

The First Appointment

Health issues, learning difficulties, behavioural problems, and autism spectrum disorders.

Welcome Back

Welcome, my name's Fran Sheffield and I'm your host for this Homeopathy for Children Webinar Series in which you'll learn how homeopathy is used for the behavioural problems, learning difficulties, and autism spectrum disorders of children.

If you're completely new to homeopathy and would like an overview of the basics, My Homeopathy has a free webinar at its website called Introduction to Homeopathy. You'll find it at www.myhomeopathy.net. We also discussed the homeopathic care of children in the My Homeopathy Forum, but I'll tell you more about this parent forum as we progress through the series.

Last webinar, Webinar 2, was about self-treatment or professional management. We looked at the different levels and different treatments for trauma, first aid, acute, chronic, and preventative problems, homeopathy as primary healthcare or as a process, how to recognize capable homeopaths and the questions to ask them, children's stories from the clinic, and two new remedies.

This webinar, Webinar 3, is all about the first appointment. We'll talk about what to bring and what to expect. If you're using other therapies and approaches, we'll look at whether to stop or to keep going, some children's stories from the clinic, and a spotlight on two new remedies.

Let's make a start with some basic things you should know.

Things to Know

With the time spent and the type of questions asked, most people are really surprised by their first visit to a homeopath.

The information you provide about your child at this consult helps a homeopath decide which remedy to prescribe, so that information needs to be as accurate and complete as possible.

Your homeopath will guide you through the process by asking many questions and encouraging you to tell your child's story as fully as possible.

Some practitioners may have slightly different approaches in the way that they collect this information, but all of these basics I'm about to discuss should be covered.

Different Consultations

It's important to know that not all consultations are the same. As we discussed in last webinar, an appointment for an acute complaint such as the pain and swelling of an insect bite is different to a consultation for a chronic condition such as juvenile arthritis.

An acute consultation deals with health complaints that have a limited life that come and go over a short period of time. Acute complaints include things such as headaches, coughs, colds, indigestion, sprains, strains, bruises, stings, burns, diarrhoea, and ear infections. A consultation for these problems takes less time than one for long-term chronic complaints.

If you feel your child's acute complaint is just a small part of a much bigger problem, it would be best to book a longer a constitutional or chronic appointment so your homeopath has the time to get to the bottom of things.

Chronic problems such as allergies, asthma, eczema, irritable bowel, food intolerances, or prolonged constipation, aren't short-lived events. They don't resolve quickly. From the homeopathic perspective, they're not even separate problems, but different parts of a much larger disorder.

A longer consultation gives a homeopath time to collect all the information on these different problems so that the picture of the true disorder can be built. These consultations are often called "constitutional" or "chronic" consultations.

If you're unsure which consultation would be best for your child, just ask your homeopath at the time of making an appointment and they'll advise you.

Acute Consultations

Now, let's look at acute consultation.

While acute case taking styles may differ from practitioner to practitioner, your homeopath will fundamentally cover the following points: the location, sensation, cause, modality, and the accompanying symptoms of the particular problem your child has.

For the purpose of explaining these points, let's imagine your child has a headache. Before it can be treated homeopathically, your practitioner will need to know as much as possible the following information:

Location: Where does it hurt? Is it the right side, left side, on the top of the head, temples, forehead, base of the skull, or somewhere else?

Sensation: What does it feel like? Is it throbbing, aching, burning, stabbing, boring, band-like, or something else?

Cause: Was it triggered by anything such as fever, shock, a blow, heat, grief, anxiety, or a particular food, or perhaps something else?

Modalities: Things or situations that make symptoms better or worse. Is the headache worsened or improved for heat, cold, bending, lying, sitting, moving, eating, drinking, rubbing, noise, or perhaps something else?

Accompanying symptoms: Other symptoms that are happening with the headache such as food cravings, changes in thirst, itchy skin, cramps, burning eyes, chilliness, fever, or perhaps something else?

As you can see, in homeopathy, a headache is not just a headache!

Without additional information, it's impossible to choose which specific remedy will help out of the hundreds of remedies that can be used for headaches. If you'd like to learn more about how to use homeopathy in the home, just visit My Homeopathy again, and pick up the Easy Homeopathy Webinar Series.

Chronic Consultations

Let's take a look at chronic consultations.

In a chronic consultation, your homeopath will ask questions about your child's immediate problem, and then gather other symptoms.

