

## Homeopathic Healthcare

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### Coughs

The homeopathic treatment of coughs, while frequently and often rapidly effective, demands very careful symptom observation. It is best to resist the impulse to take "something" as soon as a cough becomes troublesome and to patiently take note of the distinguishing characteristics of the cough. Since many of our cough medicines sound similar, careful symptom selection is critical to success.

If coughing is accompanied by high fever, chest pain, bloody sputum; or is especially severe, or associated with severe systemic symptoms, or is protracted (more than one week or so), it is recommended that medical advice be sought.

First, I would like to mention a couple of natural cough syrups that can help milder coughs.

**Natural Cough Syrups:** Natural cough syrups act primarily as expectorants, agents intended to promote the free expulsion of secretions from the respiratory tract, and/or soothing agents for an irritated upper airway passage. There are many commercially available preparations at health food stores. Here are two formulas in addition:

Onion cough syrup: Place 6 white onions in a double boiler and 1/2 cup of honey. Cook slowly on low heat for 2 hours and strain. Take as needed, warm.

Expectorant mixture: 2 oz. licorice root, 1 oz. white cherry bark, 1 oz. coltsfoot, 1 oz. lobelia, 1 oz. horehound. Boil in 4 cups of water for 2 minutes. Steep for 10 minutes. Strain. Take 1 cup every two hours (or 1/2 cup if a child). Add honey as necessary for flavor.

### Homeopathic Remedies

The following homeopathic medicines are commonly indicated for uncomplicated acute coughs. Once the correct medicine has been selected, try taking it in the 30C (or X) potency, one dose every three to four hours until clear improvement is noted, usually within 12-24 hours. If the remedy hasn't helped within that time frame, try a different remedy.

**Bryonia** (wild hops): This remedy corresponds to a dry cough with a sore chest and stitching pains when coughing and moving. The signature characteristic of Bryonia is aggravation from motion, even slight movements. Patients will usually hold the chest when coughing to splint it. Cough may also be worse after eating, drinking, on entering a warm room, and after a deep breath. Headaches from cough or motion may occur. The pains are better from pressure. The patient is often irritable, wanting to be alone, and thirsty

**Nux vomica** (poison nut): Head colds descend to the chest producing coughing which is typically dry and teasing. Exposure to dry, cold weather aggravates. The cough is often worse after eating and ameliorated by warm drinks. Almost always the patient is very chilly; chills result from motion and uncovering. The cough may cause headache. Expect the person to be extremely irritable, unappreciative of assistance, and averse to answering any questions if quite ill.

**Hepar sulphuris** (calcium sulphide): This remedy is very similar to Nux vomica; however, often the cough is more moist, with rattling of mucus in the chest. The throat may be sensitive to touch,

there being a splinter-like pain. The larynx may be painful, worse from cough and from swallowing food. Hepar can also be an effective remedy for croupy coughs, worse after 4 a.m. Like Nux vomica, this patient is also very irritable and extremely chilly, even more so than Nux vomica.

**Phosphorus** (phosphorus): A dry, tight cough. Often there is a pronounced sense of oppression of the chest. The cough is worse from laughing, talking, eating, lying on the left side; it is also prone to be worse from exposure to open air and to changes in air temperature, as when going from cool outside air to a warm room or vice versa.. Sputum may taste salty or sweet, or appear rusty. There is usually a strong thirst for cold drinks. The patient is often chilly, anxious, and prefers company

**Causticum** (potassium hydrate): A dry, raw, hoarse cough. Often associated with laryngitis. Highly characteristic is the difficult expectoration of mucus; one can't cough deeply enough to dislodge the mucus or must swallow it. Often there is urinary incontinence with the cough. The cough is relieved by cold drinks.

**Rumex crispus** (yellow dock): The cough is due to a tickle in the throat pit (the soft indentation immediately above the breast bone). It is very much worse from cold air and better from warmth and covering up. The cough may be dry or associated with tough mucus; coughing may be worse from bending the head backward. (Causticum is worse from bending the head forward.)

**Kali carbonicum** (potassium carbonate): Coughs worse at 3 a.m., with intense cutting pains in the chest when breathing.

**Pulsatilla** (wind flower): The cough in Pulsatilla cases is moist; the mucus is yellow-green. The cough is much worse from warmth and better from open air. The cough may also be loose in the morning and dry in the evening. It is also typically worse on first lying down at night, calming down as the night advances. In general, the patient is intolerant of heat, desirous of open air, thirstless, and sensitive, perhaps weepy and desirous of love and attention.

**Sulphur** (sulphur): This remedy is often useful for coughs that linger. The cough is liable to be worse all night long. The patient wants air. There may be local sensations of heat, such as burning sensations in the chest, head, or face. The patient is often hungry and thirsty; he may put his feet out of the covers at night. Look for the telltale unusual redness of the lips.

*Dr. Guess is a family physician and has practiced classical homeopathic medicine since 1978. He maintains a private family practice in Crozet, Virginia, near Charlottesville. He is the past editor of the American Journal of Homeopathic Medicine (a professional homeopathic medical journal) and Vice-President of the American Board of Homeotherapeutics (a national homeopathic specialty board). [www.drgeorgeguess.com](http://www.drgeorgeguess.com)*