Sinusitis and bronchitis are two very common conditions to watch out for in the damp and cold conditions of the winter months, especially in northern climates. Sinus pressure and headaches, nasal discharge, post-nasal drip, and deep, racking coughs can cause sinusitis and bronchitis sufferers to feel simply miserable. Fortunately, homeopathy can help these illnesses rapidly and effectively, usually without the necessity for antibiotics.

Homeopaths consider bronchitis and sinusitis as either transient acute illnesses, or, in their chronic manifestations, as part of the constitutional picture of the patient. If these conditions rarely occur for the patient, they may be treated as acute illnesses and given homeopathic medicines that are only to be taken during the course of the infection. If the infections are recurrent, however, it is necessary to delve more deeply into the case in order to find a medicine that will help the whole person and prevent, or at least decrease, subsequent episodes.

Sinusitis may result from viral, bacterial, or fungal infection, or from acute or chronic allergic reactions. It is usually characterized by increased mucus, with stuffiness and/or green or yellow, stringy, viscous or fluent nasal discharge, and increased pressure in the sinuses. Facial pain in the regions of the maxillary and frontal sinuses and headaches are common. The deep sinus pain can be helpful in distinguishing sinusitis from the similar symptoms of the common cold.

If a bacterial infection is present, there may be fever and chills, either low grade or rising higher as the condition worsens. A bacterial sinusitis, if untreated, could lead to a more serious systemic infection, or at least contribute to the development of bronchitis or pneumonia.

Treating Sinusitis with Homeopathy

When treating sinusitis, the homeopath wants to know several pieces of information. First, is the condition acute or chronic? If acute, the suggestions for homeopathic medicines below are applicable. If chronic, the patient should see a homeopath for the best long-term results. Next, it is important to know the onset of the condition, any factors which seemed to contribute to the illness beginning, such as stress, lack of sleep, dietary changes, or exposure to the elements, allergens, or people who were possibly contagious. The sequence in which symptoms developed may also be helpful.

Once the antecedents to the illness are well-defined, the actual symptoms and the way they affect the patient assume the most importance in the case. In sinusitis, the two most important factors are the type and odor of the discharge, and the location and quality of the pains. The presence or lack of fever may also give some indication of the nature of the infection, but not always. The source of the infection is less important homeopathically than the characteristic symptoms.

As with most homeopathic treatment, there is no one medicine for sinusitis. Rather, the symptoms of the patient are matched with the characteristic symptoms of possible homeopathic medicines. The single best match is then given and the results assessed.

Homeopathic Medicines for Sinusitis

Suppose the person with sinusitis says, “I feel so much pressure in my sinuses, they feel like they would burst!” He continues with “I am so stuffed up, and the mucus is this yucky yellowish green stuff that comes out in strings.” Then, he describes the pain in his sinuses, as though it was located in small spots, rather than throughout the whole area, and especially, describes pain at the root of the nose. By this time, the remedy is clear to most homeopaths: Kali bichromicum, probably the most frequently prescribed homeopathic medicine for sinusitis.

Another patient suffering from sinusitis, but has a different set of symptoms. She is also complaining of yellowish green discharge, but it is more fluent and drips down the back of her throat, causing a moist cough and throat clearing. She is sweating, and if not careful, she drools. Her husband comments, “You have the worst breath ever,” and she describes a metallic taste in her mouth. Her tongue is thickly coated and you can see the indentations of her teeth in her tongue.

Patients needing two other medicines for sinusitis are quite irritable, and the third is quite mildly tempered. The irritable patients need Nux vomica or Hepar sulphuricum, and the mild sinusitis sufferer should improve with Pulsatilla nigricans, if other symptoms agree.

Hepar sulph patients complain bitterly about their symptoms and everything annoys them. They are very sensitive to the cold, and better from warmth and wrapping up. They tend to sneeze from every draft. Their noses stop up or run from exposure to the cold air or a cold, dry wind and the nasal discharge smells like old cheese.

Nux vomica patients share the irritability and chilliness of Hepar sulph. They seem to have a “type A” personality.
and are often impatient and bossy, as in “I want the medicine now! I have to get back to work right away!” Little things tend to frustrate them easily. The sinus symptoms are worse in the morning, with sneezing and runny nose, but their noses can stuff up considerably in the evening and at night. Going outdoors can also make their symptoms worse.

