

Homeopathy vs herbal medicine

what's the difference?

Our own medical herbalist and columnist Pamela Spence helps to clear up the mystery.



Herbal Medicine

- Herbal medicine uses any part of a plant to create medicine. It might be the flower, leaf, stem, bark, root, berry, fruit. You name it, a herbalist will use it.
- Herbal medicines come in many forms. The most common are tinctures (alcohol extracts), infusions (often called teas), essential oils, creams, and ointments. Slightly less common are decoctions, infused oils, glycerites and liniments.
- Herbal medicine can trace its roots through all cultures and as far back as the Stone Age.
- There are many different philosophies – Ayurveda (from India), Traditional Chinese Medicine (from China), Unani Tibb (from the Middle East) and Traditional Western Herbal Medicine with its roots in Ancient Greece. Each has its own view of the body and the ways herbs can be prescribed.
- Herbal medicine is allopathic – just like pharmaceutical medicine. This means using the opposite to cure. So if someone is hot, a cooling remedy is given.



Homeopathy

- Homeopathy was developed in the late 1700s by German physician Samuel Hahnemann.
- Homeopathy uses natural substances including plants, minerals and some animal products to create medicines.
- When a remedy is made it is highly diluted until it is possible that no molecule of the original ingredient is present in the remedy. It is the information that is passed into the water which is then made into sugar pills or powders.
- The name homeopathy reveals the philosophy that like cures like. So if someone has been stung by a bee a homeopath would give a tiny dose of bee sting thereby provoking the body to heal itself. Each remedy is a tiny dose of the substance that in larger doses would produce the same symptoms.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Homeopathic arnica is widely taken to reduce bruising. In a herbal preparation arnica is highly toxic and can only be used on unbroken skin.
- Homeopathic chamomile granules are commonly used as teething powders for babies.
- A medieval hospital was discovered at Soutra, Midlothian where an order of monks treated patients with herbal medicine from the 12th Century until 1460.

