

# TOP 5

## reasons we visit... the dentist

In this five-part introductory series to homeopathy we will look at the most common complaints people take to the dentist, doctor, pharmacist, podiatrist and vet. We will be asking members of the Faculty of Homeopathy which five conditions they treat most often in practice, and find out how they use homeopathy as a useful complement to conventional care.

doctor ... pharmacist ... podiatrist ... vet  
vet ... dentist ... doctor ... pharmacist ...  
podiatrist ... vet ... dentist ... doctor ...  
dentist ... doctor ... pharmacist ... podiatrist ...  
vet ..... dentist ... podiatrist ... doctor ...



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## Phil Wander looks at common dental ailments



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Manchester and Salford. He has 30 years experience in holistic dentistry, with a special interest in the use of Propolis and the replacement of mercury/amalgam fillings. In 2009 he was voted one of the top 10 most influential dentists in the UK by *Dentistry* magazine.

The scope for homeopathy in dental practice is broad. Help is at hand for a range of different ailments people commonly experience – pain, discomfort, inflammation, bleeding. It can have a role in calming dental anxieties, speeding recovery and making the experience in the dentist's chair generally a bit more comfortable. Nobody really likes going to the dentist and some positively fear it. But the days of gruesome teeth-pulling are long gone and we are moving, thankfully, to a much more holistic way of approaching the

patient. Homeopathically-trained dentists are much more than drillers, fillers and billers. We can even hope to improve the overall health of the patient and not just the dental condition presented to us.

Homeopathic prescribing in dentistry may be either acute or constitutional, or a combination of these. Acute prescribing is a treatment specifically for the disease or ailment. Constitutional prescribing involves analysing a person's temperament, disposition and behavioural tendencies. It is possible to prescribe one medicine to suit the general temperament or psychological state of a patient and another for the physical problem the patient is experiencing.

Overleaf are the top five complaints I see in my surgery, and some of the homeopathic medicines I frequently use.

Regular check-ups and good oral health will of course help you to avoid painful dental episodes. You should always go to a dentist if the pain is severe and preferably one who can also prescribe or recommend homeopathy. It's worth checking with a surgery before you register

to see if the dentist has homeopathic training or has an interest in holistic health.

### Dosage

#### Choice of potency

The 6c potency can be used and is readily available in shops; the 30c potency is also indicated overleaf in particular medicines. When the treatment is prescribed on the basis of a mixture of the physical and psychological symptoms I use a higher potency (30c or above).

#### Frequency

- **Low potency (6c)**
  - first aid: every five to 30 minutes
  - acute conditions: every 30 minutes to hourly, decreasing to three to four times a day
- **Medium potency (30c)**
  - one to three times a day
- **High potency (30c – 200c)**
  - once a day

The frequency should be reduced as symptoms improve.

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### 1 Toothache

Toothache can be one of the most distracting pains imaginable. It can occur for a whole host of reasons so it's hardly surprising it tops the list of ailments that people come to see me with. The underlying reasons for the pain should be investigated as soon as possible. Alongside this there are a number of homeopathic medicines that can be helpful. Particularly useful if you can't get access to a dentist straight away:

- Throbbing pain: Belladonna
- Heat brings on the pain: Pulsatilla
- Cold eases the pain: Coffea
- Major decay, clenching teeth helps: Staphisagria
- Where teeth sensitive and sore to touch, exposed roots, worse with cold air or fluids: Plantago
- Toothache in pregnancy: Sepia

Other medicines I've found useful are Aconite (toothache after being out in a cold wind), Arnica (pain with bruising/soreness), Magnesium phosphate (pain shoots like lightning, worse with cold and better with warmth) and Silica (swollen face/glands, patient wants face to be warm). And of course, Chamomilla, which is particularly indicated for teething babies. Plantago tincture, locally applied every 15 minutes, is an excellent therapy for sensitivity, giving immediate and long-lasting relief after just a few applications. It can be rubbed onto or around a tooth or teeth that are sensitive to hot or cold, or applied as a "toothache tincture".