Physical Complaints

They'll ask about physical complaints, and they'll want to know all the problems your child's prone to either now or in the past as that information will then be used to build a complete picture of your child's health.

A good way to bring this to mind is to ask yourself when you've had to either visit the doctor or other healthcare practitioner, give some form of medication (orthodox or complementary), or need hospitalisation or surgery.

While your homeopath will certainly jog your memory during the consultation, it's useful to also note these instances down beforehand, preferably in the order that they occurred so that you'll be able to remember them easily.

Your homeopath will also appreciate reports from relevant pathology tests or diagnostic investigations your child has had, along with the list of any current medications they're taking.

Individual Response

Individual response to environmental stimuli is also important.

As your homeopath continues to collect the symptoms that paint a picture of your child's particular imbalance, they'll ask things like the strength of their thirst and appetite, the type of food they normally eat, especially food cravings and aversions, or foods that aggravate and disagree.

Sleep patterns, repetitive dreams, and even the position in which your child sleeps are important. Also, the sort of weather that does and doesn't suit them, and the reaction to different environmental factors such as animals, music, and company - do they enjoy them or avoid them?

Conception, Pregnancy, and Early Development

Your homeopath will also be interested in your physical and emotional state before and during pregnancy, the pregnancy and the birthing experience, vaccines given and any reactions that took place, and the time it took for your child to reach milestones such as teething, walking, and talking.

Temperament and Personality

Temperament and personality and excesses in personality traits and behaviours are also symptoms.

For example, practicing how to save and spend money wisely is a good thing for a child to learn, but if spending money creates anxiety and leads to hoarding, a problem obviously exists.

In the same way, there's nothing wrong with being organised and neat; but if these good traits were replaced by obsessive cleanliness or controlling behaviour, your child is no longer operating from a place of health.

Changes in behaviour during sickness are also important. If your child is normally happy and easy-going, but has become irritable, fuzzy, or emotional with their illness, your homeopath will note these changes as symptoms.

One of the amazing things about homeopathy is that the right remedy stabilizes moods and behaviours just as easily as physical problems and symptoms.

Anxieties, Fears, and Phobias

Fears, phobias, and range other things should not be thought of as a normal way of life for a child. They too are symptoms of the underlying imbalance, and point to the needed remedy.

These behaviours soften and resolved with treatment. This includes fears and phobias of things such as darkness, animals, heights, thunderstorms, something happening to other family members, blood, ghosts or monsters, snakes, crossing bridges... a whole gamut of things.

Other Things

Your homeopath should also ask about the family medical history. A tendency to diseases such as cancer, heart disease, lung problems, strokes, and mental disorders in other family members can point to groups of remedies that may help.

They will then use all the collected information to build a complete picture of your child's health. The remedy that best matches the symptom totality is able to work deeply and stimulate widespread changes.

Your homeopath will also check for things that may have caused your child's health problem or which are acting as a barrier to healing. For example, a child with respiratory problems or allergies will struggle to improve in a mouldy house.

Likewise, constant exposure to harsh or irritating chemicals will not only cause dermatitis, but will interfere with its healing even though the correct remedy may be prescribed. In both of these instances, the best solution is to remove the cause.

Finally, your homeopath will refer you or your child to your doctor for pathology or diagnostic test should his or her symptoms indicate the possibility of a more serious disorder.

Detail Counts

A true homeopath treats a diseased person rather than the diseases they have.

A diagnosis of measles, for instance, doesn't help the homeopath find the correct remedy to treat the measles, but exactly how the person is 'measling' does.

The homeopath focuses on the individual's unique symptoms and experience of their disease, rather than the common symptoms that everyone with measles would have (in contrast, conventional doctors depend on the common symptoms for their prescribing).

Homeopaths then use those unique symptoms to find the matching remedy that will quickly return the unwell person to health. This process is detailed, but effective.

Your child's first consultation with a homeopath will be longer than a normal visit to a doctor, but if it starts him or her on the journey back to health, it's well worth it.

Other Therapies - To Stop or Not?

What if you're already using a number of other treatments and approaches in an effort to help your child - should they be stopped when starting homeopathy? The answer is no and for three reasons.

First, as homeopathy works on an energetic level, it doesn't interact with chemical medicines, conventional or natural, and so it's safe to use with all of them.

Second, on starting treatment with homeopathy, it's best to keep everything the same so that it's easy to tell the effects from the homeopathic remedy.

If other treatments are stopped, started, or changed at the same time starting homeopathy, it becomes hard to tell which one is responsible for any changes, positive or negative.

