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## THE ALTERNATIVE WAY TO GOOD HEALTH

*As stringent controls over herbal medicines come into force, Sof McVeigh says she's still a fan of homeopathy*

**O**ver the years, I've been to just about every type of alternative practitioner for some ailment or other. Most of them were great and I've yet to come across either a charlatan or a quack.

To appreciate the benefits of alternative medicine, however, it doesn't automatically follow that I'm against conventional medicine and scientific advances that have been beneficial to our health. For instance, certain conventional medicines in use today are derived from herbs – aspirin from willow bark and digoxin (for the heart) from foxgloves. So I'm happy to embrace anything that helps people get better or stay healthy.

Homeopathy came into my life when, somewhat unintentionally, I gave birth using just homeopathic remedies and Rescue Remedy. I say unintentionally, as I was most emphatically asking for an epidural as the pain kicked in. But my labour was so quick, I was told it was too late for that and instead was fed handfuls of little white pills and given Rescue Remedy through a straw; hardly high tech, but it worked. This experience led me to explore further just what it was that came to my aid. So, after years of study and practice, I now appreciate the potency of the 'less is more' philosophy of homeopathy.

Once, what's now called alternative medicine was a first port of call within communities, as it was relatively

inexpensive. In the West, though, it's now considered a luxury. Yet, the remedy – be it acupuncture, homeopathy or local herbs – can cost less than a course of drugs. What's more, the NHS spends around £460 million every year treating in-patients for the adverse reaction to medication.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is aware of the importance of traditional medicine and one of its aims is to 'acknowledge traditional medicine as part of primary health care'. I'd like to think the UK Government will take note of this. It's not looking likely, though, as stringent controls over the use of traditional herbal medicines have come into force and the tiny amount of homeopathy that was available on the NHS is being all but phased out. Soon the only route for health will be through the already congested doctor's surgery.

As the Countess of Mar said in a debate on alternative health in the House of Lords: 'I firmly believe that those of us who do not wish to clog up our doctors' surgeries with trivial complaints should be allowed to treat them in whatever way we wish, so long as we are armed with accurate information.'

'Hear, hear,' I'd have shouted, had I been there. So I'll endeavour to support her wise words and continue to inform you with accurate information for your own home remedies in these very pages.



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#### TOP 10 ALTERNATIVE REMEDIES

- ◆ **Acupuncture** (Chinese treatment) for symptoms of pain, needles are inserted into specific points of the skin. Find an acupuncturist at [www.acupuncture.org.uk](http://www.acupuncture.org.uk)
- ◆ **Arnica** (homeopathy) for bumps and bruises, either as a cream or pills, available widely.
- ◆ **Chamomile** (herbal) soothing night-time tea to aid sleep, or used homeopathically as teething granules. Available in sachets from chemists.
- ◆ **Echinacea** (herbal) for colds and flu, drops or tablets, available widely.
- ◆ **Elderberry** (herbal) for colds and as a winter tonic. Make your own syrup or buy Sambucol at chemists.
- ◆ **Osteopathy** (physical manipulation) for trapped nerve pain, back pain, RSI,

postural problems, and so on. Choose an osteopath on the register at [www.osteopathy.org.uk](http://www.osteopathy.org.uk)

- ◆ **Rescue Remedy** (flower essences) for stress relief, available widely.
- ◆ **Rose hip** (herbal) for inflammation and pain in joints. Available as herbal tea, in tablet form or as a supplement from chemists.
- ◆ **Wristbands** (acupressure) for nausea and motion sickness. Available at sites such as [www.sea-band.com](http://www.sea-band.com)
- ◆ **Zinc** (nutrition) for colds and flu, either as a supplement or as throat lozenges, available widely.

**Disclaimer:** The information presented here is intended for information only. These statements are not intended to diagnose, cure, treat or prevent disease. Individual results may vary, and before using any supplements or homeopathic remedies it is always advisable to consult with your own healthcare provider.