Pulsatilla sinusitis shares the yellowish green discharge of Mercurius and Kali bichromicum, but the consistency is thick and bland. Stiffness is a major symptom, and the nose feels stopped up while lying down or when indoors. The ears are often stopped up along with the nose and the nasal discharge is foul smelling. Pulsatilla patients are whiny and weepy, and often ask for company and comforting when sick. Their emotions are changeable. They are often without much thirst, and they desire rich, creamy food like peanut butter and ice cream, which can make them feel worse.

When a homeopathic medicine works for sinusitis, one can expect that the sinus pressure and pain will decrease, the fever will abate, the discharge will return to clear and any congestion will become less within 24 to 48 hours. The illness may simply go away at that point. Sometimes, even though the correct homeopathic medicine is effective for the symptoms of the sinusitis, the illness may progress into the chest, leading to a cough until the mucus is fully expelled.

Bronchitis

Acute bronchitis is an inflammation of the bronchial tubes in the lungs that may occur secondary to sinusitis, or to a cold or other upper respiratory infection, a fever, a sore throat, nasal discharge or post-nasal drip. The appearance of an episode of bronchitis may be the result of infection, allergies or irritation from chemicals or other inhalants. It may last several days to several weeks. Some occurrences of acute bronchitis may become chronic if left untreated, or if the maintaining causes persist.

The symptoms of bronchitis are mainly cough and sputum. The homeopathically significant symptoms relate to variations of these two symptoms, such as the sound, painfullness and timing of the cough, and the viscosity and color of the sputum, giving some indication of the source and severity of the illness.

As in any homeopathic prescription, other factors also influence the choice of homeopathic medicine, including onset and duration of symptoms, environmental exposures to wind, damp and cold, and emotional factors and stressors.

Homeopathic Medicines for Bronchitis

There are many potential medicines for bronchitis and other conditions in which cough is the prominent symptom. Here we can cover the most often considered and prescribed medicines; ie. the ones which have helped many cases of bronchitis in our practice.

Sinusitis & Bronchitis

The medicines in the first line of defense in healing bronchitis are Antimonium tartaricum, Coccus cacti, Bryonia, Drosera, Hepar sulphuricum, Phosphorus, Rumex and Spongia. Each of these has its characteristics pattern of symptoms that makes it unique.

Antimonium tartaricum is for the person who has a loose, rattling cough without much expectoration. It is a common medicine in bronchitis of infants and the elderly. Children needing this medicine often hate to be looked at or touched. They are irritable and whiny and usually want to be left alone, or sometimes carried, like Cina or Chamomilla. Sometimes there is an overpowering sleepiness during the cough (Opium, Nux moschata). There is difficulty breathing and the pattern is short and rapid. The lips could turn blue from lack of oxygen. These patients are worse from lying down, getting too warm or becoming angry. They are better once they get the mucus out, and sometimes after sitting up, belching or vomiting. They prefer cold, open air.

The hallmark of a Bryonia bronchitis is that the symptoms are worse from any movement. Even just the movement of the chest during respiration or coughing can be painful, or lead to extended bouts of coughing. The cough is hard and dry, without much expectoration. There is shortness of breath, but deep breathing worsens the cough.

Dryness is the next prominent characteristic. There is a great thirst for cold drinks, and the lips are often dry and chapped.

[Vitamin E is a Symphony, Not a Soloist!]

The fact is, the “vitamin E” supplements available in North America are mislabeled. They contain alpha-tocopherol, and maybe a tiny bit of the other tocopherols (beta-, gamma-, and delta-tocopherols). But vitamin E is more than alpha-tocopherol. It’s more than “mixed tocopherols,” too. Vitamin E is an eight-member complex vitamin, like theB-complex. It includes all four tocopherols, plus the four tocotrienols in there natural ratios, as partners in the vitamin E team.

Typical “vitamin E” supplements just don’t mesh with this reality. No amount of alpha-tocopherol can fully substitute for gamma-tocopherol — and no amount of “mixed tocopherols” can make up for getting no tocotrienols in your supplement.

The fact is, if you’re just getting alpha-tocopherol — or alpha with “mixed tocopherals” throw in as an afterthought — you’re not getting “vitamin E.” You’re getting a lopsided vitamin E fraction.

Total E is Canada’s first complete, balanced E-complex vitamin first introduced in 1999. Providing all eight vitamin E molecules, just two Total E softgels a day balances the top-heavy alpha-tocopheral content in most “vitamin E” supplements or premium multivitamins.

