

An Interview with Dr. Luc De Schepper, MD, PhD, D.I. Hom, LaC: Getting started with Homeopathy and FAQ's

You were trained as a Western medical doctor. What made you turn to homeopathy?

When I was a young doctor fresh out of medical school in Belgium, I thought I knew everything. But then I started seeing patients whom Western medicine just couldn't help. One young girl of 15 got headaches every time the weather changed—and in Belgium the weather changes three times a day! She had everything in Western medicine you can dream of, but nothing helped. Another lady, I will never forget it, she came in my office absolutely dripping with sweat. The sweat was pouring off her and dripping onto the floor. Western medicine could do nothing for her. Another lady could not speak. There was nothing physically wrong with her. Her family said she had not spoken a word since looking out the window and seeing a funeral procession—with her best friend's husband walking behind the hearse. The sudden shock of her best friend's death made her mute. I wanted to do something for these patients, but my Western medical training gave me no answers. So I went to a bookstore to look up alternative medicine and found a book on homeopathy. I wish these patients would walk through my door today, because these would all be easy cases for homeopathy.

What would you suggest for someone who wants to get started with homeopathy but feels bewildered by all the different remedies?

Get to know one or two remedies and all the different things they can be used for.

Arnica would be my first choice—it's king of the trauma remedies and king of the sports remedies. Arnica is good for the whole family for bumps, bruises, pulled muscles, and overuse of muscles, like someone who has a desk job and then gets 14 days vacation and wants to be a hero playing sports with his kids. It's even good for elderly people who get spontaneous bruises, because as we get older the capillaries become fragile and burst easily. Some lesser known uses of Arnica include overworry, overuse of the voice when someone is speaking all day, and for the flu, especially when there is a bruised feeling. Arnica is for bruises in general, and for illnesses with a bruised feeling, like when you feel as though a tank just ran over you and everything is sore, you don't want to be touched.

Arnica is also a great absorber of blood. For example, my patients have had amazing experiences with their kids who bump their heads and get a big egg on their forehead, which of course means there is a hematoma, a leakage of blood. With Arnica the swelling goes right down and then they don't have to take their kids to the emergency room.

Any other favorite remedies?

Arsenicum would be my second choice, especially for traveling. Never leave home without it! It's the top remedy for traveler's diarrhea and for food poisoning. Some people get diarrhea just from the change of diet when they travel. Arsenicum has rescued many, many a vacation, especially in the Middle East, China and South America where the water can be contaminated. Arsenicum is also great for the first stages of a cold or flu, when you are just getting a scratchy throat and your nose is running like a faucet with a clear, watery discharge. Arsenicum will nip it in the bud. Arsenicum is one of the top remedies for asthma and for shortness of breath in general, especially when you feel as though you are going to die because you can't catch your breath. And it's one of the best remedies for people who wake up after midnight, anxious and restless and unable to get back to sleep. But in both these cases people shouldn't diagnose themselves. For example, in homeopathy we have so many remedies for anxiety. The remedies are so precise, depending on whether the patient

has fear for the future, fear of death, of disease, of failure, of flying, of taking exams, and so on. This is the kind of thing we will teach in our school.

What's the best way to take the remedies?

This is one of homeopathy's best-kept secrets: take the remedies in water. When you buy a little tube in the store with 80 pellets, the label says to take 3 pellets 3 to 5 times a day under the tongue. (There is no secret door under the tongue!) But it will work much better and much faster for acute problems if you take one pellet and dissolve it in 4 to 8 ounces of water. Take one teaspoon as needed—as often as every 20 to 30 minutes in acute cases such as high fevers and accidents. One cup will be good for 24 hours. If you need the remedy again the next day, make another cup. If after 2-3 doses you are not experiencing any change, you can put a couple of pellets in 8 oz of water (put in a water bottle with some room at the top), pound it several times and take one tsp directly from the bottle. Putting it in water makes it reach more nerve endings. As soon as it touches the mucous membranes it starts to work. If someone can't swallow, you can even swab it on their skin.

What if you run out the same day, can you make another cup?

You could but you shouldn't need to, because as you start to feel better you slow down and take a teaspoon only maybe every hour or two. If you don't see any improvement by the time you finish the cup, it probably means you have the wrong remedy. (It could also mean the potency is too low, but this is something you will learn from experience.) If one is not improving, it is a good to consult a homeopath.

So why don't they say this on the label?

Maybe because they can sell more tubes this way! Or maybe because they just don't know. Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, developed this method of taking the remedies in water at the very end of his life, and the manuscript in which he described it was lost for nearly 100 years. Even now it is not well known. The people who work in the pharmaceutical companies have probably never read it.

Are there any situations when it's better to take the remedy dry?

