

Dana Ullman

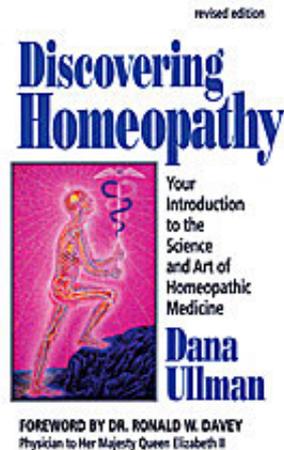
Discovering Homeopathy

Reading excerpt

[Discovering Homeopathy](#)

of [Dana Ullman](#)

Publisher: North Atlantic Books



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Pediatrics: Don't Drug Our Kids—Give Them Homeopathics

Earlier in this century, meningitis was fatal 95 percent of the time in children who contracted it. Now, because of the use of antibiotics, 95 percent of the children who get it survive. The number of infants dying in the first two years of life has also dramatically declined, once again primarily because of the use of conventional medicine. The significant reduction in the number of children dying from leukemia is another impressive development of modern medicine. Despite these benefits of modern medicine, however, there is general agreement that medical care can and should be better. There is also recognition that modern medicine is not always safe and that, in fact, it sometimes does more harm than good.

Medical Child Abuse

Benjamin Rush, M.D. (1745-1813), considered the "father of American medicine," was such an advocate of bloodletting* that

* Bloodletting is the use of a knife (called a lancet) to cut into a vein to release blood. Although this therapy did at least temporarily reduce the redness and swelling of inflammation, it also greatly weakened already sick people. Bloodletting was so respected that a major British medical journal called itself *Lancet*, under which name it is still published today.

he even recommended it for sick newborn infants.¹ Rush asserted that physicians who did not bloodlet their patients were quacks. This barbaric treatment is no longer recommended, though one must wonder if the way we are presently treating children with powerful drugs, often given repeatedly and in combination with other drugs, will be considered barbaric at some time in the future.

Conservative use of conventional drugs with newborns, infants, and children is recommended, since their bodies are still developing, the organs and glands are learning how to function in concert, and the immune and defense reactions are in the process of maturation. It is now (finally!) acknowledged that pregnant women should avoid medications during pregnancy; and yet, once our children are born, we seem to forget that their bodies are still in the process of growth and development, a delicate state that can be significantly affected by many commonly used medications.

It is a little known fact that the vast majority of drugs commonly used for infant and child health problems have not been adequately tested on pediatric populations. Even a report from the American Academy of Pediatrics admitted that "possibly as many as three quarters of the drugs used in hospital pediatric practice are not officially approved for the purpose for which they are commonly employed."²

As recently as 1975, 95 percent of physicians gave children one or more prescriptions for the common cold, and about 60 percent of the time one of the drugs was an antibiotic.³ In 1979, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) found thirty drugs to be ineffective, more than half of which were often prescribed for children.⁴

In 1975, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that tetracycline not be given to children under eight years old because it can retard bone growth, damage the liver, cause various digestive upsets, and even permanently stain the child's teeth. And yet, a study in 1977 showed that 27 percent of 1,947 Tennessee physicians surveyed prescribed tetracycline to children under eight.⁵ Although some conventional drugs are, no doubt, more dangerous than others for children, there is little controversy about the fact that we must use drugs with greater caution in the treatment of infants and children than in the treatment of adults.

During pregnancy, the fetus is protected by the mother's antibodies, which regularly are fed through the umbilical cord. After birth, the mother's milk is also filled with important antibodies and nutrients, which are invaluable for helping to build the immune and defense systems of the newborn baby. At the tender age of only two months, the baby begins to experience the six to nine viral infections per year that he (or she) will experience until the end of his childhood. Usually manifesting itself in a common cold, each virus is eventually fought off, and in the process the baby's immune system is exercised and strengthened.

Fever is the way in which the body heats up in an effort to create an internal environment uncondusive to viral growth. During this fevered state, the body's white blood cells become more active, and more interferon is produced, which aids in fighting the viral infection.* It is no wonder, then, that aspirin has been found to lead to Reyes Syndrome, a potentially fatal neurological condition, when given to suppress children's fever.

