

# HOMEOPATHY– FOR WOMEN’S HEALTH

CAM therapies such as homeopathy are gaining acceptance in countries across the world, both among health providers and consumers (1). A majority of patients consulting with CAM practitioners are women, often seeking help for **reproductive health problems , menstrual disorders , menopause, problems during pregnancy and childbirth.**

Homeopathy has a long history of successfully treating women and their health problems and is the preferred healthcare option chosen by a growing number of women. **Gentle , fast, non-invasive , non-addictive and safe , homeopathy is the perfect option for the treatment of women’s healthcare problems.** A number of studies have shown that women make up between 64 and 80 % of the clientele visiting homeopaths (2).

## WHAT HOMEOPATHY HAS TO OFFER AND THE EVIDENCE FOR IT

Homeopathy has the potential to treat a wide range of disorders in women and there is a growing body of research evidence that appears to support its effectiveness in the following conditions: **menopausal hot flushes, night sweats, headaches, fatigue, anxiety and depression; premenstrual syndrome; menstrual disorders; infertility; and complaints during and after pregnancy.** Homeopathy is also effective in treating a range of diseases and complaints that are increasingly common in women, such as **fibromyalgia** (muscle, tendon and ligament pain, and fatigue), **depression, migraine and tension headaches.**

## HOMEOPATHY– A SAFE ALTERNATIVE FOR TREATING YOUR PROBLEMS

It is the clinical experience of thousands of homeopaths over the last two centuries that homeopathy is comparatively safe even for women in pregnancy and in labour. Research into the safety of homeopathy has shown that about one in five experience an aggravation of their symptoms for a short while after treatment, but these effects are mild and transient (3-6). **Homeopathy can increase well-being prior to pregnancy, improve the chances of conception, treat morning sickness during pregnancy, post-partum bruising of mother and newborn infant, breast feeding problems and postnatal depression** (7). A homeopathic remedy acts to help the body to heal itself.

## HOMEOPATHY EFFECTIVE IN PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME (PMS)

**Homeopathy is effective in treating premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and is helpful in treating hormonal imbalance generally.** Research has shown that 90 % of women with PMS experience improvement after homeopathic treatment (P=0.048) (8). Homeopathic treatment also reduced the number of sick-days and the use of conventional drugs in women suffering from PMS. The trial was randomised and double-blind placebo controlled.

## HOMEOPATHY FOR THE MENOPAUSE

A growing number of women choose homeopathy to treat complaints during menopause. Many of these women have tried hormone replacement therapy (HRT) but have either experienced too many side-effects, no effect from the treatment or do not want to continue treatment for other reasons.

The use of alternative therapies for menopause symptoms is common. Women who use them generally find them to be beneficial. A telephone survey of more than 850 women aged 45 to 65 years showed that 76 % used alternative therapies (9). This included 22 % who used these therapies to treat their menopause symptoms. As many as 89 % found these therapies to be somewhat or very helpful.

**Research has shown that 80 % of women treated with homeopathic medicine experience significant improvements in their hot flushes, tiredness/fatigue, sleep problems, headaches and psychological problems** (10).

## HOMEOPATHY IN HOT FLASHES AFTER BREAST CANCER THERAPY

Early menopause may be the result of chemotherapy, radiation or other forms of treatment used in breast cancer in young women. Hot flashes are the most common complaints in women who have undergone treatment for breast cancer (11). These complaints can significantly decrease the quality of life. **Commonly used hormone replacement therapy with medicines such as oestrogen is contraindicated in these women, as it increases the risk of recurrence of breast cancer.**

**Homeopathy may serve as an alternative in treatment for hot flashes in women suffering from early menopause as a result of conventional treatment of breast cancer** (11-15). An overview of 12 studies of menopause-related symptoms showed that CAM therapies such as **homeopathy have significantly improved hot flash frequency and severity, mood changes, fatigue and anxiety** (13). Researchers also found that these therapies had few side effects. A survey carried out in a British homeopathic hospital showed that homeopathy is effective in treating hot flushes in both women who have reached menopause and women who suffered from breast cancer (14). Researchers found an effect both in women who were taking hormonal drugs for their breast cancer and those who were not. Homeopathy reduced symptoms in a trial of women suffering from hot flashes after having undergone surgery, chemotherapy and radiation treatment for breast cancer (15). These women particularly seemed to experience an improved general health state (quality of life) even one year after homeopathic treatment. The effect was particularly significant in women who were not on conventional hormonal drugs. The study was a randomized, double-blinded, placebo-controlled US study of women who suffered from hot flashes.

## HOMEOPATHY IN INFERTILITY

An increasing number of couples experience difficulties in conceiving. This may be due to problems both with the woman and the man. Both should therefore go through a thorough examination in order to try to find the cause of their problems. Some causes in women may be hormonal imbalances, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), endometriosis, or in men – poor sperm quality. In many cases no apparent reason can be found.

**Homeopathy is one of several alternative therapies that are used in treating infertile people.** CAM therapists take a more holistic view of infertility treatment than allopathic health professionals (16). **Homeopathy can help up to 60 % of couples trying to conceive** (17).

**In a trial on fertility disorders researchers found positive effect of a homeopathic prescriptions in 38 out of 67 women** (57 %) (18). Positive results were found on inducing pregnancy, as well as a number of factors that are important to enable pregnancy, including regulating menstruation (both to induce spontaneous menstruation and shorten the menstrual cycle), regulating hormones (improved concentration of progesterone in the luteal phase) and earlier ovulation.

### Homeopathy can help in endometriosis

Endometriosis is an important cause of infertility. It may also cause painful and/or heavy menstruation, chronic pain and menstrual disorders. **Research has shown that homeopathy is one of a number of alternative therapies that women experience as useful in treating endometriosis** (19).

