

# HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE FOR CHILDREN

## *Full Circle Healing*

Julek Meissner, ND, DHANP

76 Holland Ave, Upper Floor, Ottawa, K1Y 0X6

613-234-5151

julek@homeopathyrocks.com

**www.homeopathyrocks.com**

### INTRODUCTION

As parents, we worry a lot when our children get sick. Yet childhood illness is not uncommon, and can be an opportunity in disguise, a recognition of your child's defense mechanism flexing its muscle. By stimulating their natural defenses, homeopathic medicine can help our children develop resistance to their inherited predispositions. Improved resistance means a healthier immune system, resulting in a hardier child, less prone to sickness, preventing future relapses. Should our children get sick, homeopathy can help them recover quicker, with no harmful side-effects.

Homeopathic medicine can only help when prescribed accurately. Accurate prescribing is facilitated when we recognize what's unique in the child's nature, both physical and emotional. Only then are we able to choose a homeopathic medicine with an affinity to our child's nature, one that incorporates what distinguishes our children with a similar diagnosis. (Please refer to my article, *"The Patient, not the Condition"* for a fuller exploration of the principles on which homeopathy is based.).

The following five case histories from my practice illustrate how homeopathy approaches the following childhood conditions; *insomnia, allergies, night terrors, acute respiratory arrest, and asthma.*

### **Case 1: The Child Who Wouldn't Sleep**

James is a 20-month-old boy. His single mom is concerned about his poor sleep. His problem is that he wakes every 2-3 hours. Once awake, he is fully awake, active, energetic, and ready to play. Mother is at her wit's end about what to do. It can take up to an hour for him to fall back to sleep. This is hard for the mother, given that it's the middle of the night, and she has to go to work the next day. "I've tried 1001 ways to get him to fall back to sleep."

He has a history of frequent colds, and recurring ear infections, and has been on antibiotics several times. When he catches a cold, it can last a month or more. Nasal congestion has improved since milk products were eliminated from his diet, but he still tends to ear infections.

He is a healthy size, strong for his age, but not aggressive. Although quite agile physically, he is late in learning how to talk. Children four months younger than him have been able to say his name, yet he has not yet spoken. He makes plenty of sounds, but no words.

Although independent and seemingly fearless, he does exhibit a fear of cats. When he first met a cat, he screamed, ran to his mother, and wouldn't leave her side until the cat had left. Even now, after having been around cats for a while, he is still cautious.

Another peculiar behavior I note is that during the interview he strikes his head against the wall from time to time. This does not seem to be accompanied by any particular emotion. No anger is evident, no boredom, nor pain. He just suddenly begins to bang his head. When asked about this behavior, the mother says it occurs from time to time, but not very often.

His appetite is good. His favorite food are fruits, especially oranges, which he could eat non-stop.

The parents never married. At the time the parents came together, the father was already in a marriage, but had convinced the mother that his marriage was at an end. Then, on finding out that the mother had become pregnant, he refused to have anything further to do with her, sighting his aversion to being tied down.

## **ANALYSIS**

The medicine needed by James must have a sphere of influence on the following:

- Striking ones head against things.
- Slowness in learning to talk.
- Fear of cats.
- Craving for oranges.
- Desire to play at night.

Interestingly, *medorrhinum*, which is known to produce the above side effects in healthy volunteers, is also associated with aversion to responsibility. People who need this medicine are often ones who avoid responsibility, finding it a cramp on their lifestyle. For example, these are people who find the idea of marriage unendurable. For them, marriage, a commitment to one person, represents the end of freedom. This aversion to responsibility is exactly what James' father felt when he found out his new partner was

pregnant. *Medorrhinum* is most likely the remedy James' father needs as well!

The first night after his homeopathic medicine was taken, James had a bowel movement in the middle of the night, something he did not normally do. For the subsequent three nights, however, he slept right through the night! After that, he woke some nights, but less often, and fell asleep again much quicker. Most nights, he now sleeps till 7 AM.

Equally delightful to his mother, James started using words within days of the homeopathic medicine, five of them within two days of the prescription! His language has picked up dramatically since. Also, he is far more interested in books, associating names with pictures.

James has had a few colds since the Rx, yet is able to throw them off without a problem. He develops a fever when a cold occurs, but the fever lasts 24 hours at most. He has not required any further antibiotics!