Nasal discharge is further evidence of a child's effort to heal. The discharge is primarily dead viruses, dead bacteria, dead white blood cells, and mucus. The use of nasal sprays, decongestants, and antihistamines inhibits this elimination, which is a natural defense of the body. The suppression of the nasal discharge makes no sense physiologically, which is probably the reason that such treatments usually do not work and often cause various side effects that are generally worse than the simple cold the child initially had.

Children are frequently given cough suppressants, too. Since a cough is a natural defense of the body in its efforts to clear a breathing passageway, it is physiologically counterproductive to routinely give cough suppressants to children. And to make matters worse, many of the most popular cold and cough remedies have 50- to 80-proof alcohol in them. A 1984 report from the American Academy of Pediatrics warned that "even small amounts of alcohol can affect a child's central nervous system, causing decreased reaction time, muscular incoordination, and behavioral

*Interferon is a natural protein of the body that inhibits virus multiplication.

changes."⁸

When a person gets something done for him, he does not learn to do it himself. Likewise, on a physiological and immunological level, when drugs are given to treat a symptom or infection, the body does not learn to heal itself as well on its own.

The Homeopathic Alternative to Aspirin in Fevers

Homeopathic medicine offers an alternative to drugs that suppress symptoms. Even a book written in 1858 that was critical of homeopathy admitted that homeopathic medicines were "decided favorites with the children."⁷

Although there are those rare instances when an infant's or child's fever is so high that some type of treatment, even if it be suppressive, is recommended, homeopathic medicines are often effective in rapidly curing such conditions. * *Aconite* (monkshood) and *Belladonna* (deadly nightshade) are two common homeopathic remedies for infant fevers. These herbs are known to be toxic, but in the small doses that homeopaths use, they are valuable and safe therapeutic agents.

Sidney Ringer (1835-1910), the British physiologist who developed "Ringer's Solution" (a commonly used salt solution for intravenous fluids), proclaimed that "no drug is more valuable than *Aconite*" for its ability to control inflammation.⁸ Even Joseph Lister (1827-1912), one of England's most respected surgeons, recognized its value. Lister noted that he derived his knowledge of *Aconite* and *Belladonna* from the homeopaths.⁹

The symptoms of children who need *Aconite* or *Belladonna* have similarities, but they have individualizing differences as well. Both symptoms may begin with a sudden onset of fever, and both

*For detailed guidelines on when medical care is indicated, see Stephen Cummings and Dana Ullman, *Everybody's Guide to Homeopathic Medicines* (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1984); Robert Mendelsohn, *How to Raise a Healthy Child . . . In Spite of Your Doctor* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1984); and Robert Pantell, James Fries, and Donald Vickery, *Taking Care of Your Child* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1977).

may even develop into a very high fever. However, although both medicines are primarily useful during the initial stages of fever, they are not useful for those fevers that are protracted. *Aconite* is commonly given to infants or children who develop their condition after exposure to dry and cold air or wind, especially if they had been perspiring during that exposure. *Aconite* is also for infants or children who, along with the fever, have dry skin, a dry cough, a dry mouth, and sometimes an unquenchable thirst, generally for cold drinks. They are mentally alert, though they are also usually anxious, restless, and fearful. They may toss in their sleep or throw off their covers or clothes.

Infants or children who need *Belladonna* look distinctively different. They have a red, flushed face, intensely hot skin (which may even radiate heat, allowing the parent to feel the heat without touching the child), and glassy eyes with dilated pupils. They are mentally delirious and do not seem to comprehend what is going on around them. Their illness generally makes them lethargic and mentally dull. Rather than the *Aconite* child's restlessness and fear, the *Belladonna* child has restlessness with mental dullness and confusion. If these children have a high fever, they may hit, bite, or tear at things. They may also experience wild dreams or, in severe cases, may say they see monsters and other hallucinations. In certain cases, these children may develop muscle twitchings, which seem to come and go suddenly.

Some of the symptoms of *Belladonna* are also symptoms of meningitis, which many homeopaths feel they frequently avert with the use of homeopathic medicines. If a child is diagnosed as having meningitis, however, homeopaths do not resist using antibiotics, since meningitis is a condition too serious to delay treatment. One of the extra benefits of using homeopathy in infants' or children's fevers is that the medicines generally work extremely rapidly. And if the incorrect medicine is given, no side effects occur.

