

# HOMEOPATHY POCKET GUIDE

## FAST FACTS

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), homeopathy is the second largest therapeutic system used in the world today; it is estimated that around 500 million people have adopted homeopathy as a method of treatment for their ailments and illnesses.<sup>1,2</sup>
- While its theories are not accepted by mainstream practitioners, there is a growing amount of basic and clinical evidence to support its effectiveness in clinical practice.<sup>3</sup>
- A survey conducted by Harvard University found that from 2007 to 2012, use of homeopathy in the United States had increased by 15%, and users of complementary and alternative medicine placed it in their top 3 most commonly used treatments.<sup>4</sup>
- Homeopathy has been integrated into the national health systems of many countries including, but not limited to, Germany, India, Mexico, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom.

## WHAT IS HOMEOPATHY?

There are two major principles or tenets of homeopathy:

- Like Cures Like
- The Minimum Dose

These principles are predicated on the belief that the body has an innate healing response, which homeopaths can stimulate and guide by having their patients ingest various homeopathic substances.

### Like Cures Like

Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843), the founder of homeopathy, believed that many of the symptoms produced when we are sick are the body's healing response to an illness. He observed that many substances could induce responses that mimicked this healing response in healthy people. So, his first principle established that in order for a disease to be treated homeopathically, the individual should be given a medicine that will stimulate symptoms similar to those that the ill person produces in the healing response. The homeopathic medicine that an individual is given will induce symptoms in a healthy person that are similar to the disease or illness, thus stimulating the body's innate healing response, helping them overcome the illness.

### The Minimum Dose

Hahnemann's second principle recognized that to safely activate your body's response to the disease and not overwhelm it, you only need a minimum (small) dose. Usually a patient seeing a homeopathic physician will be given this minimal dose (which is usually derived from a plant, animal or mineral) in the form of a pellet, pill, granule or liquid.

## What is the controversy around the use of homeopathy?

The primary controversy around homeopathy arises because the remedies or drugs used are often diluted to a point where it does not seem likely that any of the starting material would be present in the pellet, pill, granule or liquid. Critics have said this means that homeopathy cannot possibly work and, therefore, it must be no better than a placebo. Supporters say that the

process of producing remedies, which involves both dilution and succession (shaking), produces nano-particles (small particles) or other molecular forms in the pill or liquid that can produce physiological effects; therefore, the pill or liquid does not require the original substance to be present in the final product. Critics claim there is no clinical evidence or placebo-controlled studies proving homeopathy works. Supporters cite both observational and randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trials that show homeopathy's effectiveness.

## What is the American Institute for Homeopathy?

The American Institute for Homeopathy is the oldest existing national physician's organization in the United States; it was established in 1844, three years prior to the founding of the American Medical Association. The organization is composed of medically licensed individuals who are also trained in homeopathy. They come from different medical fields including physicians, dentists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, naturopaths, chiropractors, veterinarians, pharmacologists and pharmacists. The organization holds annual organizational and educational meetings and oversees the certification of a specialized certification: Diplomate of Homeotherapeutics (D.Ht.).

In order to receive a D.Ht., physicians are required to meet prerequisites and pass both a written and oral examination. These include being a licensed and practicing medical physician (M.D. or D.O.) and obtaining 350 training hours.

## What conditions does homeopathy treat?

Homeopathy is used for a variety of both mental and physical health conditions and used to address symptoms related to chronic health concerns including, but not limited to:

- ADHD
- Asthma
- Atopic dermatitis
- Allergies
- Diabetes
- Digestive issues
- Ulcerative colitis
- Emphysema
- Parkinson disease
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Respiratory infections

## Is there evidence that homeopathy works?

There is a growing body of research on homeopathy. This includes nearly 400 published laboratory studies, 1000 clinical studies and 6 systematic reviews or meta-analyses, as well as multiple government evaluations and reports. A majority of the systematic reviews have found that homeopathy is more effective than placebo. A study looking at homeopathic research over a 20-year span found that 70 percent of homeopathy trials had positive outcomes, including many that were double blind and randomized (considered the gold standard of evidence).<sup>5</sup> While debate over the mechanisms and effectiveness of homeopathy remains controversial, several large observational studies on the effects of homeopathy in actual practice have reported significant benefit.<sup>6-7</sup> Some of these studies indicate that homeopathy might help reduce unnecessary antibiotic use (a major global problem) and lower costs in primary care.<sup>8,9</sup>

