

Introduction

Homeopathy is a treatment based on the use of highly diluted substances, which practitioners claim can cause the body to heal itself.

~~Homeopathy is a complementary or alternative medicine (CAM). This means that homeopathy is different in important ways from treatments that are part of conventional western medicine. A 2010 House of Commons Science and Technology Committee report said that homeopathic remedies perform no better than placebos, and that the principles on which homeopathy is based are "scientifically implausible". Unlike conventional treatments, the use of homeopathy is not always based on scientific principles:~~

~~Homeopathy is a complementary or alternative medicine (CAM). This means that homeopathy is different in important ways from treatments that are part of conventional western medicine. You can learn more about the difference between CAMs and conventional medicine by reading 'What do we mean by CAMs?'~~

~~Homeopathy is based on a series of ideas developed in the 1790s by a German doctor called Samuel Hahnemann had a series of ideas that evolved into the principles of homeopathy.~~

A central principle of the treatment is that "like cures like". That is, that a substance that causes certain symptoms can also help to remove those symptoms. A second central principle is based around a special process of dilution and shaking, called succussion.

Practitioners believe that the more a substance is diluted in this special way, the greater its power to treat symptoms. Many homeopathic remedies consist of substances that have been diluted many times in water until there are only microscopic amounts or none or almost none of the original substance left.

~~Practitioners often use the treatment on~~ Homeopathy is used to treat an extremely wide range of conditions, including physical conditions such as asthma, and psychological conditions such as depression.

Does it work?

~~There has been extensive investigation into the effectiveness of homeopathy. A 2010 Science and Technology Committee report said that scientific tests had shown that homeopathic treatments do not work. There is no good quality evidence that homeopathy is effective as a treatment for any health condition.~~

Homeopathy and the NHS Availability of homeopathy

~~The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) do not recommend homeopathy as a treatment for any health condition.~~

~~Availability of h~~ Homeopathy is not available on the NHS is limited, and varies across the UK. In the UK, in all areas of the country but there are several NHS homeopathic hospitals and some GP practices also offer homeopathic treatment.

Homeopathy is usually practised privately and homeopathic remedies are available from pharmacies. The price for an initial consultation with a homeopath can vary from around £20 to £80. Homeopathic tablets or other products usually cost around £4 to £10.

What happens

~~Your first session with~~ When you first see a homeopath they will usually involve an initial consultation where the homeopath will ask you about any specific health conditions, but also about your general well-being, emotional state, lifestyle and diet.

Based on this, the homeopath will decide on the course of treatment, which most often takes the form of homeopathic remedies given as a pill, capsule or tincture.

Comment [m1]: Can we remove this statement? This report is really quite contentious and we may well be subject to quite a lot of challenge from the Homeopathic community if published.

Comment [D2]: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmsctech/45/45.pdf>

See pages 17 and 19

Comment [T3]: Link

Comment [D4]: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmsctech/45/45.pdf>

See page 19

Comment [m5]: The DH response to this report (point 24) doesn't support this statement though.

Your homeopath may recommend that you attend one or more follow-up appointments so the effects of the remedy on your health can be assessed.

Common uses

~~The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) advise the NHS on proper use of treatments. NICE currently do not recommend that homeopathy should be used in the treatment of any health condition.~~

Homeopathy is used to treat an extremely wide range of health conditions. Many practitioners believe that homeopathy can help with any condition

Among the most common conditions that people seek homeopathic treatment for are:

- asthma,
- depression,
- ear infections,
- hay fever,
- other mental health conditions, such as stress and anxiety,
- allergies, such as food allergies,
- dermatitis (an allergic skin conditions),
- arthritis, and
- high blood pressure.

~~According to a 2010 Science and Technology Committee report, there is no good quality evidence that homeopathy is an effective treatment for these or any other health conditions.~~

~~The National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) advise the NHS on proper use of treatments. NICE currently do not recommend that homeopathy should be used in the treatment of any health condition.~~

Comment [D6]: <http://www.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmsctech/45/45.pdf>

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Safety and regulation

There is no legal regulation of homeopathy in the UK. This means that anyone can practise as a homeopath, even if they have no qualifications or experience.

Regulation

A number of professional associations can help you to find a homeopath who will ~~practice-practise~~ the treatment in a way that is acceptable to you.

Some leading homeopathic organisations in England include:

- [Alliance of Registered Homeopaths](#),
- [The Society of Homeopaths](#),
- [British Homeopathic Organisation](#), and
- [Institute for Complementary and Natural Medicine](#).

Voluntary regulation aims to protect patient safety, but it does not mean that there is scientific evidence that a treatment is effective.

Safety

Homeopathic remedies are generally safe and the risk of a serious adverse side effect arising from taking these remedies is thought to be extremely small. Some homeopathic remedies may contain substances that are not safe, or that interfere with the action of other medicines. You should talk to your GP before stopping any treatment prescribed by a doctor or avoiding procedures such as vaccination in favour of homeopathy.

Evidence

There have been several reviews of the scientific evidence on the effectiveness of homeopathy. The 2010 House of Commons Science and Technology Committee report on homeopathy said that there is no evidence that homeopathy is effective as a treatment for any health condition.

There is no evidence for the idea that substances which can induce certain symptoms can also help to treat them. There is no evidence for the idea that diluting and shaking substances in water can turn those substances into medicines.

The ideas that underpin homeopathy are not accepted by mainstream science, and are not consistent with long-accepted principles on the way that the physical world works. The 2010 House of Commons Science and Technology Committee report on homeopathy said the "like cures like" principle is "theoretically weak", and that this is the "settled view of medical science".

It is of note, for example, that many homeopathic remedies are diluted to such an extent that there is unlikely to be a single molecule of the original substance remaining in the final remedy. In cases such as these, homeopathic remedies consist of nothing but water. Some homeopaths believe that, due to the succussion process, the original substance leaves an "imprint" of itself on the water. But there is no known mechanism by which this can occur. The 2010 report by the Science and Technology Committee said, "We consider the notion that ultra-dilutions can maintain an imprint of substances previously dissolved in them to be scientifically implausible."

Some people who use homeopathy may see an improvement in their health condition due to a phenomenon known as the placebo effect. If you choose health treatments that provide only a placebo effect, you may miss out on other treatments that have been proven to be more effective. You can learn more in [What is the placebo effect \[LINK\]](#).

Comment [D7]: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmsctech/45/45.pdf>

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Comment [m8]: Again, don't thin the DH response entirely supports this statement.

Comment [D9]: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmsctech/45/45.pdf>

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