As you can see there are numerous medicines that can apply in toothache, depending on the symptoms, and the above is not an exhaustive list. If in doubt about the correct one to take, think ABC: Arnica, Belladonna, Chamomilla.



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### 2 Abscesses

If you have ever been unfortunate enough to suffer toothache with a gum boil which is red, swollen and throbbing, then Belladonna will bring relief. It is best used for an abscess early on. Try 30c every half an hour. If the swelling from the abscess runs down into the neck, try Myristica, which works exceptionally well – I have known it to resolve the problem in cases

where surgical incision seemed essential. Silica is useful if the abscess has been lingering for a long time and hasn't come to a head, and to hasten discharge when the pus is draining. If you have chronic (recurring) abscesses then Hepar sulph should help, in the 6c potency if the abscesses are pus-filled, although you should always visit a dentist if the condition is severe.

Merc sol 6c is useful for bad

breath as a result of sores, with excessive salivation. Pyrogenium can be used when there is pus present but without drainage. And Bryonia is indicated when there is acute inflammation or if pricking pain is relieved by firm pressure. Pulsatilla can help, as with toothache, where the pain is accentuated by heat and relieved by cold water. Consider using a homeopathic mouthwash as well (see oral health, page 20).

### 3 Gum disease

Gum disease can be very painful and is a major cause of tooth loss. Infected or bleeding gums are usually caused by a build-up of plaque on the teeth because of poor dental hygiene or because the saliva is too acidic. In less common cases vitamin deficiency, blood disorders, or drugs may be the cause.

**Treatment can be complex and a visit to a homeopathic dentist is recommended, so that he or she can find the correct constitutional medicine for you.**

In addition to this you may find that using some of the medicines in this article is useful:

- Unhealthy, bleeding gums: Arsenicum album
- Gums that bleed after brushing: Ferrum phosphoricum
- Bleeding gums with bad breath: Merc sol 6c once daily
- Swollen, painful gums, tongue has whitish coating, patient consumes a lot of stimulants like coffee and tea: Nux vomica
- Swollen gums that bleed easily, over-production of saliva: Phosphorus

Hypericum can be used for tender gum tissue, to promote healing. China is also useful for bleeding gums.



photo courtesy of Phil Wander

### 4 Broken teeth/ extractions

Some people only end up at the dentist when their teeth cause them a major problem, either by falling out, breaking off or by being knocked in an accident. Symptoms associated with the potential loss of a tooth or teeth can, understandably, include anxiety and shock. Probably the most well-known of all homeopathic medicines, Arnica, is as effective in dentistry as it is in other fields of healthcare. I use it routinely in my surgery, giving it to patients before and after treatment. As well as its affinity for the psychological state of the patient, it is brilliant for treating soreness, swelling and bleeding. Luckily I rarely see patients who have had serious accidents, and spend much more of my time using Arnica before and after extractions and more extensive dental procedures, to ameliorate the associated symptoms. Hypericum is also very useful if there has been associated

nerve damage and Phosphorus should be considered to control bleeding. If you have had a tooth extracted and later in the day the socket starts to bleed, take Phosphorus 30c or use Phosphorus tincture on a cotton wool ball or hankie and apply pressure to the socket to stem the flow. Ruta graveolens is indicated where the bone is injured in a dental procedure and for "dry socket". Symphytum is also a medicine to think of, as it encourages the growth of tissue following dental trauma.



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### 5 Mouth ulcers

These can be very irritating and painful but can be alleviated with homeopathic Feverfew, which is also known to help migraine sufferers. A homeopathic mouthwash is advised (see oral health, page 20). Other homeopathic medicines which might help are:

- Ulcers with a raw appearance that bleed easily: Nitricum acidum
- Small red ulcers worse for salt or acid: Borax 30c, every fifteen minutes
- Sticky saliva with a swollen tongue: Hydrastis

Propolis tincture is also beneficial, applied neat or taken as a mouthwash to relieve symptoms while healing occurs. It seems to reduce the amount of time ulcers take to heal from seven to ten days to two or three days (see page 20).

