

Danger exists

The lack of side effects is one commonly cited advantage of homeopathy. However, use of homeopathy as an alternative to conventional medicine can have disastrous consequences.

In one case in the New Zealand Coroner's Court, a mother refused antibiotics for her baby's ear infection, preferring to take homeopathic advice. Two weeks after the initial consultation, the baby was taken again to the homeopath, who expressed concern about its poor health but who did not suggest seeking conventional medical treatment. The mother, a registered nurse, commented that the symptoms looked like meningitis and, two days later, took her baby to her GP. The doctor insisted on the baby being hospitalised immediately; it took some time to convince the mother to do this. The Wellington Hospital paediatrician reported a "great sense of frustration in dealing with the mother, who opposed him every step of the way". Despite intensive treatment, the child died a week later from brain damage due to bacterial meningitis.

While such documented cases are rare, particularly as there is little consumer protection or oversight of this industry, the website Whatstheharm.net lists many cases where homeopathic practices have caused people harm.

One major concern has been the industry marketing homeopathic preparations as "vaccines", particularly during the New Zealand meningitis campaign, citing its "like cures like" approach that sounds vaguely like genuine vaccination practice.

It is rare for the pseudoscience underpinning homeopathy to be clearly explained in media coverage, so people are under-informed and left with the impression that there is something to it.

In most cases, homeopathic preparations are used to treat conditions that are minor or which get better spontaneously. But relying on the placebo effect - where it's your psychological response making you feel better -- can be dangerous for your health and your wallet.

The most effective practice of homeopaths is the lengthy time they spend with their clients to establish a case history and a personal relationship that can improve health outcomes. That too is a form of placebo effect.

There are campaigns to discourage pharmacies from selling homeopathic products alongside tested effective medicines., as it is unethical and unsafe for them to do so.



the new zealand Skeptics guide to

Homeopathy

If homeopathy works, then obviously the less you use it, the stronger it gets. So the best way to apply homeopathy is to not use it at all.

Phil Plait

**Water has memory!
And while its memory of a long lost drop of onion juice is Infinite
It somehow forgets all the poo it's had in it!**

Storm by Tim Minchin

Homeopathy might work in the sense of helping some people feel better some of the time. Homeopathy does not work, however, in the sense of explaining pathologies or their cures in a way which not only conforms with the data but which promises to lead us to a greater understanding of the nature of health and disease.

Bob Carroll, The Skeptics Dictionary