## Are there precautions, side effects or safety concerns from homeopathy?

A systematic review found that homeopathic medicines taken under the supervision of a qualified homeopath are generally considered safe.<sup>10</sup> If you are under the supervision of a trained and certified homeopath, many of the safety concerns and risks can be avoided. Please consider the following when beginning any homeopathic treatments:

- If you are purchasing products claiming to be homeopathic, check that they have been properly prepared. They should be prepared using standards approved by both the Food and Drug Administration and the Homeopathic Pharmacopeia of the United States (HPUS). These regulations are not the same as the regulations for dietary supplements.
- Always look for the initials "HPUS" on the label to indicate that medicines are prepared in correct manner. Products labeled as homeopathic are not always prepared according to these regulations, and you may be ingesting a non-homeopathic dose. This is especially important to verify when taking additional medications since a higher dosage of the chemical in a false homeopathic medication may result in a negative reaction or interaction with other drugs you are taking.
- It is not recommended that you cease the use of any proven mainstream forms of medicine for the use of homeopathy unless advised to do so by your physician.
- Homeopathic products referred to as "nosodes" or "homeopathic immunizations" have been advertised as replacements for conventional immunizations. These advertisements can be dangerous as there is no evidence supporting this claim; you should not avoid immunizations.

If you would like to read more about the potential safety concerns when using homeopathic treatments, please visit:

[www.nccih.nih.gov/health/homeopathy](http://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/homeopathy).

## How often and how long is each session?

How often and for how long you will see a homeopath is dependent on the reason you are seeking the help of a certified homeopathic clinician and the homeopath's approach to treatment. In the original form of homeopathy, called "classical" homeopathy, the first session can last up to an hour or more depending on the symptoms you are experiencing, the depth and duration of the condition and the time the homeopath uses for determining a medication for your symptom profile. Other forms of homeopathy or treatment for acute conditions can be much shorter. Typically, after your first session, your homeopath will want to schedule a follow-up consultation in one month to six weeks (in the "classical" form) or at another interval from your first appointment.

## What training/certifications do homeopaths need to practice?

Globally, the licensing of homeopaths varies considerably from country to country, with some countries fully legalizing the practice and some restricting or banning it. Please see the following document published by the WHO to review the current status of homeopathy throughout the world:

- [apps.who.int/medicinedocs/pdf/h2943e/h2943e.pdf](https://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/pdf/h2943e/h2943e.pdf)

The WHO also produced the following document to assist Member States on technical aspects of the production and manufacture of homeopathic medicines:

- [www.who.int/medicines/areas/traditional/prehomeopathic/en](http://www.who.int/medicines/areas/traditional/prehomeopathic/en)

In the United States, homeopathic certifications and diplomas are not currently regulated at a national level. Regulation of homeopaths occurs on the state level and by licensing boards whose requirements may differ depending on the state and the specialty. A current directory outlining the requirements needed by a homeopath to practice by state does not currently exist. If you would like to learn about your state's requirements, you should either contact your state or the professional organization that licenses the provider. One of the following organizations can also provide more information for some types of providers:

- North American Society of Homeopaths: [www.homeopathy.org](http://www.homeopathy.org)
- Council for Homeopathic Certification: [www.homeopathicdirectory.com](http://www.homeopathicdirectory.com)
- American Institute of Homeopathy: [www.homeopathyusa.org](http://www.homeopathyusa.org)

Individuals who have some form of training and who practice homeopathy tend to be licensed medical doctors (MDs), osteopathic medicine doctors (DOs), chiropractic doctors (DCs), naturopathic doctors (NDs) or nurse practitioners (NPs). Individuals who are not licensed in a medical field can receive homeopathic training and are only allowed to act as counselors/advisers to individuals interested in using homeopathy, not to practice medicine.

Formed in 1982, the National Center for Homeopathy created the Council on Homeopathic Education (CHE), an independent organization founded with the purpose of setting professional standards for homeopathic training. Since there is a lack of uniformity regarding training approaches and guidelines, the CHE has created a directory of schools and a list of certification programs that provide physicians and medical practitioners with training to act as homeopaths. The following websites can provide you with an overview of the CHE's approved schools and certification programs:

- National Center for Homeopathy: [www.homeopathycenter.org/professional-and-organizational-directory](http://www.homeopathycenter.org/professional-and-organizational-directory);  
[www.homeopathycenter.org/studying-homeopathy](http://www.homeopathycenter.org/studying-homeopathy)
- American Institute of Homeopathy—Diplomate Specialty Certification: [www.homeopathyusa.org/certification.html](http://www.homeopathyusa.org/certification.html). MDs and DOs may seek the Diplomate Specialty Certification (D.Ht.), a specialized certification overseen by the American Institute for Homeopathy.

