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## The ABCs of homeopathy

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*Kim Ridley*

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Homeopathic remedies, which come in pellet, tablet and liquid form, are widely available in Europe and in many natural-food stores and alternative-medicine pharmacies in the U.S. There are two basic categories of remedies: disease-specific preparations like *oscillococcinum* for the flu, and constitutional remedies for an individual's unique set of symptoms. To experience homeopathy's fullest healing effects it's always best to schedule a consultation with a classically trained homeopath.

During the first consultation, which usually lasts around an hour, a homeopath will take a detailed history that includes a patient's physical symptoms, mental/emotional state and overall constitution. In homeopathy, everything's connected.

Then a homeopath will prescribe a constitutional remedy intended to stimulate healing by matching a patient's "symptom picture" as precisely as possible. Homeopaths typically give the remedy a few weeks to work and then schedule a follow-up appointment with patients. The goal is a cure of the symptoms on all levels.

Wayne Jonas of the Samueli Institute suggests following the "Four Ps" when considering homeopathy or any other form of alternative or complementary medicine:

- Protect yourself against toxic or expensive therapies.
- Permit those things that are non-toxic and low-cost.
- Promote those things scientifically proven to be safe and effective through randomized, placebo-controlled trials.
- Partner with health-care practitioners who will help you properly balance these criteria.

Adds George Lewith of the Complementary Medicine Research Unit at the University of Southampton in England: "Have a set of outcomes, check to see if those occur within a reasonable period of time, and then make a decision on whether to continue or not," he says. "Don't just take things ad infinitum."

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