In conclusion to this case, I find it remarkable that homeopathic medicine can address issues which are subtle in manifestation, issues such as aversion to responsibility which, in our society, are viewed not so much as disease, but as 'character weaknesses'. What we fail to realize is that these are often the clues to a person's method of coping, clues that can be used to help a person get healthier. Ignored, they too can get passed down from generation to generation!

## **Case 2: On allergies and temper tantrums**

Joanne is a 3-year-old girl who suffers from allergies to mould and grasses. Last Spring and again in the Fall, Joanne suffered with a runny nose and sneezing, rubbing her nose constantly, sticking her finger inside her nose over and over, and scratching at her eyes. More disturbing still were her changes in behavior.

Normally, she is a quiet, happy, playful child. When her allergies are at their worst, however, Joanne turns belligerent. She hits her mother and brother, she kicks, and she becomes uncooperative and angry whenever asked to do something. She may also throw things, if her play is interrupted, or if she feels her wishes are not met. She is unresponsive to discipline, defying all warnings and threats from her parents. The more she is reprimanded, the angrier she gets, screaming, hitting, and throwing things.

Joanne's sleep becomes disturbed during allergy season, in that she suffers from night terrors. Often, she will wake screaming, a blood-curdling scream in the middle of the night. When her parents come, she clings to them terrified. When asked what scared her, she describes a Sesame Street character trying to eat her.

## ANALYSIS

Remember, from the homeopathic perspective, what we need is something that will act as a stimulus to Joanne's unique defense mechanism. Assuming her symptoms are a reflection of her defense mechanism in action, she needs a substance that will act like a vaccine to raise resistance to her predispositions. According to the homeopathic law of similars, whatever substance she needs must be able to produce the following symptoms in healthy people;

- Itching in the nose, causing the person to scratch and bore and pick at the nose.
- Irritability and anger, causing the person to strike and throw things in anger.
- Night terrors, causing the person to wake up screaming, and to grasp hold of those around them.

*Cina*, commonly known as wormwood, is in herbal medicine indicated for children suffering from intestinal irritation, including worms. Because it can produce nasal itch, night terrors, and temper tantrums, it seemed well indicated for Joanne. However, on receiving *Cina*, although her sniffles, nasal itch, and night terrors improved considerably, Joanne continued to be extremely tired and irritable, and kept fighting sleep. Recognizing that she was still suffering despite the improvement in her allergic symptoms, I looked further into the case and found that *Psorinum* (a substance made from the scabies mite) is also associated with many of the symptoms which originally led me to *Cina*, namely;

Irritability, with sleeplessness

Fear on waking, with shrieking.

Obstinacy in children, with tendency to a quarrelsome, unfriendly, repulsive mood.

Hay fever and many nasal symptoms, including a tendency to bore in the nose with one's finger.

Joanne recovered beautifully after *Psorinum* was prescribed. Her behavior improved dramatically, as did her sleep. Her nasal and eye itching became worse for one week, and then cleared up. She has not suffered from allergies since, and has needed neither homeopathic nor conventional medicine in over a year! Her parents are most grateful to have their sweet and healthy daughter back.

### **Case 3: The Fearful Child**

John is an 8 year old boy who, as in case #1, also suffers sleep problems. From infancy till age 3, he would wake screaming throughout the night. To this day he has difficulty falling asleep, and wants the light on all night.

When I first meet him, I find him to be restless, having difficulty sitting in his chair, wanting to touch everything in the office. He's a nice boy, but has an intimidating way about him, bossing his mother. In the initial meeting, his mother isn't free to tell me everything, as she doesn't want to upset John. A peculiar behavior throughout the interview is that he keeps making a spitting gesture and noise with his mouth, not a random act either, but whenever he's not pleased about what his mother says about him.

When asked about his sleeping problem, he tells me he's up half the night from fear. When asked what he's afraid of, he says the dark. When asked what about the dark, he says it's the monsters. He doesn't want to describe them, but does admit scary tv shows affect him a lot.

John has many other fears. My office has a huge window overlooking a waterfall. A bridge can be seen down river. John is scared of bridges, and tells his Mom he was scared when they had to cross it this morning, on the way to see me. He proceeds to inform her that's why he moved from top to bottom bunk in his bed, because of how scary it was up high. When asked what else he's afraid of, he tells me that dogs are scary, no matter what size.