Only if it's impractical to take it in water. When I play tennis I keep Arnica and Rhus tox. in my pockets in case I sprain my ankle. I can take some pellets and keep on playing, then as soon as I have a chance I put them in water. Here's another secret: if you are going to be out all day, driving around in the car, put the remedy in a water bottle and take it with you. Then each time you take the remedy you can succuss it (give it a hard thwack, a "slam-dunk"). This gradually increases the potency of the remedy and it will work even better this way.

How many pellets, say for a typical 16 oz. spring water bottle?

Just one, but you can put two pellets in to make sure, as very rarely, some pellets are not "impregnated" with the solution. You don't need four pellets, just because there is four times as much water. We are dealing with energy, not with molecules. It's a little more dilute this way, but succussing it will keep increasing the potency of the remedy.

Should you reduce the dosage for kids?

Not at all! In fact kids need higher potencies than adults. Never hesitate to give a child a higher potency. It's the opposite of Western medicine, where our dosages are based on body weight. In homeopathy, the dosage is based on the vital energy of the patient, and kids usually have much stronger vital energy than adults. Look at how fast a child can spike a fever. That shows how strong the vital energy is.

Let's say someone looks up in a homeopathy book and figures out that Lachesis is the best remedy for her left-sided headache, but when she goes to the store to buy it, the tube says it's for hot flashes. Why is that?

Each of the major remedies (the polycrests) has many, many different indications or uses. The pharmaceutical company can only fit one or two of them on the label. The good thing is that they have the freedom to do that, unlike vitamin companies, because homeopathic remedies are under a different law and the FDA allows this kind of labeling.

Do the remedies have side effects?

No, again because we are talking energy, not molecules. When you use potencies over 24c there is not even one molecule of the original substance left, and then when you put it in water it is even more dilute. You can get what we call a similar aggravation, though, if you take too much. An aggravation is a temporary intensification of the symptoms. It's unlikely to happen in acute cases, because you are using up the remedy so fast. You would have to really take a lot, to get this kind of reaction. If you do get an aggravation, just stop taking the remedy and your body will use up the excess. It's like speeding in a car. It's not a bad car, just a bad driver! You need to get used to the car. As you get experience using the remedies, you will get to know how fast you can take repeated doses.

Some people say you have to go through an aggravation to be cured with homeopathy. Would you agree with that?

Not at all! Hahnemann developed the water method to save people from the discomfort of aggravations.

Can you be allergic to the remedies?

No, for the same reason. Sometimes my patients say they can't take Sulphur as a remedy because they are allergic to sulfa drugs. An allergy to sulfa drugs is actually a good indication that the patient needs Sulphur!

What if someone is allergic to lactose, can they have a reaction to the lactose the pills are made from?

Not usually, but if they are extremely sensitive they could have a reaction if they take the pills dry. It's another good reason to take the remedies in water.

Can you develop a tolerance to the remedies the way you can to a drug?

As long as you need the remedy, it will continue to work. If your baby is learning to walk, all the time falling and smacking his head, you can give Arnica every day and it will continue to work. If a remedy stops working, it means you no longer need it.

Can the remedies be addictive? There is not one patient in a Betty Ford center addicted to homeopathic remedies!

Whereas there are many treatment centers and detox centers for people addicted to Western drugs. It's scary how easy it is for people to and get addicted. All it takes is one hospitalization, and they give you painkillers sleeping pills without your knowledge or your permission. Before you know it you're addicted. I have seen it many times in my practice.

What do the numbers mean—6c, 30c, 200c?

They represent the successive dilutions the remedies go through. "C" stands for centesimal and it means a dilution of 1 part of the remedy to 99 parts of alcohol at each stage. The remedy is succussed, or shaken, 100 times at each stage so that the energy of the remedy is imparted to the liquid. The higher the number, the higher the dilution—which in homeopathy means a more powerful remedy, because the vibrational energy is higher.

Usually in health food stores you find 6c, 12c and 30c potencies.

What's the difference in how they are used?

I would rather see 30c and 200c in stores for acute situations. I encourage my students

to get 200c kits once they are familiar with the remedies. 30c is better when you are first starting out because if you take the wrong remedy in a 200c, you could get an aggravation. 6c and 12c are too low to do any good for acute situations. 6c and 12c are only indicated for more chronic diseases, and people should definitely not diagnose or treat themselves for chronic diseases. Only a professional homeopath can do that.

Is that because 6c and 12c could be dangerous?

Not at all. It's because a layperson could not prescribe the right remedy for a chronic situation, in which the choice of remedy depends on the totality of symptoms of the physical, the mental and the emotional symptoms, as well as the onset of the disease. For example, if I have four patients with chronic fatigue, one may be never well since taking birth control pills, another never well since overwork and over-worry, another never well since multiple operations, and the fourth never well since heartbreak. They may all have the exact same physical symptoms and the same diagnosis in Western medicine, but they each get a different remedy from me, because homeopathy is so individualized to the patient.

What do you mean by acute and chronic?

