

Over the Counter (OTC) medicines

Buying homeopathic medicine without extensive investigation goes against the classical approach but, says *Steven Kayne*, homeopathy is well suited to this while *Lee Kayne* runs through the remedies most often prescribed over the counter in treating self-limiting conditions



Dr Steven Kayne FFHom (Hon) is Hon Consultant Pharmacist at Glasgow Homoeopathic Hospital and Pharmacy Dean to the Faculty of Homeopathy. His new book on Complementary Therapies will be published later this year.



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One of the most important things about OTC homeopathic medicines is that people can take them in the confident knowledge that they are not going to experience a toxic reaction, because they are highly dilute. Sometimes patients do get an initial aggravation, and there is much discussion as to whether this constitutes an adverse reaction or not. It is true that if you take the right remedy in the right potency, occasionally the condition may become slightly worse before it gets better. If you don't use the remedy as it is meant to be used or if you are not treating a condition that you can self-treat, then you are likely to put yourself in the position of allowing your condition to progress unchecked.

Conditions to treat

The sorts of problems that lend themselves to OTC treatment are mainly acute conditions (eg coughs and colds, allergies etc). Teething in infants or sports injuries are other examples of situations that may respond. Homeopathy is not very good

for treating bacterial infections directly, apart from cystitis that often responds to a number of medicines, including Berberis or Cantharis. Generally speaking homeopathic medicines are not strong enough to eliminate invaders to the body. However, we can certainly treat the low, washed-out feeling that you get when you have a bacterial infection. This is an ideal situation to use homeopathy alongside conventional therapies. Homeopathy is also rarely effective where there is a shortage of vitamins, minerals or a hormonal imbalance in the body, again because the medicines are given in such small quantities. So, there is no homeopathic iron tablet as such. A homeopathic medicine may be able to help with associated symptoms but not rectify an iron deficiency directly.

Using homeopathy with other medicines

Orthodox medicines like steroids, found in some asthma medications, may reduce the effectiveness of homeopathic medicines.

However homeopathic medicines do not inactivate orthodox medicines at all.

We always advise that under no circumstances should anyone stop taking prescribed orthodox medicines without consulting their doctor first.

Dose

There are three levels of dosing appropriate to self-treatment:

- **First Aid Level** – this includes the first treatment given for an acute problem, as well as first aid for an injury. In this situation, we would recommend 2 tablets every 15 minutes to 2 hours depending on the severity on the condition for about 6 doses. Children should be given one tablet as a dose in all cases.
- **Acute** - this is a condition that you have had for a few days (ie sneeze number 52 or 53 as opposed to sneeze number 3 or 4!). For this, I would recommend taking 2 tablets 3 times a day for 7-10 days. If the condition is not substantially better, advice should then be sought.
- **Chronic** - here I am referring to conditions that lend themselves to self-treatment, for example a person who still has a bruise after sustaining a blow or knock six weeks ago. This does not apply to long-term medical conditions. An appropriate dose would be 2 tablets twice daily for about 4 weeks.

Potency

Generally, the rule for OTC medicines is: the more acute the condition, the higher the potency. This may be very different from what you see in textbooks or are told by classical homeopaths but experience shows that this approach works well. Typically, 6c is used for chronic conditions and 30c is used for acute conditions.