

HOMEOPATHY AND INDIGESTION

Nux vomica (*Colubrina* in Canada)

Dr. James Tyler Kent wrote well over 100 years ago a description of a person who might need *Nux vomica* as a remedy:

“...a business man has been at his desk until he is tired out, he receives many letters (our equivalent today would be many emails!), he has a great many irons in the fire; he is troubled with a thousand little things; his mind is constantly hurried from one thing to another until he is tortured...lies awake at night; his mind is confused with the whirl of business and the affairs of the day crowd upon him...”

It would seem we haven't learned much from the past! How many people do you know who live lives like this...a glass of wine or two at night to help relax from a busy day, takeout dinner, headache in the morning from dreaming about work, a couple of Tylenol in the morning, a latte to get going, and no time to eat breakfast because of sleeping late, two more coffees at work, liquid lunch or fast food, and pretty soon it's time to break out the antacids to deal with the reflux! This is the state and situation of someone needing *Nux vomica*...we've all been there at some time or another. And it's not just businessmen and women these days that can find themselves in this kind of situation.

Busy moms, care givers...anytime where we are in a situation where the many small details of life are creating irritability, touchiness, and exhaustion, and the digestive symptoms fit, *Nux vomica* may provide relief.

- Digestive problems brought on by excessive worry about work, small details and overindulgence in alcohol, coffee, and stimulants, over the counter medications, and too much fast food.
- Nausea from overeating – heartburn, empty retching, sour burps.
- Headache (this is considered a great hangover remedy...gives you an idea of the kind of headache!) with irritability, dullness, and drowsiness; the kind of headache that comes with a disordered stomach.
- Constipation with an urge to go but very little happens, or there may be a feeling of incompleteness, of not quite being finished – feels worse mentally and

physically in the morning (think the “day after” a big party...too much food, too much drink, too much coffee, way too much fun!)

Pulsatilla

I like to think of this remedy as the birthday party stomach upset. Your child is excited at the party, playing and getting heated from running around. The menu is hot dogs, maybe French fries and burgers, cake with buttercream icing, whipped cream on ice cream sundaes, and then after the party comes the tummy ache, the clinging to mom, the weeping. The vomiting may come toward bedtime, much later after eating, and the food is only partly digested. Are we having fun yet?

- Digestive problems brought on by eating rich, fatty foods, especially ice cream, heavy cream.
- Tongue may be coated white or yellow.
- Cool air makes the person feel better in general.
- Becoming heated or warm/hot rooms make the person feel worse.
- Not thirsty at all – may have diarrhea or constipation, but the stool may change in character and color.
- Bad taste in the mouth.

Ipeca

Where Ipecac is used over the counter to induce vomiting, it is used homeopathically to relieve vomiting with constant nausea. The situation that most comes to mind when thinking of constant nausea without relief from vomiting is morning sickness. I remember my first month of pregnancy with my first child... I, who loved coffee, was ready to throw up at just the smell of it. I wouldn't let my husband come near me if I could smell any fried food on his clothing. The nausea just wouldn't go away. If only I had known about homeopathy then!

- Tongue is clear with increased saliva...that funny watery feeling that you can get with nausea just before you throw up.
- Vomiting can be quite severe and is worse after eating or drinking.
- Diarrhea with nausea and stools may be green and frothy or with mucous.
- Little thirst.

Arsenicum (Metallum album in Canada)

This is the food poisoning remedy par excellence! The symptoms of Arsenicum so resemble those of food poisoning that it is almost as specific...like Arnica is to injuries. Food poisoning has violent cramping with vomiting and diarrhea and often occurs anywhere from 2-12 hours after eating contaminated food. If the meal has been taken at the supper hour, midnight is about the time you're off and running to the bathroom...both ends at the same time...not a pretty picture! There is exhaustion, chilliness, restlessness and fear...one of the thoughts going through your head at that moment may even be, “I've been poisoned!” At some point, you may even be

convinced that you are going to die. The other situation where Arsenicum can be very helpful is with traveller's diarrhea.

- Severe cramping with violent vomiting and diarrhea.
- Chilliness, restlessness, weakness, exhaustion with any digestive complaint.
- Burning pains...could be anywhere in the digestive tract and the person feels better by being warm...warm blankets, heating pads, wheat bags.
- Thirsty but will take only small sips of water at a time; drinking cold drinks can bring on vomiting.
- Worse at night, especially around midnight.
- Afraid of being alone.
- Diarrhea with burning sensation in the rectum.

Potency and Repetition

Some quick tips on potency (that's the number beside the remedy name...e.g. 6CH or 6X, 12CH, 30CH, etc.) and dosage (how much and how often):

In general, the more intense the acute sickness, the more you will need to repeat the dose. For example, in a high fever, you may need to give a dose (one to three granules) every half-hour to one and one half-hours for up to three doses. In most cases, however, one dose every two to five hours will be sufficient.

If you have a well-chosen remedy (according to the symptom picture), you will begin to see results within twelve to twenty four hours. If the symptom picture changes, a second remedy may need to be given but do not rush giving a different one. If there is improvement, even if it is slow and there are no changes in the symptoms, stick with it. A potency of 30CH will be sufficient for any of the above situations. Again, if you are uncertain at any time, please call your homeopath.

In Dana Ullman's book *Everybody's Guide to Homeopathic Medicines*, there is a great list of symptoms to watch for when you will need to get medical care in digestive complaints, including:

- any severe abdominal pain.
- if there is incessant vomiting.
- if there is evidence of dehydration: lack of tears, truly dry mouth, loss of normal skin texture, sunken eyes, sunken soft spot in baby's head.
- if there is a possibility of poisoning or drug use.
- if stools or vomited material is bloody, black, red, tar-like, or resembles coffee grounds.
- if there is vomiting, diarrhea or pain after an abdominal or head injury.
- if a child's vomiting is accompanied by marked irritability, inconsolable screaming or marked lethargy.
- if vomiting begins unexpectedly during the course of a viral respiratory illness.