

Safe Homeopathic Solutions for Pregnancy's Problems

Stephen Malthouse, MD and Elizabeth Chapman, ND

High quality prenatal care is the foundation for the good health of both mother and baby. This is achieved by combining the best of both orthodox and complementary therapies.

Have you ever seen a husband bicycling across town to buy ice cream and pickles for his pregnant wife? Why would a mother-to-be suddenly drink a full glass of vinegar? Why is it that some women have terrible nausea during pregnancy while other women do not?

The principles of homeopathic medicine explain the reasons behind the odd cravings and food aversions of pregnancy. Hormonal and physical changes put pressure on the defence or homeostatic mechanism of the pregnant woman. The body then calls out for help in the language of symptoms that may include morning sickness, gestational diabetes, hemorrhoids, muscle cramps and a myriad of other complaints that conventional medicine is not able to treat successfully. With the horrors of drugs such as DES (diethylstilbestrol) and thalidomide still in recent memory, pregnant women are right to question the use of any medication. Risks and benefits must be carefully weighed.

In the absence of life-threatening illness, many women choose to avoid conventional drugs and live with annoying symptoms. It's unfortunate that in Canada doctors rarely (and midwives infrequently) offer their patients homeopathy as a safer option. The expectant mother has to do her own investigation of alternative therapies.

Luckily, homeopathy has a long tradition of home use for treating acute, self-limited conditions during pregnancy and is both safe and effective. Many excellent resource books are now available to guide self-prescribing, but it is still essential to maintain contact with a primary health-care provider.

Homeopathic medicines are potentized (diluted and vigorously shaken) beyond the point of containing any molecules of the original substance, yet medicinal qualities are retained and passed on to the patient. Remedy selection is individualized, based on the pattern of symptoms that the mother exhibits. In order to correctly choose the right homeopathic remedy, the prescriber (whether it's the mother, her spouse, midwife or physician) must be able to elicit the small, but characteristic, details of the chief complaint. Seemingly unrelated mental, emotional or physical symptoms may also be important in pointing to the correct remedy.

A woman needing the remedy *Pulsatilla*, for example, may be unusually weepy and emotionally changeable while simultaneously experiencing morning sickness. Factors that modify the main complaint are also noteworthy. Leg cramps made better by warm applications point to homeopathic *Magnesium phosphate* as the cure, while hemorrhoids made worse from standing suggest the remedy *Sulphur*. In homeopathy, the peculiar and characteristic symptoms guide the way to successful treatment. The name of the illness or diagnostic category (which is all-important in mainstream medical prescribing) is insufficient to make a homeopathic prescription.

Morning Sickness

Hyperemesis gravidarum got the name "morning sickness" because, in most cases, the nausea appears upon arising in the morning and improves as the day goes on. Some women experience nausea and vomiting that lasts the entire day. Others only suffer in the evenings. In homeopathy, these time distinctions are important in differentiating among possible remedies.

Homeopathic *Ipecac* can bring relief if the nausea is constant and not relieved even after vomiting. The nausea is accompanied by excessive salivation and the woman feels worse when lying down.

A *Colchicum* case is characterized by extreme sensitivity to the smell, sight or even thought of food. These women may have strong food cravings but, when they try to eat the food they desire, they are overcome with nausea.

Pulsatilla has nausea, which is worse in the late afternoon or evening and after eating. They are often quite moody and cry easily. A strong aversion to fatty or rich foods is prominent for a person requiring *Pulsatilla*.

The remedy *Tabacum* will treat nausea that continues both day and night and is accompanied by violent vomiting and ice-cold perspiration.

The *Nux vomica* patient is irritable and easily offended, with nausea coming on only after eating, whereas the *Sepia* patient with nausea is depressed, indifferent and wants to be left alone. The latter characteristically desires pickles, vinegar and other acidic foods.

And Other Nasty Symptoms

The treatment of hemorrhoids is another area where homeopathy excels. *Aesculus* (horse chestnut) cures hemorrhoids that cause the sensation of needles or sticks in the rectum. Although these swollen veins may be quite painful, they do not bleed very much. This contrasts with a *Hamamelis* (witch hazel) case, where bleeding is often profuse and the hemorrhoids feel bruised and are made worse by heat.