Convulsions with fever in infants who do not have meningitis are not uncommon. Too often these infants are given powerful anticonvulsive medications. Parents should know that there is no evidence that infants will suffer serious aftereffects from these convulsions. One study of 1,706 children with febrile convulsions

showed that they did not lead to a single death or motor defect.¹⁰ There is also no convincing evidence that febrile seizures lead to epilepsy later in life. Severe recurrent seizures, however, can cause brain damage, and conventional or homeopathic treatment for them is important. However, treatment for the common febrile seizures with anticonvulsive medications is inappropriate and dangerous.

Homeopathic doses of *Belladonna*, *Chamomilla*, *Calcarea carbonica* (calcium carbonate), *Helleborus* (snow-rose), *Opium* (opium), *Stramonium* (thorn-apple), *Nux vomica* (poison nut), and *Zinc* (zinc) are among the safer homeopathic alternatives to conventional anticonvulsive medications. For best results in treating this condition, it is generally recommended to seek professional homeopathic care.

The Homeopathic Treatment of Common Infant Health Problems: Teething, Colic, and Eczema

Shakespeare once described infancy as the age of "mewling and puking in the nurse's arms." Although there are innumerable theories for why infants vomit or have one condition or another, the underlying basis of homeopathic thought is that symptoms are responses of the organism to deal with infections or some type of internally or externally derived stress. Symptoms, then, represent the best efforts of the body to try to defend and heal itself.

Besides the inappropriate treatment of infant fevers and colds, another common, inappropriate treatment that is often administered is for infants' teething problems. A large group of pediatricians were recently surveyed about what they do for teething infants. Virtually all prescribed medications, usually painkillers of varying strengths, sedatives, and local anesthetics.¹¹

It is certainly understandable that parents want to do something to allay their infants' pain during the teething stage. Besides the tooth pain and drooling that infants suffer, they also often have fever, bowel problems (usually diarrhea, or constipation alternating with diarrhea), colds, and skin rashes. And it is certainly understandable that physicians who see the pained infants and

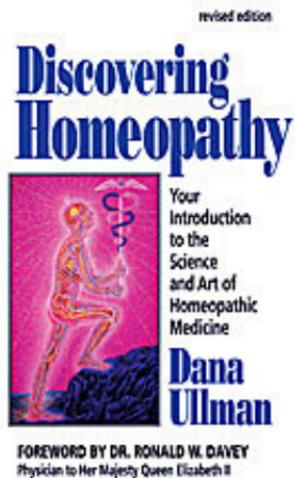
the frightened and concerned parents would want to do something. However, homeopathy offers such an effective alternative to problems associated with teething that physicians and parents will inevitably look to it.

Chamomilla has probably introduced more parents to homeopathy than any other homeopathic medicine. It is not the only medicine that homeopaths prescribe to treat teething, but it is so commonly used that it is generally recommended unless the infant's symptoms clearly indicate the need for a different medicine. The most common symptoms of infants who need *Chamomilla* are inflamed gums, drooling, and a desire to keep fingers in the mouth. Commonly, one cheek is hot and red, while the other is pale. More notable than these physical symptoms are the emotional and behavioral changes. The infants are hyperirritable and may scream and hit. They demand things, but reject them as soon as they are given. During sleep they toss and turn and may cry aloud. The only relief they experience comes when they are being carried about or rocked. This description of *Chamomilla* infants no doubt sounds familiar to many parents.

Other homeopathic medicines given to teething infants are *Calcarea phosphorica* (phosphate of calcium), *Calcarea carbonica* (calcium carbonate), and *Coffea* (coffee).

For numerous infant and childhood conditions, it may often be more appropriate to treat the parent's anxiety than the pediatric complaint. The fever-phobia that parents have and the fear that any symptom requires immediate treatment is a common, though "curable," state of mind. Although there are certainly conditions that require medical attention, the vast majority of infant and childhood symptoms are nothing to worry about. Pediatrician Robert Mendelsohn has noted that 95 percent of pediatric ailments heal themselves and do not require medical care.¹²

One important recommendation for parents who want to try to treat their children is to remember to avoid treatments that suppress symptoms. Treatments that try to counteract the body's natural defensive tendencies are generally suppressive. One example of a common home treatment for infants' colic (or sometimes for children's digestive problems, too) is the use of baking soda. Although baking soda may neutralize the stomach acids, it causes



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278 pages, pb
publication 1991



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