Third, it's important that treatments on which your child depends - as may be the case for some conventional medicines - should not be suddenly stopped or changed without your prescribing doctor's supervision.

Your child's life could be in danger if long-term drugs such as insulin and steroids are suddenly stopped or reduced without supervision.

The reverse is also true. With significant improvement, your child should be reassessed by his or her prescribing doctor, as doses of their prescription medicines may no longer be needed and could lead to an overdose.

Once improvements are seen and it's clear what the remedy is doing, other treatments can then be stopped or adjust as needed.

Common treatments and interventions, and their implications for homeopathic treatment will be discussed in more detail during Webinar 5.

It's time to look at the two remedies we're going to cover this webinar.

Remedy 5: Stramonium (Stram.)

The first one is Stramonium, a fascinating remedy. It's prepared from a poisonous plant called Datura Stramonium, also known as the thornapple or devil's apple. You may even have it growing in your yard.

Mental-Emotional Features of Stramonium

The mental-emotional symptoms consist of intense emotions and fear of violence, which lead to hitting, kicking, biting, and destructive behaviours.

These fears increase at night, and there's a strong fear of the dark. They look terrified, and they want to sleep with their parents. They must have the light on. They feel abandoned, alone, and in great danger if they're not with their parents. They'll cling to the parents in fear and terror.

Night terrors are a big problem with children who need this remedy. They'll scream in their sleep and they'll wake in terror. The terror of Stramonium is as though they're about to die horribly at the hands of an evil presence, of being eaten alive by wild animals, or being devoured by terrifying monsters.

Physical Symptoms of Stramonium

- Childhood fevers
- Dislike drinking water
- Eyes sensitive to bright light – photophobia
- Stammering
- Convulsions, spasms, grimaces, twitches, jerks

At this point, I want to remind you of our jigsaw analogy too, because if a child had all of these symptoms, all of these pieces of the puzzle, they'd be a very unwell child, and you'd be very, very concerned.

Most Stramonium children start their day quite happily. It's as nightfall comes that they start to get a little bit nervous and a little bit clingy, very frightened of the dark.

While some children are sick enough to have all of these symptoms present, some are only bothered by their fears and never have spasms, or convulsions, or twitches, or jerks.

Once again, if your child's symptoms fit the puzzle, but they don't have all the symptoms of that puzzle, that doesn't matter. The remedy will still have a healing or curative effect for them.

Remember, if your child doesn't have all of these symptoms, doesn't have all the pieces of the Stramonium puzzle, that doesn't matter as long as their pieces do match because Stramonium will still be a helpful remedy for them.

What to Expect from Treatment with Stramonium

If your child needs Stramonium, what can you expect to see?

They'll stop reacting as though they're under threat or about to be attacked. They'll become calmer or more relaxed.

The night terrors quickly stop and they'll no longer cling. They no longer need the light on at night or come into the parents' bed, and they gradually feel more comfortable until all that fear of darkness disappears completely.

They feel comfortable with animals and water, no longer fearful of either of those, and they cope better with narrow and closed places. They're no longer claustrophobic.

The spasms, twitching, ticks, and grimaces settle. The stammer reduces, and then disappears, and the speech becomes fluent, and the eyes lose the sensitivity to the light.

How long do you have to wait before these symptoms improve? As with all things in homeopathy, the more intense and strong the symptoms, the faster the improvements.

So, if your child was having night terrors, waking up screaming every night, you'd be expecting to see within the week, those night terrors would be gone or significantly reduced.

The same with a lot of the other fears and anxieties. The worst of them would settle very quickly, and then over the coming weeks, the more minor ones would settle and disappear as well.

Remedy 6: Tuberculinum bovinum (Tub.)

Moving on to our second remedy for this webinar, Tuberculinum bovinum or Tub for short. Now, Tub is prepared from the discharge of a bovine tubercular abscess or a cow tubercular abscess.

Before you go “ewww!” let me reassure you that there’s no trace of that original discharged matter left in the remedy because of the potentization process that goes on. It’s quite safe to use.

Mental-Emotional Features of Tuberculinum

The mental-emotional symptoms of Tub include restlessness and hyperactivity.

These children like frequent changes to their routine, love doing new things, and love travelling.

They’re dissatisfied with boring routines or tasks, and they become very discontented and have lots of longings. With that boredom, they start to become malicious and aggressive. They become incredibly frustrated and will lash out as a result.