The one homeopathic remedy used in pregnancy that does not require careful individualization before prescribing is *Arnica* (mountain tobacco). Well-known for its use in first aid treatment of trauma, *Arnica* brings fast relief to the bruising and soreness of the birth canal that occurs after almost all deliveries. This remedy is indispensable on the maternity ward. *Arnica* can also be used after a Caesarean section if a bruised sensation is present.

In treating any of the above conditions, you can use the 30C potency of homeopathic remedy. It can be given every four to six hours and tapered off as the symptoms improve. When using *Arnica* after delivery, use the 200C potency as often as every hour. Repeat as needed to relieve bruising and soreness. If no change is noted after five doses of the medicine, then the choice of remedy is probably incorrect. Back to the drawing board! Carefully choose another remedy. If you have access to a professional homeopath you may decide to enlist his or her help if you are unable to treat yourself.

Constitutional treatment, which aims to treat the whole person, is an important adjunct to conventional medical care during pregnancy. Ideally this should begin before conception.

Elizabeth Chapman and Stephen Malthouse practise classical homeopathy together in Victoria, BC.

PAIN & BREAST FEEDING

Lisa Decandia, DSHomMed, HD (RHom)
Homeopathic Doctor

Breastfeeding is an intimate time of connection between you and your baby. It is a great opportunity to nurture and bond. Keeping your breasts healthy and pain free can allow these golden moments to continue for as long as you and baby want.

Most lactating women, especially first time mothers; experience some breast discomfort. Prompt treatment can resolve sore or cracked nipples, clear up a clogged duct and even prevent the occurrence of breast infection (mastitis).

The first signs of a clogged duct are soreness and a lump in the breast which can occur with or without redness. It is possible that if you do not attend to the clogged duct, infection (mastitis) accompanied by fever could follow. Any sign of infection is to be taken seriously and treated.



Homeopathic treatment is highly effective in treating breast infections and is a safe alternative to antibiotics. A Homeopathic remedy called Phytolacca (a plant named Poke-Root) can help during breast infections where the breast is hard, nodular and lumpy. A remedy called Belladonna (from the nightshade plant family) is effective in dealing with fever and red and engorged breasts. Silica (Pure-Flint) is helpful when there is a cutting and stitching abscess pain in the breast. As well as using Homeopathy, here are some simple tips for prevention and treatment of mastitis:

- Check that your bra is not cutting in and causing a blocked duct.
- Rest more; a blocked duct could be a sign that you are overdoing it.
- Apply hot and cold compresses alternately to the sore breast every 2-4 hours for 5-10 minutes at a time.
- Breastfeed more often and in a variety of positions to drain the milk from the ducts.

Another discomfort of breast feeding is sore or cracked nipples. Women who have sensitive nipples may be more prone to this. Sore nipples can crack easily, so you will need to pay particular attention to them. Try using some of these suggestions:

- Feed your baby when she/he first cries rather than waiting. This will prevent the baby latching on desperately and tugging at your nipples.
- Offer the breast that is least sore first, as the baby sucks the hardest at the beginning of the feed.
- Use relaxation techniques or listen to music to try and settle yourself during the feed.
- Limit the amount of time your baby sucks as long as she/he is taking milk, usually 10 minutes on each side.

The Homeopathic remedy, Phytolacca is specific for sore, cracked nipples when the pain radiates from the nipples all over the body. Silica is helpful when there are sudden, sharp pains while the baby is nursing and the cracked nipples bleed. A remedy called Sepia (Cuttlefish Ink) can soothe sore, cracked nipples that itch.

These early weeks and months are filled with so many “service calls” — feeding, changing, rocking and nurturing. Don’t forget to nurture yourself as well. You will be happier and more available to fulfill your baby needs without depleting your own.

Homeopathic Rescue for Bladder Infections

Nicole Duelli, CCH, RSHom(NA)



Susan felt a familiar tugging, burning sensation while urinating and felt like she had to go again just minutes later. Having suffered through bladder infections before, she knew how to treat herself naturally.