Later, during a phone consult with his mother, she tells me John was adopted at infancy. Talking about the birth parents and the circumstances around the birth, she tells me the pregnancy was secretive, that the birth parents were young and had had an affair. It turned out that the birth father was schizophrenic. The mother didn't know about this. She didn't want to give John up for adoption, but couldn't cope as a single mom, with a potential schizophrenic child.

His past medical history reveals a tendency to frequent colds and ear infections. His ear used to produce a lot of pus when infected, and he has had a long history of antibiotics. Also, John wets his bed to this day. One peculiar food craving is for vinegar. He's not fond of salads, but will drink the vineagar salad dressing out of the bowl.

## ANALYSIS

Speculating about the reasons behind John's fears, it is not difficult to imagine the fright an infant may go through when abandoned by its parents. Assuming the inherited predisposition is there, such a fright may persist for the rest of that person's life, unless addressed in a curative way. By applying the law of similars, homeopathic medicine stimulates the person's own defenses. Like a vaccine tailored to the individual, it helps the person develop resistance to their predispositions.

To be homeopathic to his constitution, John's medicine must be able to produce the following symptoms when given to healthy volunteers:

- Fear of the dark
- Fear of heights
- Fear of dogs
- Shrieking on waking.
- Spitting noises, making
- Cravings for vinegar.
- Involuntary urination at night.
- Ailments from suppressed ear discharges.
- Restlessness in children.

*Stramonium*, commonly known as Thorn apple, is a plant that is known well in our homeopathic literature as a medicine for night terrors. Within 3 days of prescribing Stramonium, John's sleep had improved dramatically. Not only did he start to sleep through the night, but his anxious and restless nature took a major change for the better. His bed wetting also ended.

### **Case 4: Trick Or Treat; A Case of Respiratory Arrest.**

This case involves an emergency phone call I received one Halloween evening several years ago, when a friend and fellow homeopathic physician called me in a panic. Earlier that evening, his 10 year old daughter had gone trick or treating, overindulged her sweet tooth, and then complained of being nauseous. Soon after, my friend's 7 year old daughter found her older sister lying on the bed, "not breathing", motionless, her eyes wide open, staring at the ceiling.

After performing CPR and calling 911, while waiting for the ambulance to arrive, my friend calls me. His daughter is breathing, but barely. She's particularly having trouble with exhalation. He intends taking his homeopathic first aid kit to the hospital, and warns me that he'll need to hang up when the ambulance arrives, asking that I study his daughter's case for him, and that he'll call me back once he's at the hospital.

Moments later, the ambulance arrives, and I'm left wondering whether I can help. I open the repertory (a book that describes symptoms in alphabetical order, and homeopathic remedies associated with those symptoms), and go to the Respiration chapter. Under "Respiration difficult, expiration", 11 remedies are listed. "Staring", in the eye chapter, has too many remedies to be of much use. However, in the Stomach chapter, under "nausea from sweets", only 19 remedies were listed. I was relieved to see a pattern emerging.

After what seemed like an interminable time, my friend finally calls me back. His daughter's been hooked up to a respirator. The breathing is imperceptible, and the problem with expiration persists.

Fortunately my friend and colleague had *Ipecac* in his first aid kit! Within 30 seconds of administering it, his daughter was up and talking. By the time the doctor came a few minutes later, she was totally normal, and the doctor reproached my friend for wasting his busy time, when so many people were in need of urgent help!

Ipecac is a member of the *Rubiacea* family, which also includes *coffea* and *china* (From which Quinine is derived for the treatment of malaria). Dr. Sankaran, in his *Insight Into Plants*, summarizes the sensation in this plant family as being "stimulus-hungry", seeking over-stimulation, and then suffering the consequences (Sweets, of course, are in that stimulant category.).

Ip is one of only 8 remedies listed in the mind chapter of the repertory, under 'gourmand', a rubric I didn't have access to back then while using my paper version of Kent. As well, it is listed under "collapse", and under overeating (as are *coff* and *chin*).

