

MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY  
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INFORMATION SHEET: 17

## HOMOEOPATHY

*SIMILIA SIMILIBUS CURENTUR*

“SIMILAR SYMPTOMS IN THE REMEDY REMOVE SIMILAR SYMPTOMS IN THE DISEASE”  
(HAHNEMANN, ORGANON OF THE RATIONAL ART OF HEALING, 1810)

### HISTORY

The word homoeopathy is derived from the Greek *homoios*, similar, and *pathos*, suffering. The motto *Similia similibus curentur* is Latin and means “Let like be treated with like”.

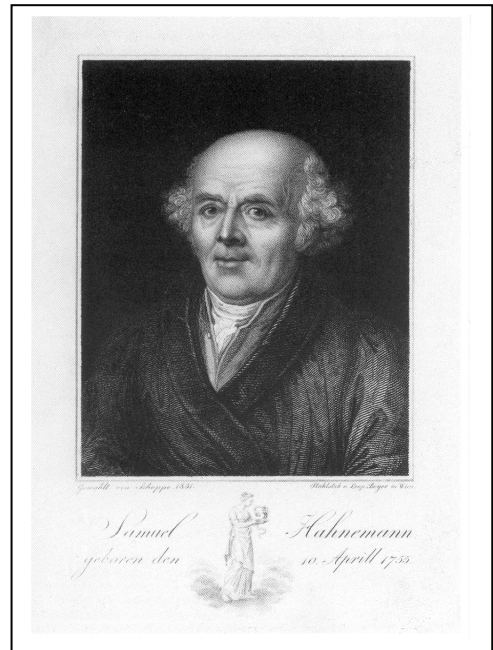
The founder of homoeopathy, Samuel Hahnemann, was born in Meissen in 1755 then lived in Leipzig 1789 -1821 where he became a physician. He experimented with cinchona bark (quinine), which was used to fight fever, and discovered that cinchona bark taken by a healthy person produced similar symptoms to those of the fever. He noted that Hippocrates and Paracelsus had mentioned substances that both produced and cured the same symptoms. He gave friends remedies and asked for reactions – these were called ‘provings’ – then tried the same in greater and greater dilutions. Dilutions were then used as cures. Using his dilutions, he had great success treating victims of cholera epidemics in 1812 and 1820.

Homoeopathy spread to Britain but attempts were made by the medical profession to have it banned by law. However, during a cholera epidemic in 1854, 16.4% of patients in a homoeopathic hospital died in contrast to an average of 51.8% in other hospitals.

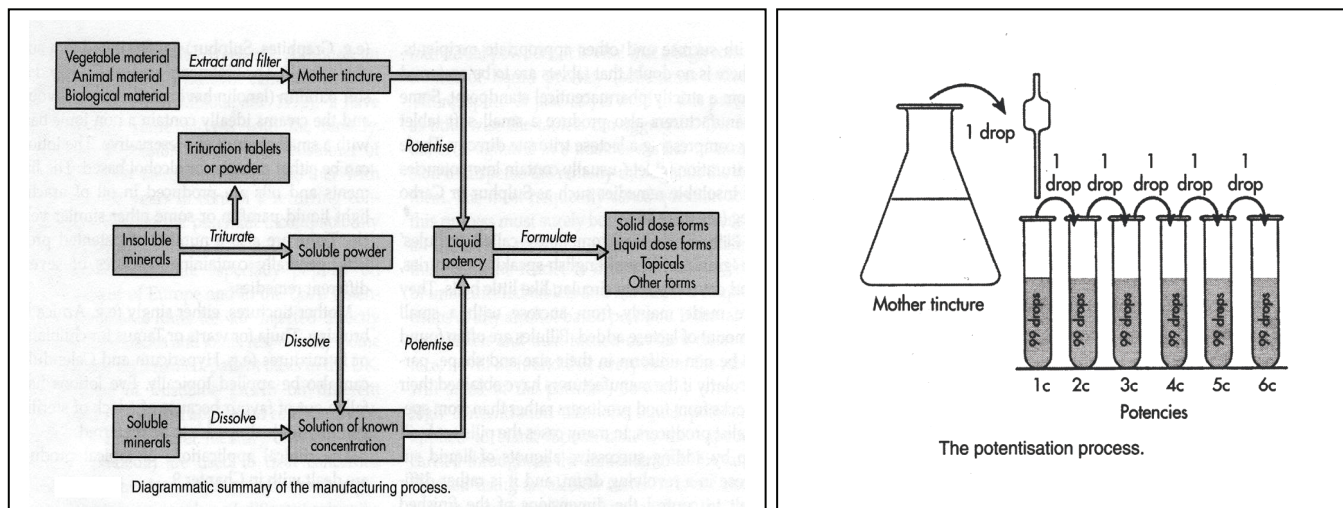
Later in his life, Hahnemann was forced to leave Leipzig because of hostility from apothecaries. He moved to Cothen then to Paris where he continued to practice until his death in 1843.

### TREATMENT

Treatment by homoeopathy involves more than prescribing medicine. Long consultation by the practitioner builds up a history of the person in order that the whole person can be treated, not just the disease. Items taken into account include family history of illness, inherited problems, effects of external stimuli on the condition e.g. heat, cold, time of day, and other factors such as the side of the body affected. The practitioner will then usually prescribe a single remedy, adding others if felt necessary.



## MEDICINE



Homoeopathic medicines are made by potentisation. First, a mother tincture is made by extracting or dissolving substances using alcohol. One drop of mother tincture is taken and ninety-nine drops of diluent (mixture of water and alcohol) and the resulting solution is succussed, an action of vigorous shaking and impact which adds kinetic energy. This will produce a *centesimal* potency referred to as 1c. One drop of 1c potency diluted with 99 drops of alcohol will produce 2c. The process is repeated until the required potency is produced. Alternatively, *decimal* potencies may be used when one drop is diluted with nine drops and succussed, producing 1x.

Homoeopathic dose forms vary. The most common are:

**Powders** - made from lactose impregnated with liquid potency. The powders come individually ready wrapped and the liquid is added to the outside of the wrapping, which passes through the paper to medicate the powder inside.

**Liquids** – usually these are prepared from mother tinctures by serial dilution and taken orally as drops, in water or on a sugar cube.

**Tablets** – small bi-convex white tablets made mainly from lactose.

**Pills** – small and spherical, made mainly from sucrose (sugar).

**Granules** – very small lactose pills. Used mostly for children and animals.

**Crystals** – very similar to granulated sugar.

Older dose forms include **pilules** (pills) and **globules** (granules). These names may also be found in current foreign descriptions. Solid forms are potentised by coating the outer surface of the product.

### Taking the medicine

Remedies should be kept in the original container, away from strong-smelling substances such as peppermint, paint and perfume. The mouth should be free of other tastes such as coffee or tobacco. The dose should be taken about half an hour before or after food. Remedies must not be handled; tablets and granules are tipped into the container cap and then placed on the tongue and allowed to dissolve in the mouth.

If stored correctly and not handled, homoeopathic remedies are thought to remain active almost indefinitely although it is now legally necessary to state an expiry date.

The illustration overleaf is of Samuel Hahnemann from an engraving by Leopold Beyer.  
Diagrams are from *Homoeopathic Handbook: an Introduction and Handbook* by Steven B Kayne 1997.

This information sheet is also available in a large font size.  
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