As a woman with a bladder infection, Susan was not alone. At least one out of every five women experiences the discomfort of bladder infections, also known as cystitis, a minimum of once a year. Many women who have repeated infections will also suffer a kidney infection, which emphasizes the importance of treating bladder infections quickly and completely.

Choosing Remedies and Dosages

Correctly chosen homeopathic remedies boost the immune system and act fast to resolve infections. Begin by choosing the one remedy that most suits the symptoms you experience. Take that remedy three times, two hours apart. If the symptoms are very strong, repeat every half hour, three times. Choose the next suitable remedy if symptoms do not improve within this time.

If you experience lower back pain along with cystitis, you may have a more serious kidney infection. Seek professional advice if you have severe pain that does not quickly resolve or if your bladder infection continues.

Homeopathy to the Rescue

Take each of the following homeopathic remedies in 30c potency.

Cantharis is the most popular remedy for bladder infections and works well when pain is the guiding symptom. The person may feel frenzied, experiencing intense urging but able to pass only a few drops of urine.

Nux vomica is ideal when frequent urging is the primary symptom. Besides the typical pain when passing urine, the urge is never fully satisfied. People who need this remedy are typically sensitive to anger or are easily chilled.

Pulsatilla is another common remedy for bladder infections when the pain occurs with the urge to urinate, or the pain comes and goes. Choose this remedy if the infection began after getting the feet wet and cold. People who need *Pulsatilla* often feel better when someone looks after them and they may be weepy.

Sarsaparilla is useful when the primary symptom is burning pain that occurs with the last drops of urination. Choose this remedy only if this symptom is prominent and other remedies do not fit.

Susan treated her infection immediately by keeping warm, resting, taking homeopathic *Pulsatilla*, and drinking plenty of herbal tea. Using these measures, you too can safely treat a urinary tract infection.

Herbal Remedies Add Support

Use herbs if symptoms are too vague to guide the choice of a remedy. Many herbal combinations are available in tincture, tea, or tablet form. Teas encourage liquid intake, which is vital during a bladder infection. In fact, be sure to drink a minimum of two litres of tea or water daily. Cranberry and blueberry juices are also popular, but beware of those loaded with sugar, since sugar promotes bacterial growth. Also avoid coffee and spicy foods, as they irritate.

Nicole Duelli, CCH, RSHom(NA), enjoys sharing her love for homeopathy. She is a certified classical homeopath who trained in Germany as a naturopathic practitioner and practises in Vancouver.

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<http://www.alive.com/4654a12a2.php>

Homeopathy for the Menopausal Years

Lesley Mang



During menopause, you may feel as though you are under siege from within and without. Fluctuations in your energy may make it difficult to plan to do anything outside of your daily work. Mood swings may make ordinary difficulties seem overwhelming, and it may be hard to know how you will be feeling physically and emotionally at any particular time.

For many women, one or more of the following symptoms will begin in the mid to late forties and carry on for four or five years (peri-menopause) until their last period (actual menopause): hot flashes, irregular periods, night sweats, bloating, depression, weight gain, irritability, anxiety, flooding, hair loss, headaches, insomnia, vaginal dryness, exhaustion. Some of these symptoms may continue for a time after the last period, but eventually fade. Others may linger indefinitely. A year after her last period, a woman is considered to have entered post menopause.

There are a number of ways you can ease the stress of menopause through self care:

- Being kind to yourself is truly important at this time of life. Make a little space in your day just for you.
- Keep track of when you feel discomfort, whether physical or emotional. You may be able to avoid whatever triggers it.
- Pay attention to your diet and water intake. Hot or spicy food, meat, and caffeine can bring on hot flashes. Stress, anxiety, overwork, and chronic fatigue can also bring on night sweats and hot flashes. Increasing the amount of water you drink can help to keep you cool. Generous helpings of veggies and fruit, and a reduction in meat consumption, will strengthen your immune system and help you cope with the stress of your body's changes.
- Supplement your diet with a multivitamin-mineral mix formulated for the older woman. Adding a vitamin B complex supplement can also help to alleviate stress.
- Wearing layers of clothing will allow you to cool yourself when you need to. Try to wear natural fibres such as cotton, linen, or rayon as these do not trap body heat.
- Regular exercise will also help you to feel and look good.