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Better from lying on the painful side, which prevents it from moving, and from pressure. They like cool, open air, rest, and warm drinks, especially warm milk.

_Coccus cacti_ bronchitis cases are characterized by thick, stringy mucus (Kalium bichromicum). There is a lot of throat clearing and the throat tickles violently. The racking cough may lead to vomiting long strings of mucus. The same stringy mucus may originate in the sinuses and drop profusely into the throat and lungs. At times there is a sensation of a thread hanging down the back of the throat.

_Coccus cacti_ patients feel worse from both heat and cold (Mercurius sol) and from lying down (Drosera). However, they are also known to improve from cold air, cold drinks and a cold bath, and they will often ask for frequent, large drinks of water.

Those needing _Drosera_ are known for their violent fits of hard, painful coughing with choking and gagging, even vomiting at the end of the episode. The cough is dry, barking, croupy and spasmodic (Spongilla). The cough may come from a sensation of dryness and irritation in the larynx, as if from a feather or crumb that is stuck there.

_Drosera_ patients are worse from lying down in bed, from the warmth of the bed, and especially at night, after midnight. The cough may also come on from taking cold food or drinks. Emotionally, people needing this medicine may feel persecuted or harassed.

Those bronchitis sufferers needing _Hepar sulphuricum_ are known for two primary characteristics accompanying most conditions: extreme irritability and great sensitivity to cold. They are also very sensitive to pain. Their coughs often come on after exposure to cold and they tend to get bronchitis after every cold they catch. All symptoms in _Hepar sulphuricum_ are worse from cold and drafts, and nasal congestion is worse in cold, dry air. These people are better from bundling up and warmth in general to counteract their sensitivity to the cold.

Coughs for those who need _Hepar_ tend to be either dry or loose, but in either case it is difficult to bring the mucus up, though there may be a lot of thick yellow mucus present in the bronchi. The cough is worse from cold drinks, and also tends to be worse in the morning. Like _Antimonium tartaricum_ patients, there can be rattling in the chest, with a feeling of weakness.

Constitutional _Phosphorus_ patients can be recognized by their friendly, outgoing, sympathetic nature. In acute bronchitis, you may find people who need _Phosphorus_ also need company to relieve their suffering. They are very thirsty for cold drinks, especially carbonated beverages. The bronchitis may lead to pneumonia, characterized by rusty or bloody sputum and frothy mucus that tastes salty or sweet.

Individuals with bronchitis who need _Phosphorus_ start as head colds that develop into bronchitis with sore throat and hoarseness. The cough is hard, hacking and painful, at first dry, then looser as time goes on. The chest feels tight and oppressed, and coughs may linger on and on.

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**Sinusitis & Bronchitis**

_Bryonia_ patients are known for being irritable, overconcerned with business and money, and often have a desire to go home. Their symptoms are characteristically worse at midnight. Their symptoms are characteristically worse at midnight. They are also very sensitive to pain. Their coughs often come on as soon as the head touches the pillow and continues as long as the person is lying down. Mucus tends to collect in the throat and must be hawked out.

Other factors that make the cough worse are inhaling cold air or change of temperature, like going from a warm room outside or vice versa. Talking or touching the throat also aggravate the cough. Two things that can improve the cough are covering the mouth or sucking on an unmentholated lozenge.

_Spongilla_, another well-known cough medicine is best known for its deep, dry, hollow, barking cough, like a seal's bark or a saw cutting through wood. There is considerable hoarseness, and a feeling of a plug in the larynx with anxious, gasping breathing and a suffocating feeling. Heart palpitations may occur along with the bronchitis. Breathing is short and difficult, and the air passages feel dry. Those people needing _Spongilla_ for their bronchitis tend to be worse in a warm room, while lying down, after midnight and from exertion. Warm food and downward motion can improve their symptoms.

**The Course of Treatment**

As you can see from this summary of the main remedies for sinusitis and bronchitis, it is important to understand the symptoms quite specifically in order to select the appropriate homeopathic medicine. When the correct medicine is chosen, however, improvement and recovery are often rapid and dramatic. In most cases, a few doses of a 30C potency, given every few hours, will start the healing process.

If the homeopathic medicine that is needed is obvious, a higher potency, such as 200C or 1M may be given less frequently for more rapid and complete healing.

(For more information on taking the case for acute bronchitis and sinusitis and dosing, please see our book, _Homeopathic Self-Care: The Quick and Easy Guide for the Whole Family_ (Prima, 1997), from which much of the information above was excerpted.)
