated when outside, exposed to cold; craves sips of cool water   | <i>Arsenicum album</i>        | Arsenic              | Burning, irritating, watery nasal discharge that's usually worse on the right side; greater than normal chilliness.   |
| General Fever<br>and Colds               | Glassy-eyed, with dilated pupils  | <i>Atropa belladonna</i>      | Deadly nightshade    | Cold with sudden onset, accompanied by a high fever (more than 102 degrees), a flushed red face, and a reddened sore throat.  |
| Colds with<br>Slow Onset                 | Better when alone and/or walking slowly   | <i>Ferrum phosphoricum</i>    | Iron phosphate       | Colds that come on slowly with low fever, dry cough, and congestion; sweaty skin.   |
| Stringy Nasal<br>Discharge/<br>Sinusitis | Better in the open air and in hot weather   | <i>Kali bichromicum</i>       | Bichromate of potash | Thick, stringy, and yellow-greenish nasal discharge. Postnasal drip and pain at the root of the nose. Also treats colds that evolve into sinusitis.   |
| General Nasal<br>Congestion              | Weepy, clingy, and desirous of sympathy (common in children); lack of thirst; a preference to keep windows open for fresh, cool air | <i>Pulsatilla nigricans</i>   | Windflower           | Thick yellow or greenish mucus, plus an aggravation of symptoms in warm, stuffy rooms and at night.   |
| First Signs<br>of Flu                    | Feverish, chills, body aches and pains  | <i>Oscillococinum</i>         | Duck and heart liver | Weakness, chills, fever, and aches normally associated with the first signs of flu.   |
| Flu with<br>Exhaustion                   | Lack of thirst, headache at back of head; symptoms arise with anticipatory anxiety (such as preparing for a test)                   | <i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i> | Yellow jasmine       | Flu with feelings of exhaustion. Arms and legs, in particular, feel tired; eyes droop.  |
| Flu with<br>Stiffness                    | Intense thirst; symptoms improve when lying still and engaging in conversation  | <i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i> | Boneset              | Flu accompanied by fever, stiffness, and aches and pains.   |

SOURCES: HOMEOPATHIC FAMILY MEDICINE (E-BOOK) BY DANA ULLMAN, M.P.H., THE SMART GUIDE TO HOMEOPATHY (BOIRON, USA)



Unlike the prominent Western medical paradigm, which aims to combat colds and flu with “weapons” like antibiotics, antihistamines, and anti-inflammatories, homeopathy seeks to find a cure that resembles the symptoms. Cold and flu choices, therefore, target a range of specific problems, from dry fever and stiffness to different types of nasal discharge.

One popular remedy called *Oscillo-coccinum* (known as *Oscillo*) aims to reduce the duration and severity of classic flu symptoms: fever, chills, and body aches. “You have to take it within the first 48 hours for it to work best,” Ullman advises. “After that I would recommend you use remedies that treat your specific symptoms.” (See “Cold and Flu Fighters,” page 46). Some practitioners, including Werner Vosloo, a homeopath at the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Oregon, even use it preventively. “Generally I recommend taking three pellets of *Oscillo* once a week through the flu season, from early November through early April,” he says.

Another remedy, *Influenzinum*, is made from the flu vaccine (which, in turn, is created from the killed virus of that each year’s major flu strains). “Take it in the 9C or 30C potency once a week for four weeks, then wait a month and take another dose,” advises Ullman. Because the flu vaccine—and therefore the *Influenzinum* remedy—are updated each year, be sure to buy the latest version of the homeopathic product, which is released around October.

Clinical studies on homeopathic medicines have yielded mixed results. Among those showing promise, however, is a cold and flu remedy derived from the plant boneset—at least according to a small clinical trial on *Eupatorium perfoliatum* that found its benefits equalled aspirin. Another study, conducted by a product manufacturer on 485 patients and published in 2004, found that *Eupatorium perfo-*

## WHEN TO CALL A HOMEOPATH

When you’re dealing with common, acute, non-life-threatening ailments such as rashes, bug bites, colds, or flu, it’s usually fine to treat yourself. However, chronic or more-severe conditions such as asthma or depression require the expertise of a homeopath.

“A professional is trained to detect symptom information of which a patient may not even be aware,” says homeopath Werner Vosloo in Portland, Oregon. “Slight nuances can make all the difference.” For example, when treating a sore throat, a homeopath may ask you if you’ve been craving ice cream or lying on your right side at night. If so, phosphorus is likely the right remedy. On the other hand, if you have a sore throat with foul-smelling breath, you might do better taking *Mercurius vivus*, or mercury.

To find a homeopath in your area, consult the National Center for Homeopathy ([homeopathic.org](http://homeopathic.org)) or Dana Ullman’s Homeopathic Educational Services, which is based in Berkeley, California ([homeopathic.com](http://homeopathic.com)). Always consult with your physician in cases of severe symptoms or conditions.

*liatum*, combined in a formula with *Aconitum napellus* (monkshood) and other ingredients, relieved viral symptoms in nearly 68 percent of patients. (Conventional treatments helped only about half the patients.)

So how do you choose among so many treatments? Match your particular symptoms to the remedy. A cold or flu treatment should act quickly, if you choose the right one. “When homeopathic remedies work, they work rapidly,” says Ullman. “Usually within an hour or two you’ll reduce the most significant symptoms; within one night’s sleep, you’ll feel completely better. Stop taking a remedy when you notice your symptoms are significantly reduced. At that point the body will finish healing itself.” +

*A nutritional anthropologist by training, LINDA KNITTEL is a health counselor and freelance writer living in Portland, Oregon. Her article on medicinal mushrooms appeared in the October 2005 issue of Body+ Soul.*

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## HOMEOPATHIC HOW-TO'S

- + Take the right amount. The frequency will depend on the severity of your symptoms, but a good general guideline is a dose every two hours during intense pain or discomfort, or every four hours if your symptoms are mild.
- + Stop taking a remedy if you don't see improvement after 24 to 36 hours, or if you experience new symptoms.
- + Keep your homeopathic remedies tightly sealed, dry, away from light, and at room temperature. Also avoid their exposure to aromatic substances such as menthol or perfumes, which can neutralize their beneficial effects.
- + Place the medicine under your tongue without touching it with your hands, so as not to deactivate and contaminate it.
- + Refrain from eating or drinking for five minutes before and after taking your remedy so that it can be better absorbed under your tongue.
- + Avoid coffee, chocolate, camphor, eucalyptus, mint, and other strong-smelling substances when taking homeopathics, as these may interfere with absorption.

whole-body picture. This determines the course of treatment.”

While many remedies come from benign sources, such as onion or jasmine, even those treatments containing otherwise harmful substances (poison oak, mercury, deadly nightshade) are completely nontoxic—even for children and babies.

In the United States, an increasing number of people are learning about what the healing modality has to offer. According to a 1999 survey, more than 6 million Americans had used homeopathy in the preceding 12 months. Considering that it's safe, fast-acting, and known among homeopaths for effectively treating colds and flu, the sniffle season might make an ideal time to give homeopathy a try.

### Colds + Flu

Homeopathic remedies differ from conventional cold and flu medicines, which are notorious for side effects such as dizziness, headaches, drowsiness, and parched nasal and sinus cavities.

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