As the reader may know, the homeopathic approach is based on the principle of Similars, whereby substances known to produce symptoms in healthy people are indicated, in subtle doses, for the sick who are suffering similar symptoms. Ipecac is a plant substance which till recent times was used in hospitals for accidental poisonings, to induce vomiting. In his *Keynotes on Homeopathic medicine*, H.C. Allen's first sentence on Ip describes it the way most of us know it, as "Adapted to cases where gastric symptoms predominate... with nausea." What is less known in our culture is Ipecac's influence on the respiratory tract. T.F Allen's *Encyclopedia of Pure Materia Medica*, under the respiratory heading, highlights Ipecac's association with suffocative cough and asthma. Allen goes on to say, about the respiration, that "Instead of the ordinary wheezing, the muscles of respiration seemed tetanically convulsed, producing a condition not unlike what is described as 'holding the breath'... barely sufficient to keep the wheels of life from ceasing altogether." A little further, he describes "Most violent attack of suffocative constriction in the air-passages...". In the *generals* section, Allen describes "The body of the child is stretched out stiff", not unlike the body of my friend's child.

## Case 5: Asthma and the oversensitive child

George, a 12 year old boy, is brought by his mother in May of 04 for a homeopathic consultation to help him with his asthma. He is a lean and lanky boy of average height, who strikes me as serious, or perhaps shy, but who nonetheless participates throughout the interview, attentively engaged in answering any questions when asked. He is a middle child, with a sister a few years younger, and a brother who is considerably older and who has already moved out of the house.

George has been on steroid inhalers for 2 years, his asthma starting shortly after the family moved from Montreal to Ottawa. Medication helps him with his breathing, but his mother would like to see him be asthma and drug-free, and has heard that homeopathic medicine can help.

In common with other asthma sufferers is that George's asthma is worse with exercise, like running or cycling. He belongs to a cycling team, and is often lagging behind as he can't catch his breath. He doesn't mind the asthma so much, except that it slows him down, and he doesn't like to slow the rest of the group down, fearing they'll be upset with him.

When I ask him to talk more about his fear of upsetting others, his mother tells me he's very sensitive to other people's feelings, including his younger sister's, feeling like he's done the worst thing possible when he makes her cry. He then says, "If my sister's mean to me, I get her back even worse than she got me" (as he tells me this, I notice George has tears in his eyes). When I ask him to tell me what he's feeling at this moment he answers that he's sensitive to hurt, his and others. "I don't like to hurt others. I know what it feels like to be hurt. It hurts me when I get hurt, and I don't want others to feel hurt." He shares with me that he wears glasses, and that he used to be called names at school. It would upset him, and he'd walk away, or would try to ignore the teasing. "If someone pushes me around, it makes me feel really weak, that I can't do anything about it. My sister can be really mean to me, and at times it feels **as if she doesn't care for me at all** (Silent tears roll down his face as he's telling me this). She sometimes says to me that she hates me. It's upsetting, and I go to my room and cry.

His mother describes him as very empathetic. When his aunt (his mother's sister) died of cancer last year, George felt very sad for his mother. When he would see her crying, he'd sit down next to her, comforting her, being nice in any way he could think. "He's the kindest, when anyone's hurting".

When asked to talk more about what was happening in his life when asthma first started, his mom says that the move to Ottawa was particularly hard on him, that he missed his friends a lot and felt very lonely in Ottawa. As he made new friends his loneliness subsided, but not so his asthma.

***Analysis:***

George has a very sensitive nature, which he manifests by crying easily. This is what sets him apart from others who suffer from asthma, and what a homeopathic physician will use to arrive at a prescription.

The proving of *Pulsatilla* (the homeopathic preparation of the Wind Flower, a common perennial in many Canadian gardens) is associated with the following symptoms:

- Crying, when talking about their problem.
- Increased compassion and sensitivity.
- Asthma when dealing with emotions associated with sadness and abandonment.
- Increased sensitivity to feeling abandoned and alone.

After he received his homeopathic medicine, I didn't see George for 5 months, until his mother brought him back again in November, when he reported being asthma-free ever since the start of his homeopathic treatment, this despite having been more active than ever with playing football and mountain biking. He has had no wheezing whatsoever and has not needed puffers since his homeopathic medicine. George's confidence has also changed dramatically. He became involved in leadership activities at school, volunteering to be a peer helper, and has become a spokesman against bullying, accompanying teachers to student conferences. His relationship with his sister can still have rough moments, but there are fewer quarrels. "She doesn't bug me as much, though she hasn't changed at all. I'm still annoyed by her, but I react differently. I'm not as sensitive to feeling hurt, not as upset when feeling not liked."