

The travelling homeopath

Steven Kayne advises on what to pack for first aid on holiday

Many people shy away from using homeopathy in first aid situations believing that one needs considerable skill and time to choose the right medicine. While this may well be true in managing complicated or long standing (chronic) cases it is possible to use a number of homeopathic medicines more easily in less complicated conditions, including those associated with travel.

A drug picture is a list of symptoms that emerge when a homeopathic medicine is given to a healthy volunteer (a procedure known as “proving”) and provides a guide to its therapeutic use. A few medicines, for example Arnica and Belladonna, may be chosen on the basis of a highly abbreviated drug picture comprising just two or three key indications, allowing them to be used quickly and effectively when

administering first aid. In this context I am using the term “first aid” to mean “first treatment” for any problem, rather than restricting it to physical injury resulting from an accident.

Useful medicines for the traveller

Some useful homeopathic medicines to consider taking with you when travelling are summarised below.

Common remedies for the homeopathic traveller			
Condition	Remedy	Form	Comments
Abrasions (superficial), scratches Antiseptic use	Calendula	Mother tincture Cream, ointment	Dilute with water Should not be used topically for deep cuts
Allergies	Euphrasia Mixed pollens/grasses	Tablets, pills, granules Eyedrops (prescription only) Tablets, pills, granules	Particularly where red itchy watery eyes Use twice daily Depends on area visited
Anxiety (about travelling)	Argent nit (worry) Aconite (terror) Rescue Remedy	Tablets, pills, granules Tablets, pills, granules Liquid and spray	Start taking night before travel Start taking two days before travel Flower remedy
Blood and crush injuries	Hypericum	Tablets, pills, granules Mother tincture	Take every 10 -15 mins Do not use topically on a severe injury
Bruising	Arnica	Mother tincture Cream, ointment and gel Tablets, pills, granules	May be diluted with water Apply topically Associated with general trauma, tiredness
Diarrhoea and vomiting	Arsen alb	Tablets, pills, granules	May need concurrent rehydration therapy Seek advice if lasts more than 2-3 days (especially in tropical climates)
Heat effects, headache and flushing with sudden onset	Belladonna	Tablets, pills, granules	Seek advice if persists
Indigestion, effects of overeating and drinking	Nux vomica	Tablets, pills, granules	
Insect bites	Apis mel Ledum	Tablets, pills, granules Tablets, pills, granules Mother tincture	Stings; surrounding area warm/hot Puncture wounds; cold to touch Apply topically
Insomnia	Coffea Passiflora	Tablets, pills, granules Tablets, pills, granules	Take before retiring; repeat if necessary
Jetlag	Arnica	Tablets, pills, granules	Take before, during, after flight as necessary
Motion sickness	Cocculus Petroleum Tabacum	Tablets, pills, granules Tablets, pills, granules Tablets, pills, granules	Air or car travel Associated with nausea and headache Sea travel
Sore throat, mouthwash/gargle	Calendula	Mother tincture	Dilute with water
Sun burn	Belladonna Cantharis Urtica	Tablets, pills, granules Tablets, pills, granules Cream, ointment Tablets, pills, granules	Hot, flushed with headache; rash Hot burning skin Use topically to soothe skin Take orally if skin broken in place of cream

In addition to the medicines listed in the table there is one other that might be particularly useful for people who suffer from exposure to the sun. It is called Sol; the mother tincture is made by exposing an alcohol/water mixture to direct sunlight for five hours. As well as taking the medicine (see below for suggested dose) it would be appropriate to follow the usual precautions of sitting in the shade, wearing a wide brimmed hat and using high factor sunscreen.

If you have any doubts on how to use the medicines or do not see the condition for which you require assistance do not hesitate to seek advice from a suitably qualified pharmacist or homeopathic practitioner.

Dose forms and levels

The table shows three different oral dose forms – tablets, pills and granules – all of which are convenient for travelling. Liquid forms of remedies are also available to be taken by mouth. These are called liquid potencies and usually come in special dropper bottles to facilitate placing three to four drops directly on the tongue or into a glass of water to be sipped.

