

Homeopathy and immunisation



A balance of risks

There are no risk-free choices when deciding about immunisation. A decision has to be made which balances the respective risks of suffering harm from a particular disease against the risks of harm from the immunisation.

Risks of disease

What are the risks of catching a particular infectious disease? The risks relate to the chances of coming into contact with a particular 'bug', the strength of that 'bug' and the overall health of the individual. Not every person is at the same risk. Very young babies, children with other chronic illnesses and children living in poverty all have higher risks of both being infected and of suffering harm from the infection. The chance of catching a particular infectious disease is greatly affected by the numbers of other people in the community that have been immunised.

Risks of immunisation

Immunisation should not be given to the sick or to those who are already trying to fight off an infection. The most common problems with vaccines are temporary local reactions, which may occur within days of the injection. Long-term problems have been suspected from time to time and the situation is different with different immunisations but overall, the consensus view among medical experts is that there is no significant evidence of frequent serious long-term side effects with the currently used vaccines.

What is homeopathy?

Homeopathy works on the principle of using like to cure like. In other words the medicines are made, in miniscule amounts, of the same substance that would cause the symptoms.

For example, in homeopathy a medicine derived from onions can be used to alleviate watery eyes and a runny nose, which are symptoms that an onion might cause.

The medicines are derived mainly from plants and minerals. The active ingredient is diluted many times (making it completely safe) and succussed (shaken vigorously) to produce the medicine.

The role of homeopathy

Homeopathy can be an appropriate way to treat the ill effects of an immunisation. It can also be used to help treat infectious diseases caught by those who had medical conditions which prohibited them from being immunised (contra-indications).

There are no proven homeopathic substitutes for immunisation. Some people have suggested using 'nosodes' (homeopathic preparations of the 'bugs' which cause the diseases). There is currently no evidence that nosodes are effective in humans. Relying on nosodes instead of immunisation may create a false sense of security, since efficacy is not proven.

Treating epidemics

Homeopathic medicines prescribed by trained practitioners can successfully treat epidemics of infectious disease, even where there are no other alternatives. For example, homeopathic medicines have been shown to relieve and shorten the duration of symptoms during outbreaks of influenza.

Constitutional medicines

You may be prescribed a homeopathic medicine which has been individually selected for you. This medicine may boost your overall wellbeing and health, making it less likely that you will catch an infection or help you to recover more quickly should you become ill. This is known as a constitutional prescription.

In summary

In the end, the decision is yours, but discussing your anxieties or fears with a healthcare professional may help you to decide, on the basis of the best information available. A list of doctors trained in homeopathy is available on our website at www.britishhomeopathic.org/getting_treatment/find_practitioner

The Faculty of Homeopathy follows the Department of Health guidelines on immunisation and recommends that immunisation be carried out in the normal way unless there are medical contra-indications.