### Homeopathy improves sperm quality

Infertility can also be caused by difficulties in men, including low sperm numbers and poor quality. Men with infertility problems also consult with CAM practitioners such as homeopaths (20). **A research trial of 45 sub-fertile men showed that homeopathy improved both the number and the quality of sperm** (21). Significant changes were found in sperm density, percentage of sperm with good progressive motility and density of sperm with good propulsive motility. The general health of the patients also improved significantly. It did not matter whether these men were subject to stress or had been childless for a long period of time.

## **FIBROMYALGIA – A COMPLAINT MORE OFTEN FOUND IN WOMEN**

Some conditions, such as fibromyalgia, are more typically found in women than in men. Research has demonstrated the **effectiveness of homeopathic treatment for fibromyalgia** giving reduced pain and improved health and quality of life (22, 23).

### **TIME TO TALK: IDENTIFYING THE IMBALANCE**

As well as identifying the homeopathic medicines that will best treat a woman's condition, a consultation with a homeopath gives time to talk and explore the sources of the healthcare problems. Very often the healthcare problems are caused or aggravated by lifestyle factors such as poor diet or are the result of emotional strains in the family or the work situation. Diet, lack of exercise, sleep patterns etc. are all factors that need to be explored and corrective changes introduced where necessary.

**Homeopathy is a safe and effective choice of treatment, for the benefit of your health care.**

### **Reference list**

1. Beal MW. Women's use of complementary and alternative therapies in reproductive health care. *J Nurse Midwifery*. 1998 May-Jun;43(3):224-34.
2. Viksveen P, Steinsbekk A. Changes in patients visiting a homeopathic clinic in Norway 1994-2004. *Homeopathy* (2005) 94, 222-228.
3. Bornhöft et al. Effectiveness, Safety and Cost-Effectiveness of Homeopathy in General Practice – Summarized Health Technology Assessment. *Forsch Komplementärmed* 2006;13(suppl 2):19-29.
4. Adler M. Efficacy, safety of a fixed-combination homeopathic therapy for sinusitis. *Adv Ther* 1999; 16: 103–111.
5. Dantas, F. & Rampes, H. 2000. Do Homeopathic Medicines Provoke Adverse Effects? A Systematic Review. *British Homeopathic Journal*. 2000; 89: 70-74.
6. Thompson 2004. A preliminary audit investigating remedy reactions including adverse events in routine homeopathic practice. *Homeopathy* 93;203-209
7. Kaplan B. Homeopathy: 2. In pregnancy and for the under-fives. *Prof Care Mother Child*. 1994 Aug-Sep;4(6):185-7.
8. Yakir M, Kreitler S, Brzezinski A, Vithoulkas G, Oberbaum M, Bentwich Z. Effects of homeopathic treatment in women with premenstrual syndrome: a pilot study. *Br Homeopath J*. 2001 Jul ; 90(3), 148-53.
9. Newton KM, Buist DS, Keenan NL, Anderson LA, LaCroix AZ. Use of alternative therapies for menopause symptoms: results of a population-based survey. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2002 Jul;100(1):18-25.
10. Relton C, Weatherley-Jones E. Homeopathy service in a National Health Service community menopause clinic: audit of clinical outcomes. *Journal of the British Menopause Society*, Vol. 11, No. 2, June 2005.
11. Graf MC, Geller PA. Treating hot flashes in breast cancer survivors: a review of alternative treatments to hormone replacement therapy. *Clin J Oncol Nurs*. 2003 Nov-Dec;7(6):637-40.
12. Boekhout AH, Beijnen JH, Schellens JH. Symptoms and treatment in cancer therapy-induced early menopause. *Oncologist*. 2006 Jun;11(6):641-54.
13. Carpenter JS, Neal JG. Other complementary and alternative medicine modalities: acupuncture, magnets, reflexology, and homeopathy. *Am J Med*. 2005 Dec 19;118 Suppl 12B:109-17.
14. Clover A, Ratsey D. Homeopathic treatment of hot flushes: a pilot study. *Homeopathy*, 2002 Apr;91(2):75-9.
15. Jacobs J, Herman P, Heron K, Olsen S, Vaughters L. Homeopathy for menopausal symptoms in breast cancer survivors: a preliminary randomized controlled trial. *J Altern Complement Med*. 2005 Feb;11(1):21-7.
16. Veal L. Complementary therapy and infertility: an Icelandic perspective. *Complement Ther Nurs Midwifery*. 1998 Feb;4(1):3-6.
17. Viksveen P. Heggemsnes A. *Dynamis* 2005.

18. Bergmann J, Luft B, Boehmann S, Runnebaum B, Gerhard I. The efficacy of the complex medication Phyto-Hypophyson L in female, hormone-related sterility. A randomized, placebo-controlled clinical double-blind study. *Forsch Komplementarmed Klass Naturheilkd.* 2000 Aug;7(4):190-9.
19. Wienhard J, Tinneberg HR. Alternative treatment possibilities of complaints due to endometriosis. *Zentralbl Gynakol.* 2003 Jul-Aug;125(7-8):286-9.
20. Oldereid NB, Rui H, Purvis K. Male partners in infertile couples. Personal attitudes and contact with the Norwegian health service. *Scand J Soc Med.* 1990 Sep;18(3):207-11.
21. Gerhar I, Wallis E. Individualized homeopathic therapy for male infertility. *Homeopathy.* 2002 Jul;91(3):133-44.
22. Bell IR et al. Improved clinical status in fibromyalgia patients treated with individualized homeopathic remedies versus placebo. Available at <http://rheumatology.oupjournals.org/cgi/reprint/keh111>
23. Fisher P. An experimental double-blind clinical trial in homeopathy. *British Homoeopathic Journal* 1986; 75; 142-147.