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### Oral health the homeopathic way

#### Mouthwashes

A range of homeopathic mouthwashes are available. The most important of these is Calendula. Hypericum and Calendula (Hypercal) mouthwash will leave the mouth feeling comfortable and fresh after treatment. It is particularly indicated after surgery, as Calendula has excellent healing properties and Hypericum has an affinity with the nerves. Take one or two drops of the tincture in a glass of warm water.

There are also other gargles available from natural health shops, with combinations of ingredients including tinctures of myrrh, propolis and krameria (also known as rhatany, a perennial shrub found in North and South America) and essential oils of cloves, eucalyptus and peppermint.

#### Toothpastes

Some people believe the peppermint in conventional toothpastes antidotes homeopathic medicines. There are a number of companies providing "alternative" toothpastes, which also do not contain ingredients like fluoride,

sweeteners, colourings or sodium lauryl sulphate. Salt toothpaste is a favourite. Herbal toothpaste is available for those who dislike the taste of salt. Kramaria is very beneficial for gums and many prefer its taste. Sanguinaria (blood root) is another favourite botanic ingredient. Other useful toothpastes contain aloe vera and propolis (see box).

#### Medicines for dental anxiety

Anxiety associated with a visit to the dentist is not uncommon! Thankfully there are some homeopathic medicines which can help here. I use Aconite where a state of fear and anxiety is present (there is mental and physical restlessness but fright is the predominating feature); Gelsemium is indicated when the patient is feeling weak in the knees, fearful and lacking in energy. Both Aconite and Gelsemium can be used the night before and the day of the surgery for a relaxing effect. Argentum nitricum is also useful if there is a sense of trepidation, hurried actions, incessant speech and diarrhoea as a result of the anxiety.

### Propolis

Propolis is not homeopathic but can be used very effectively in a range of situations. Made up of a 50 to 70 per cent mixture of resins and balsams, 30 to 50 per cent wax, 5 to 10 per cent pollen and 10 per cent essential oils, it is a sticky filler substance used by bees to seal the hive and provide them with an immune system. Propolis tincture is excellent in treating oral ulcers, sores, abscesses and inflammation. It can be applied to areas where other preparations are not so effective at staying in place. A residue or film of resin appears over the ulcer, almost immediately relieving pain and providing a healing barrier to further irritation. I apply propolis liquid immediately after extractions, to aid healing.

It can also be used as a mouthwash, gargle and breath freshener. Recent research shows it may have a role in preventing tooth decay, due to its anti-bacterial qualities. Allergy and sensitivity to propolis is uncommon but you should avoid it if you have ever experienced adverse reactions to bee stings, bee products, honey or have an extreme sensitivity to pollen.

### An innovation in dentistry

There are homeopathic medicines for every facet of dental prescribing, and some are specific to certain oral conditions. Homeopathy is not a replacement for the skills used in everyday dental procedures, but it is a useful complement, particularly in helping apprehensive patients to get through dental treatment. Patients can approach the visit to the dentist with a little more confidence and a bit less trepidation perhaps! Even more than that, the use of homeopathy in dentistry is an innovation that opens up new vistas for the dental profession. Systemic illness can often be observed first in the mouth, so we have the opportunity to do more than just filling the hole in a tooth. Dentists with knowledge of homeopathy and its application can benefit the whole patient, not just treat the presenting problems in isolation.

### Finding a homeopathic dentist

There are a number of dentists who incorporate homeopathy into their practices in the UK. The Faculty of Homeopathy accredits introductory and advanced training for dentists and other dental professionals. Successful completion of the introductory training enables dentists and hygienists to become Licensed Associates of the Faculty of Homeopathy and use the qualification LFHom(Dent). Dentists who go on to complete the advanced training achieve the qualification MFHom(Dent). To find a homeopathic dentist near you with Faculty of Homeopathy qualifications, go to the BHA's website at [www.britishhomeopathic.org](http://www.britishhomeopathic.org)

All members of the Faculty of Homeopathy are bound to practice within the competence of their profession and their level of training and qualification in homeopathy.