## How do I find a practitioner near me?

The following links provide information on homeopathic providers in the United States:

- The Council for Homeopathic Certification: [www.homeopathicdirectory.com/find-homeopath.html](http://www.homeopathicdirectory.com/find-homeopath.html)
- The National Center for Homeopathy: [www.nationalcenterforhomeopathy.org](http://www.nationalcenterforhomeopathy.org)
- The American Association of Naturopathic Physicians: [www.naturopathic.org](http://www.naturopathic.org)
- The North American Society of Homeopaths [www.homeopathy.org](http://www.homeopathy.org)
- Homeopathic Educational Services in Berkeley, California: [www.homeopathic.com](http://www.homeopathic.com)
- American Institute for Homeopathy [www.homeopathyusa.org/specialty-board/board-certified-physicians.html](http://www.homeopathyusa.org/specialty-board/board-certified-physicians.html)

## How much will seeing a homeopath cost me?

The cost of seeing a homeopath will vary based on location, provider and extent of services needed. Costs for seeing an MD or DO homeopath in the United States range widely from \$150 to \$500 for your first session, which may last from one to two hours. Some non-MD homeopaths charge less (\$30-\$80) per consultation. Providers who simply incorporate the use of homeopathic remedies into their regular practice may not charge any additional fees beyond their normal visit costs. Homeopathic remedies themselves typically cost less than \$10. Costs in other countries vary widely by country and location.

## Will my insurance company cover the cost of seeing a homeopathic practitioner?

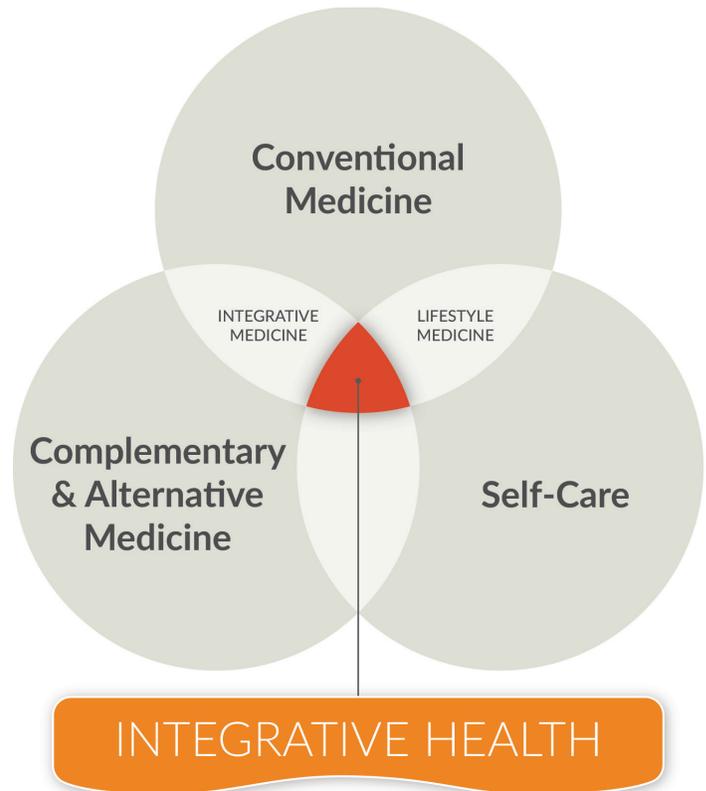
It is unlikely that your insurance company will cover the cost of seeing a homeopath or pay for the medication he or she prescribes. However, it is possible that your insurance company will cover the services of a licensed medical professional such as an MD, DO, NP, ND or DC who also practices homeopathy.

## Should I inform my primary care physician?

Yes. It is important when using homeopathy to let your primary care physician and any other health care provider treating you know that you include homeopathy in the tools you are using. To receive optimal treatment and effectively address your condition, it is best to openly communicate with all your health care providers. Open communication can help you and your health care provider optimize treatment and avoid complications.

The following websites might be of assistance to you and your physician when discussing homeopathic treatments:

- [www.hpus.com/regulations.php](http://www.hpus.com/regulations.php)
- [www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/InformationbyDrugClass/ucm589282.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/InformationbyDrugClass/ucm589282.htm)



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