There can be angry tantrums, and they’ll break things to show their frustration or to get even with the parent.

They can bang their head against things with frustration and anger, tend to be poor learners, and they’ll grind their teeth sometimes during the day, but especially during sleep.

They have a fear of dogs and cats, though a handful of them absolutely adore cats - more so than other children.

It’s been noticed that those symptoms improve when they’re in pine forests, but how many of us have a pine forest right nearby?

The symptoms can also worsen before a change in weather or storms.

Physical Symptoms of Tuberculinum

The physical symptoms of Tub include frequent colds and chest infections, even to the point of pneumonia. Their colds are easily caught from drafts or changes in the weather, and their asthma is relieved when they’re facing into strong winds or with a fan blowing on them.

The glands of the neck, the groin and armpits can become hard or like rows of knotted cords, and they’ll have large swollen tonsils.

Tub children sleep in the knee-chest position with their knees pulled up under them, or flat on their abdomen.

They’ll often sweat profusely at night during their sleep, and they can have allergic reactions to cats and skin allergies that changes places on scratching.

In young boys, there can be painful erections, and these children often have fine hair that grows down the length of the spine.

They crave and enjoy ham, bacon, salami, pork, smoked meats, meat fat, and cold milk.

They tend to be very thin and lose weight easily in spite of strong appetites. They gain weight slowly.

What to Expect from Treatment with Tuberculinum

If your child ends up being prescribed Tub and that's a remedy they need, what can you expect to see?

The restlessness and the frustration will calm down, the tensions will stop, the vindictiveness will disappear, and they'll become happier and more cooperative.

They'll be able to cope better with mundane routine matters, and they'll finish jobs and activities before moving on to new things.

Concentration and focus will improve as well, and as a result, the learning will improve.

The destructive behaviour and head banging will stop. The teeth grinding will settle. The sleep will improve. There'll be no more shrieking, day or night.

They'll feel much more comfortable with animals, and allergies - especially to cats - will settle.

The asthma and itching will settle, and the colds will become infrequent and with a much quicker recovery. The colds will no longer go down to the chest.

For little boys, those painful erections will settle. The swollen glands including tonsils will shrink and disappear.

They'll start to gain weight and fill out, and no longer sweat at night.

All in all, a good result for a child who otherwise would've been continuing with those problems.

Stories from the Clinic

I'd like to share a few cases from my clinic with you, and the first one I've chosen is a little boy who needed Stramonium.

Case 7: Stramonium – “He'd sit bolt upright in bed and the screams would be blood-curdling.”

He was brought to be because his mom was very upset. He was having frequent night terrors, waking up screaming several times a night. He'd sit bolt upright in bed, and the screams would be blood-curdling. The mother said that they went right through you.

When they went in to try and help him, he'd be there wide-eyed, shrieking and screaming, and he'd fluctuate between trying to hit them as though they were trying to attack him and clinging onto them madly.

In the morning, he'd have no memory of the events. He was also frightened of animals, and he had problems with stammering.

He was easily frightened about many things, and would always grab and cling to the parents as though his life was in danger.

When playing with other children, he'd suddenly turn violent if they hit him or took something of his. Again, it seemed to be based on a lot of terror or anxiety.

He was frightened of water and animals.

So, what did I give him? Stramonium, and the results were dramatic.

Within three days, there were no more night terrors.

Over the coming months that he was under my care, his stammering reduced and the anxiety levels went right down. He was able to sleep at night without the light on. Up until then, he'd always need it at night or he'd be in the parents' bed.

He was able to play much more happily with other children, and he began to have swimming lessons, something he'd refuse to do before because he was frightened of the water.

Case 8: Tuberculinum – “He'd bang his head against the wall and scream, and cry, and tantrum.”

What about a couple of Tub cases? One is of a four-year-old boy who came to me. He was diagnosed with pervasive developmental disorder at two years of age.

At 12 months, his mom said he'd stopped eating many foods and solids, and his growth has slowed. He started to display autistic behaviours at about one and a half years of age.

Through this period, he ended up severely malnourished, and he was placed on a formula food called Neocate which is pre-digested food for children who can't eat any solids at all.

Despite his developmental delays, his appetite and his weight were his mother's greatest concerns because he was off the percentile charts. He was off the scale completely.

He had a history of severe eczema, and his mother said he was very sweaty. He'd sweat if he was in an igloo. He sweated day and night.

He was also diagnosed with lots of parasites and gut infections, and he had bowel motions that would scald the skin. The skin would actually blister when it came in contact with them.