Medicines for insomnia may be taken half an hour before retiring and again during the night if necessary. Medicines for motion sickness should be started two hours before travel and taken every two to four hours until the journey has been completed. There are different medicines depending on the mode of travel.

Anxiety about travelling can often be allayed either by choosing a suitable homeopathic medicine (see table) and using the dose



Photo courtesy of Alfred Buckingham

regimes suggested below or using another option – Rescue Remedy. This is a mixture of five flower remedies – Cherry plum, Clematis, Impatiens, Rock rose and Star of Bethlehem. Four drops of the liquid may either be placed directly on the tongue or diluted with water and sipped, four times daily as necessary. There is also a spray available.

Jet lag may prove troublesome particularly if you are travelling for a relatively short period across several time zones. In many overseas countries there are conveniently packaged proprietary homeopathic products for jet lag available in airport shops, but none of these is currently licensed for sale in the UK. The main medicine to consider is Arnica. When being used for jet lag Arnica should be taken in the 30c potency every two hours on the day of travel

and the following day if necessary; for longer journeys the medicine may be taken every four hours or as often as practicable.

The 6c potency of Sol mentioned above can be taken prophylactically commencing five or six days prior to departure, at the acute level of dosing (see opposite) rising to the first aid level immediately prior to departure and then reverting to the acute level for the remainder of the trip.

For other conditions there are two dose levels that may be used:

First aid level: one tablet or pill (or a salt spoon sized dose of granules) of 30c potency should be taken every 15 minutes to two hours (depending on the severity of symptoms) for six doses. Relief is usually obtained by this time, but it is possible to repeat this regime if necessary.

Acute level: if the condition continues to persist then it would be appropriate to move to the acute level of dosing. Here the 30c potency is given three times a day for up to seven days. If progress is not being made or you are unhappy at any stage then seek professional advice.

Mother tinctures should be diluted before application by adding ten drops to half a tumbler of water. In countries where the water supply may be suspect freshly boiled and cooled water should be used. Calendula for gargling should be similarly diluted.

Topical preparations should be applied sparingly twice daily. If the surface skin is deeply lacerated you should seek medical help.

Taking your existing medication with you

You should always take with you any medicines that you need on a regular basis and make sure that you keep them in hand luggage in case your flight is delayed or your main bags go missing. Medicines bought abroad may have similar names to those available in the UK but are often prepared to different standards or even have different ingredients.

Use of homeopathic medicines as “vaccines”

From time to time requests for “homeopathic vaccines” are received from people who are visiting areas where the risk of disease is high. Those patients who do choose to use homeopathic medicines in place of conventional travel vaccinations and for malaria prevention should be aware that there is no evidence that these provide any degree of protection. Such measures are, therefore, likely to be unacceptable to travel

insurance providers. The Faculty of Homeopathy does not promote this methodology, being of the opinion that there is currently no evidence at all to support its use.

Effects of X-ray exposure on remedies

It is not unusual for travellers to ask if their homeopathic remedies are likely to be adversely affected by X-ray security machines at airports. The intensity of the rays used in these machines is relatively low and remedies are unlikely to suffer any deterioration during the three or four exposures an average holiday might involve. However, if repeated exposure is likely, on an extended business trip for example, then it might be prudent to request a hand search although these days this might well meet with a curt refusal. The traveller should be careful not to

arouse suspicion – homeopathic remedies look remarkably similar to certain drugs of abuse! On more than one occasion I have been disturbed from my slumbers by an irate customs officer telephoning to seek assurance that the innocent-looking granules found in someone’s case were not something more sinister.

Further information

Further information for the serious traveller may be found in a comprehensive book written by Colin Lessell. *World Travellers’ Manual of Homoeopathy* (available from BHA Books, Glasgow) gives a fascinating insight into the myriad ways in which the unwary traveller may be infected, infested, stung, bitten or envenomed, quite apart from the common ailments resulting from fatigue, sprains, heat and cold. Happy travelling!



Photo: istockphoto.com

Steven Kayne PhD FRPharmS FFHom (Hon) was a community pharmacist in Glasgow for more than 30 years. He is currently Honorary Consultant Pharmacist at Glasgow Homoeopathic Hospital. The second edition of his book *Homeopathic Pharmacy* will be published by Churchill Livingstone later this year.