



Myra Nissen, C.Hom.

Homeopathic Consultant

### HOMEOPATHIC REMEDIES

Looking for a homeopathic remedy to substitute for the over-the-counter treatment now no longer available to infants? **Myra Nissen** says parents should definitely consult with a certified homeopath before giving anything to their child, but here are some typical remedies she recommends:

■ **FEVER:** Belladonna, diluted and in pellet form, is often recommended when a child has a high fever, the face is flushed but there is no sweating.

■ **SORE THROAT:** Cold-Eeze lollipops are often suggested, but only for children 3 and older. Parents also should be aware of any choking hazard to their child.

■ **SNEEZING:** Sabadilla is sometimes the choice for sneezing accompanied by tingly nose, ears, eyes and soft palate.

■ **STUFFY NOSE:** Kali Bichromicum might be prescribed for a very stuffy nose where the mucous is yellow-green.

■ **COUGH:** Nature's Way Sambucol, a cough syrup made of black elderberry, is a common remedy for cough and comes in an infant formula.

■ **CROUPY COUGH:** Drosera, found behind the herbal counter at Elephant Pharmacy and made by Hahnemann Labs, helps clear a barking cough, often with just one dose.

## Holistic Help for Little Snifflers

As OTC remedies vanish, parents seek alternatives

By Candace Murphy  
STAFF WRITER

**E**ARLY THURSDAY of last week, after the news had just broken on the Eastern seaboard that major makers of over-the-counter infant cough and cold medicines were withdrawing their products from the market for fear that they'd be misused, pregnancy and parenting Web sites lit up like a telephone switchboard on Mother's Day.

"Oh my goodness, what are we supposed to do?" was the virtual wail from Jill239714 at PregnancyWeekly.com.

"That is ridiculous!" blasted GenvieveK. "What are we supposed to give our babies to make them feel better?"

"Holy cow," cried Danetta2357314, "I should have bought some before they took it off the market ...and besides, can people not read labels? HELLO."

Though the resounding chorus nationwide seemed to be one of anger and frustration that a few people who couldn't read the back of a label were spoiling the convenience of over-the-counter remedies

for everyone, every once in a while, a lone voice in favor of holistic remedies would brave the storm and take the opportunity to dust off a soap box and tentatively test its boards for strength. Such was the case with a user named "Meg and Jo" on Pregnancy Weekly.

"Go to your local health food store and buy a homeopathic remedy.

Oftentimes they work better than the OTC stuff," countered Meg and Jo, but only before adding a winking, yellow, smiling avatar to soften what was definitely an unpopular message to the community at large.

Does this mean it's time for Pediacare and Dimetapp to scoot over and make room for Allium Cepa pellets for runny noses, onion earmuffs for earache pain, and belladonna pellets for high fevers? Quite possibly.

The removal of infant cold drugs from shelves are part of a voluntary withdrawal that only affects products labeled for use in infants and children under the age of recommended that the products not be used on infants.

A major log on the fire fueling the FDA's recommendation was based on the fact that from 1969 through 2006, there were 54 reported cases of death just with decongestants and 69 with antihistamines, and that the majority of deaths felled children younger than 2. The total recall also came despite the fact that the FDA acknowledged that "we have no way of definitely knowing how many fatalities occurred in relation to the number of children given cough and cold products during this time, nor whether the medicine was really the only problem."

Still, citing instances of parents using incorrect dosages or doubling up on over-the-counter medications — and perhaps even mindful that parent-to-parent advice on keeping children calm on long airplane or automobile rides includes a gentle, unneeded dosing of Benadryl — the recall went into effect.

But not all parents are at a loss. As Meg and Jo alluded, advocates of holistic health, a philosophy of medical care

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that incorporates physical, mental and spiritual aspects in treatment, and fans of naturopathic medicine, a medical philosophy that treats disease with homeopathy, among other modalities, are essentially unmoved by the developments at their corner drugstores.

"I was happy to hear it, says Karen Rezai, 36, co-leader of the Holistic Moms Network, East Bay Area Chapter. "It's just good to hear that they're concerned with the safety of children. I'm glad that people are thinking of what else they can do for their kids."

Dr. Anja Lindblad, a naturopathic practitioner in Walnut Creek, says parents are asking more questions about alternative treatments for their children, especially in the wake of the recall. Lindblad will also be giving a talk at the next meeting of the East Bay Area Holistic Moms Network when it convenes in Oakland on Oct. 30 ([visitwww.holisticmoms.org](http://visitwww.holisticmoms.org) for information).

Some of the most common treatments, says Lindblad, are the "onion earmuff" for children with painful earaches; cool compresses and plenty of hydration for a fever; and, as incompatible as it may sound logically, network spinal analysis by a trained chiropractor for the prevention of illness.

"Some treatments are more unusual than others," says Lindblad, as she explains the onion earmuff, which has a parent cutting an onion in half, heating it up, wrapping it in a thin towel and holding it over

the child's ears.

The sulfur in the onion helps reduce the pain," says Lindblad, adding that blood flow and air flow help temper the pain.

Still, trumping all these treatments, even the onion earmuff, might be the most common naturopathic treatment advice of all: for parents to, essentially, do nothing.

Assuming a woman breast-feeds at least 6 months, thereby providing her child great immunity benefits, naturopathic medical circles advise that a child's immune system needs to develop between the ages of 6 months and 4 years without the suppression many over-the-counter products provide. Working through cold symptoms like fever (letting fevers go up to 103 degrees is usually considered acceptable) and cough (the lungs are clearing themselves) allows the immune system, much like a muscle, to strengthen itself and learn what to do in response to future infections.

Such a seemingly laissez-faire approach to cold coddling underscores the common, yet not-oft-absorbed fact, that cold medicines don't cure anything, in adults or children. Not to mention that it's unclear whether over-the-counter medicines even relieve symptoms in children under age 2. Instead, the administering of cold medicines in infants has traditionally been more for parents' peace of mind, and perhaps a few borrowed extra hours of sleep when their child is sick.

But if parents want to learn more about their options, Lindblad recommends that they do their research before going

to Whole Foods and slicing up a yellow globe onion. After all, generalizing between homeopathic and naturopathic practices, and acupuncture and aromatherapy, all distinct philosophies and modalities despite all being "alternative," is too simplistic an approach.

For example, while a naturopath might have you wait out a fever, a **certified homeopath** like **Myra Nissen** might prescribe that a parent drop one pellet of belladonna into a glass of water, let it dissolve and give one teaspoon to a child every 15 minutes for 2 hours, or until the fever goes down. For a stuffy nose, a naturopath might have you suction out mucous, while Nissen might prescribe Kali Bichromicum.

"It's hard to say that 'this works for that,'" says Nissen, a homeopathic consultant with Elephant Pharmacy who also has a practice in Benicia and Walnut Creek. "There are a lot of different scenarios; everything presents itself differently, and homeopathy looks at every little detail. Parents can come into Elephant for a consultation or call a local homeopath for the right remedy."

Similarly, Lindblad recommends parents seek advice from experienced professionals.

"Find a practitioner you can trust, work with and learn from," she says. There are many talented naturopathic doctors out there. Yes, I am one, but I also know what we're trained to do, and that we're trained to work with natural remedies whether they be botanical or homeopathic or whatever, and we have board exams to make sure we know

what we're doing."

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