How Can Homeopathic Treatment Help

Although menopause is a naturally occurring phase of your life, this does not mean that you have to suffer while it lasts. Symptoms are an indication of an imbalance in your energy and occur as a result of the body's effort to rebalance itself.

You will experience menopause (or more correctly peri-menopause) in your own way. You may feel weepy with your hot flashes, whereas your friend gets really irritable. You may get hot flashes only during the day and chills at night, while your friend wakes up drenched in sweat. Because you are a unique being, your menopausal symptoms will be particular to you.

Homeopathy is a holistic system of medicine that treats people as individuals. While your physical symptoms are very important, your sleep and energy patterns, responses to weather, emotional triggers, and food sensitivities are equally important in determining the correct treatment. The correct homeopathic remedy will stimulate your entire being to return to homeostasis (a state of balance). This means that your menopausal symptoms will diminish and your entire system will feel more comfortable with the changes.

I highly recommend use of the Bach Flower Remedies, which soothe painful emotional, mental, and spiritual states. These are very low potency homeopathic remedies that can be used with any other treatment you may wish. There are thirty-eight remedies in the repertory, which are widely available at health food stores.

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Homeopathy for the Menopausal Years - continued

Here are a few to try:

- *Rescue Remedy* - will calm you in any circumstance. This is a mix that contains five remedies that address different types of fear.
- *Mustard* - for depression of unknown origin.
- *Larch* - for lack of self-confidence
- *Scleranthus* - for indecision
- *Holly* - for irritability and jealousy
- *Olive* - for exhaustion
- *Impatiens* - for restlessness

Put 4 drops of a remedy into a 500 ml water bottle and sip it whenever you feel the need. You can mix up to 5 together to address a complex state. For deep chronic conditions, however, you need to see a professional homeopath.

Case Studies

1) Gina suffered from severe hot flashes during the day and chills at night. She would often wake up in the morning with her heart pounding and a headache. Aside from these symptoms, she felt as though her uterus was falling. The hot flashes were a problem since she was a teacher and felt that she had to stop what she was doing when one came on. She had put on some weight and was really worried about losing her looks. After treatment with homeopathic *Lachesis* (2 doses 200c 4 weeks apart, then 1 dose 1M), her morning headaches and pounding heart disappeared. She still had some hot flashes but they weren't as severe. She felt much more energetic. To control her weight Gina made some changes to her diet. At my suggestion, she began to reduce consumption of bread, pasta and caffeine. She also began taking fitness classes. Since she was exercising, she also began taking a herbal supplement, *Fucus vesiculosus* (Bladderwrack). This acted as a mild stimulant to her thyroid (the supplement works best if you are already active.)

In two months she had lost ten pounds and was feeling great.

2) Sharon came to me complaining of menstrual flooding. She also had an uncomfortable feeling that her uterus was going to fall out. She had sudden hot flashes that made her feel extremely weak. When these happened at night she would wake up with heavy sweats and then would feel chilly for hours afterward. She was very irritable, especially in the morning, and often would feel frustrated with her family and her life and would cry.

I recommended the homeopathic remedy *Sepia* (LM1- 5 drops daily for 2 weeks, then 2 doses 200c, 2 weeks apart, then 2 doses of 1M, 4 weeks apart). It stopped the flooding and calmed the hot flashes. She was also much less irritable and felt she could enjoy life again. After her periods stopped, she began to experience vaginal dryness. The vaginal dryness responded to *Sepia* 30c. She takes it as needed.

3) June also suffered from menstrual flooding, but she was very anxious rather than irritable. She was worried about retiring and whether she would have enough money to be comfortable. She would wake up feeling anxious. Her head and neck would sweat and her hands and feet would feel cold and clammy. Sometimes she would feel dizzy turning her head while in a prone position. Homeopathic *Calcarea Carbonica* (Calc. carb. - 200c, 2 doses each, 4 weeks apart) reduced June's flooding and sweating. More important to her was the fact that she felt less anxious about her future.

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