

Homeopathic Healthcare
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Food Poisoning

This article pertains to the most common types of bacterial food poisoning, those caused by Staphylococcus, Clostridium, or, the most severe, E coli. Chemical food poisoning, botulism, and the exotic kinds of seafood poisoning aren't included. Undercooked or spoiled meats, custards, milk, cream-filled pastries, fish, and other foods (e.g., potato salad left too long on the picnic table, etc.) are some of the more common sources of these uninvited guests. Depending on the cause symptoms can begin abruptly and be severe, even with bloody diarrhea (E coli), or start more gradually and be mild. Symptoms usually ensue two to twenty-four hours after ingestion of the offending microbe or the toxin the microbe produces.

Conventional medicine has little to offer these patients beyond supportive care and rehydration (an important component of therapy in severe, dehydrating diarrhea and/or vomiting). Still, severe cases of food poisoning should seek a physician's help. Antibiotics are not usually employed. Homeopathic medicine, on the other hand, can often provide prompt and definitive relief for food poisoning sufferers. As is usual, in each case of food poisoning the unique, individualizing symptoms of the patient must be determined. The more common symptoms – diarrhea, abdominal cramps, vomiting, perhaps fever – help only to establish a diagnosis; they alone, without further precise definition, offer no clues to the correct homeopathic remedy.

Below are some of the more common homeopathic remedies useful for food poisoning, with their prescribing indications. The recommended dosage is one dose of 30C or 200C every one to four or so hours depending on the severity of symptoms; give at least three doses before changing remedies should there be no response. Once the diarrhea and/or vomiting are brought under control, repeat a dose at the first sign of relapse.

Homeopathic Medicines

Aloe socotrina (aloe): A sense of rectal insecurity; involuntary loss of stool when passing flatus. Spluttery stool, similar to Podophyllum. Early morning diarrhea.

Arsenicum album: Severe vomiting, with diarrhea at the same time is a keynote of this remedy. Burning diarrhea; vomitus that burns the throat. Cold drinks, fruit and ice cream aggravate diarrhea. Warm drinks and warmth in general help these folks feel better. Stools are frequent, and often scanty (as compared to Veratrum album, which also has simultaneous vomiting and diarrhea). Weak and restless. Chilly. Bad water and spoiled meat and cheese are common offenders.

Camphora (camphor): diarrhea with extreme coldness, yet does not want to be covered.

Carbo vegetabilis: Spoiled eggs, and other foods (spoiled meat, fish, fatty, rich foods) can aggravate Carbo vegetabilis patients. Most characteristic in these cases is the great accumulation of gas in the stomach and intestines, with considerable distention and flatulence; passing flatus or belching bring significant, temporary relief. There may be a strong desire for open air and being fanned. Chilly. Diarrhea can be offensive, sometimes bloody; there may be strong ineffectual rectal urging.

China (peruvian bark): Painless diarrhea with undigested food particles in the stool. Rapid debility from loss of fluids. Flatulence and fullness in the abdomen. Passing flatus very often does not bring relief. Diarrhea worse from bad fruit or water.

Colocynthis (bitter cucumber): Diarrhea with cramping abdominal pain which is better by bending forward, pressure, and warm applications. Abdominal pain is also better from the passage of flatus. Irritability. If these very same symptoms are present, but Colocynthis fails to help, try *Magnesia phosphorica*.

Cuprum metallicum (copper): diarrhea with cramps, in the abdomen and often the extremities. The abdominal cramps are made better by cold drinks. Persistent cramping. Does not tolerate pressure on the abdomen.

Ipecachuana: These cases of food poisoning are characterized more by extreme nausea and vomiting than diarrhea. Nausea not improved after vomiting, unrelenting. Sour fruits and rich pastries are a common cause. Typically, in gastrointestinal conditions one finds a coated tongue; the tongue of the Ipecachuana patient is notably clean and unaffected.

Lycopodium: Great fullness and distention of the abdomen, with flatulence. Passing flatus brings some relief. Marked sensitivity to tight waistbands and belts. Shellfish poisoning is a common cause. Symptoms tend to be worse in the late afternoon, from 4 to 8 pm.

Mercurius vivus (or solubilis) (mercury): Painful rectal urging which continues even after the diarrheic stool. The rectum still feels full after stool. Bloody diarrhea. The remedy may be compared with the remedy *Nux vomica* which has a similar painful rectal urging which is significantly better after stool and better from warmth — applications, bathing, etc.

Podophyllum (may apple): diarrhea with flatus (gas); yellow, offensive, explosive, spluttery stool, with many spots of liquid stool scattered around the toilet; intestinal rumbling with pain. Emptiness is felt in the abdomen after stool. Early morning diarrhea, around 5 a.m., driving the patient from bed is characteristic. Shellfish poisoning is a frequent cause.

Pyrogenium: Spoiled meat or fish aggravate this remedy. Nausea, vomiting, cutting abdominal pains, and, most characteristic, horribly offensive stool, sometimes black (must be wary of bleeding). There may be strong tenesmus (painful urging) of the rectum and bladder. Other discharges might be very offensive, even putrid as well; eg, the breath, perspiration, vomitus. Restless. Aching bones, made better briefly by movement. Rapid pulse. The person might feel better from hot drinks and/or hot bathing, as is Arsenicum album.

Sulphur: The stool is offensive and often excoriating, burning the anus. Sulphur usually is a warm-blooded remedy, unlike Arsenicum, which it can resemble.

Veratrum album (white hellebore): Diarrhea with simultaneous vomiting. Copious, frequent, painful diarrhea. Violently ejected stools with cramping abdominal pain, weakness, cold sweat, cold extremities, cold tongue, and cold breath (*Camphora* has similar coldness). Spoiled sausages is a specific cause of food poisoning in this remedy.

Additional comments: Fluid replenishment is important if diarrhea and/or vomiting are severe or protracted. Pedialyte is a good, physiologic oral rehydration fluid. A homemade oral rehydration drink can be made

with the following ingredients: one level teaspoon of salt, eight level teaspoons of sugar, one liter (about a quart) of clean drinking or boiled, then cooled water. Stir until all salt and sugar is dissolved. Drink after each bowel movement or vomiting episode (if you can keep it down).

Another little trick I've learned over the years for acute diarrhea is the liberal drinking of very concentrated lemon juice in water; basically squeeze about as much fresh lemon juice as you can stand into water and drink liberally. This solution often has a remarkable ability to dry up overactive bowels.

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