Acute is something that just happened within the last day or two, within the last several weeks at most, that is self-limiting (it will go away by itself). In an acute disease, the vital energy of the patient is usually strong enough to overcome it. If not, it can turn into a chronic condition, one that develops over a long period of time and does not go away by itself. In a chronic condition there can be a steady overall downfall of the patient's health unless it is opposed by the right remedy. Other times there can be acute symptoms of a chronic state of imbalance or disorder in the system, such as PMS. A woman can have acute symptoms each month which can be treated with acute over-the-counter remedies each time—but if her overall constitution is treated by a professional homeopath, her symptoms will not recur. I have seen this many times in my practice—I do not even address the patient's PMS symptoms directly because they go away automatically with the well-chosen remedy.

A lot of times health food stores have combinations that have 6 or 8 different remedies. Wouldn't that be better than a single remedy, since you would be sure to cover your bases?

Actually, no, because the remedies can cancel each other out. I would rather see people become familiar with the single remedies. For example, I've seen a combination for Grief that has one remedy, Pulsatilla, for people who are very clingy and needy of consolation, and another, Nat-mur., for people who just want to be left alone in their grief. How can one person possibly need both?

Many homeopaths say you can't use mint, camphor or coffee when you are taking remedies. Would you agree?

Coffee is the only one I put the accent on in my own practice. If someone is drinking more than one cup a day, I get them off the coffee first (with Chamomilla, Nux vomica or Coffea). Decaffeinated coffee and other caffeine-containing foods like chocolate and cola are okay (not in other ways but in terms of canceling the remedy!) Mint and camphor are only important for the high potencies used by certain professional homeopaths, the Kentian prescribers. They won't make much difference in acute situations where you are repeating the doses frequently.

Some homeopaths tell their patients not to do acupuncture or polarity or take vitamins while on a remedy. Why is that?

I tell my patients to do anything they can to support their vital energy while they are

healing. Any healing modality such as acupuncture that follows the same natural laws as homeopathy will do nothing but help. The only thing is, they shouldn't start doing these things the same week they start the remedy. That will muddy the picture. Then if they have a reaction, it's not clear what they are reacting to.

I've heard that remedies are prescribed based on the symptoms present.

So does that mean the remedies can't be used preventively?

No, in fact here's another little-known tip. They can be used ahead of time if you know you are going to need them, but in this case make up your 4 oz stock bottle: take 1 tsp from the stock bottle into a 4 oz cup, stir and take 1 tsp. For example, Arnica should be taken before and after strenuous sports for someone who is not in shape, or for weight lifters, football players, soccer players and others who are likely to get pulled muscles or bruises. And if one person in the family comes down with a flu or cold, everyone else in the family can take the same remedy. If you know there is a flu coming to your area, before it even hits you can start the entire family taking Arsenicum, the best preventive flu remedy. Use 30c in a 4 oz stock bottle--take one tsp from the stock, into a 4 oz cup, stir and take one tsp once Weekly.

What's your basic approach in finding a remedy for your patients?

I have them make a time line with all the major traumas in their life, whether mental, emotional, physical, financial, or whatever. Any event that causes lasting symptoms will need to be treated eventually. We call it a layer. We start with the most recent layer first and work backwards, every time treating the Never Well Since (usually a mental or emotional trauma that triggered the onset of symptoms).

You are both a homeopath and an acupuncturist. What do you see as the connection between these two healing modalities?

They both work with the healing energy or vital qi, and they both follow the same natural laws of healing. For example, we know the patient is healing if the disease goes from the inside to the outside. Also both disciplines accent the mental and emotional origins of disease (unless there is a direct physical trauma like a cut, blow or burn). In both, each organ has certain emotions associated with it, like the liver and anger. Each of the main homeopathic remedies has a place on the Star of the Five Elements in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Homeopathy is so similar to acupuncture that Hahnemann must have read the acupuncture texts that were available to him in translation.

Does someone have to be a medical doctor to practice homeopathy?

In terms of licensing, it varies from state to state. In terms of knowledge, many of the greatest homeopaths of the past have been lay-people!

Can you share one last secret with us?

Here's a great one for sports injuries: if you're a basically healthy person and have a serious acute injury, like a pulled muscle, take in water: 1 tsp from 4 oz cup (4 oz stock bottle) Arnica 30c, then 200c, then 1M, each, 4 hours apart. I did this once when I pulled my thigh muscle while playing soccer. The muscle swelled up and turned hard as a rock. By the time I was through the Arnica it was back to normal again! I learned this tip from a Swiss-French homeopath and very few people in this country know about it.

How do I find out more about Homeopathy?

I have a good book on acute prescribing called Peoples Repertory ([link](#)), as well as more advanced books. Other places for beginning books to start on your path to deeper understanding of Homeopathy and research are Mimimum.com.

WholeHealthNow.com, Educational Services.

The People's Repertory (a how-to guide to homeopathy) and Human Condition Critical (an introduction to the laws and principles of homeopathy in chronic diseases) are excellent books for furthering your knowledge. Please see the Book Section to order