He was diagnosed with multiple food allergies and had no appetite at the time he came to see me. His mom couldn't get him to eat.

He was sleeping on his tummy and very frightened by dogs.

He had a lot of sensory issues especially with food and food textures, and hated walking on grass in his bare feet.

His mom said up until that point, they done a lot of things and some of the dietary changes had helped, but problems were still ongoing.

He'd bang his head in frustration against the wall, and scream, and cry, and tantrum first thing getting up in the morning.

She said she couldn't leave the house with him. His fears and anxieties tended to be around dogs, storms, blood, and insects.

When we first began treatment with him, because it was such a complex case, I gave him a number of remedies. All of them helped partially, but none of them really hit the spot until he started to come down with colds, with lingering bad coughs that would go on for weeks and weeks after the cold.

His mom had to elevate his head in bed at night. He was very emotional about it, or losing his temper easily and crying easily.

On that basis, and combined with his other symptoms, we put him on Tub. Within days, his mother said the coughing stopped. This coughing that had been going on for weeks after the colds just cleared completely, and his nose cleared.

During the following weeks and months, his mother and his school reported that he was developing mentally and becoming more mature. The reports from school were very good. He was getting on with other children and studying well.

He started to gain weight and began to eat more food. He was still picky and fussy, and his mom had to coax him and encourage him, but at least he was starting to eat.

He was generally doing very, very well.

Now, I don't see this little boy anymore because his mom moved away, but since we put him on the Tub, that's really the only remedy he's needed.

I don't see him, but every so often I do hear from the mom probably about once every year and a half. She asks, "Please, can I have some more of that remedy? We're almost out of the bottle."

She gives it very infrequently when she finds that his behaviour is deteriorating or he's getting colds a little bit more easily than he should do, and he's away again.

I think it's probably about six years since I was seeing this little boy, and he's still doing very well with the occasional dose of Tub.

Case 9: Tuberculinum – “He had a cold, quite a strong cold, within 24 hours of getting the remedy, and his parents panicked.”

The other story I wanted to share is of a three-year-old boy who had the classic history of Tub: frequent colds since birth, and very “mucousy” colds.

His parents said he'd cough and splutter, and he'd been admitted twice to hospital with pneumonia.

He was a very difficult child. He was dissatisfied and unhappy with things that were done for him. He'd want one thing, and as soon as he was given that, he'd throw it away, and he'd want something else. Unless his parents were able to keep up a constant range of new activities to him, he'd get very upset and tantrum.

He only seemed happy when he's travelling in the back of the car. That was the only time he would sit quietly, and not fuss and complain.

He had a history of lots of middle ear infections, glands were up in his neck, and lots of tonsillitis.

This little boy got Tub, and the change was amazing. He had a cold, quite a strong cold, within 24 hours of getting the remedy, and his parents panicked because they thought, "Oh, no. It's another stint in the hospital," but no.

It turned out that there was a profuse discharge, and he recovered from it in the week. They had never seen that before. In the past, his colds had always been complicated, lots and lots of mucus going down to the chest, antibiotics, hospitalization, off to emergency departments, and he couldn't breathe properly.

This time, he recovered within a week. They were just amazed.

The other thing that improved with this little boy, his behaviour improved.

He stopped being irritable. He stopped being restless. He stopped being demanding. He just became a delightful child. Those temperament personality changes happened over a period of about one to two months.

That's what you can expect to see with Tub. Young children respond remarkably quickly because they've got good energy and good vitality, and the recovery is normally quite quick.

Conclusion: Review of Webinar 3 and a Preview of Webinar 4

Let's recap what we've covered in this Webinar 3: The First Appointment.

We've looked at what a consultation looks like, what to bring, what to expect, and using other therapies and approaches - to stop them or not during homeopathic treatment. We've had some children's stories from the clinic and two new remedies. Maybe you've recognized your child in one of those.

Our next webinar, Webinar 4, will be about ongoing treatment and management; what happens after that first appointment - because, as we say, constitutional or chronic treatment is a process.

We'll look at what to expect with each appointment, and the six different responses that your child will have to remedy, and what each of them means for their ongoing treatment; homeopathic help for problems of conventional treatments, how to make the transition from conventional treatment through to homeopathy; more children stories from the clinic, and a spotlight on two new remedies.

Once again, thank you for joining me with this webinar.

I hope the information's been useful to you, and I look forward to talking with you again in Webinar 4.