



# Contagion Season!

## The Flu and You: What to Do

by MARY ASPINWALL

CONTAGION, THE HOLLYWOOD BLOCKBUSTER, OUTSOLD ALL OTHER MOVIES IN ITS OPENING weekend this Fall and continues to clean up. It put bottoms on theater seats for two reasons: the cast is A-list (Matt Damon, Gwyneth Paltrow, Kate Winslet, Jude Law), and the flu is super scary.

We are talking about an illness that could be our modern-day equivalent of the Black Plague. The SARS outbreak and the more recent Swine Flu panic gave us just a tiny foretaste of the havoc a cleverly adapted virus could wreak in these days of the itty-bitty, global village. Flu (and the panic it brings) is not to be sneezed at!

### Flu can kill

The last big epidemic called “Spanish flu” (but known in Spain as the “Naples soldier”) was referenced in the movie. It killed more people than all those who died in combat during World War I. Estimates put the worldwide death toll at 21,642,274. One billion people were affected by the disease—half the total human population. It came at a time when 19 nations were at war. The disruption, stress, and privations of war certainly aided the flu’s spread. It

killed people on every continent except Antarctica, with the most lives lost in Asia and the highest percentage of the population killed in India.

From August 1918, when the incidence of flu began to seem abnormally high, until the following July when it returned to about normal, 20 million Americans had become sick, and more than 500,000 had died. In October 1918, the flu reached its peak, killing about 195,000 Americans. About 57,000 American soldiers died from influenza during World War I; about 53,500 died in battle.<sup>1</sup>

### Homeopathy’s stellar track record

Homeopathy was used very successfully during the 1918 flu. While the death rate for those who sought treatment from conventional physicians was about 30%, the death rate for those who sought homeo-

pathic treatment was only 1.5%. To find out more about this, I highly recommend you read *The Homeopathic Treatment of Influenza—Surviving Influenza Epidemics and Pandemics Past, Present and Future with Homeopathy* by Sandra J. Perko. It captures the full horror of what happened at the start of the last century and has a wonderfully thorough overview of homeopathic flu remedies.

During epidemics, homeopaths can greatly help one another by sharing information on symptom patterns and remedies they have found effective in helping their clients. The homeopathic literature of old describes this being done very effectively during a major cholera epidemic and a scarlet fever epidemic. The concept, known as finding the “*genus epidemicus*,” has the potential to greatly reduce suffering and save lives.

The idea is to build up a symptom picture of an epidemic, as it is being expressed in a large number of different cases. Once again, the internet could be our savior, permitting the speedy exchange of this information through special-interest mailing groups and message boards.<sup>2</sup> By drawing all of these far flung cases together “as if they were one person,” one (or more) homeopathic medicine can be identified (i.e., the *genus epidemicus*). This remedy can then be given to everyone who con-

comes on fairly suddenly, with a high fever (102°F and up), severe body aches, extreme tiredness, and a flushed face. Vomiting and dizziness may also be present. After a few days, these symptoms may improve a bit but that’s when severe respiratory symptoms may arise, like bronchitis or even pneumonia. Flu is usually over within a week to ten days, but feelings of exhaustion can last for weeks or longer after a bad flu. Fortunately, careful use of homeopathic remedies can speed up

rations in France, and estimated annual US sales are around \$20 million per year.

Like all truly homeopathic remedies, it has a wonderful safety record with no drug interactions or side effects. Four clinical studies, including two published in peer-reviewed journals, show that *Oscil-*

## The last big epidemic called “Spanish flu” ... Estimates put the worldwide death toll at 21,642,274.

tracts the illness—a real time-saver in an epidemic situation. This same medicine can even be prescribed to healthy people to protect them from contracting the illness at the height of an epidemic. This type of prophylactic prescribing has recently been done very successfully, on a massive scale, in Cuba to prevent an outbreak of leptospirosis.

### When is “flu” not flu?

The word “flu” is becoming increasingly misused. Being under the weather, sniffly, and achy does not necessarily mean you have flu. It is much more likely that you are a little run down and your body is giving gentle warning signs to pay attention to your diet, drink more water, take gentle exercise, and get more sleep. If you get this type of illness frequently, it is a sign you need homeopathic treatment for the underlying weakness in your constitution.

Flu is a powerful epidemic illness that affects large numbers of the population at around the same time and is highly contagious; a common symptom pattern emerges in most sufferers. Flu usually

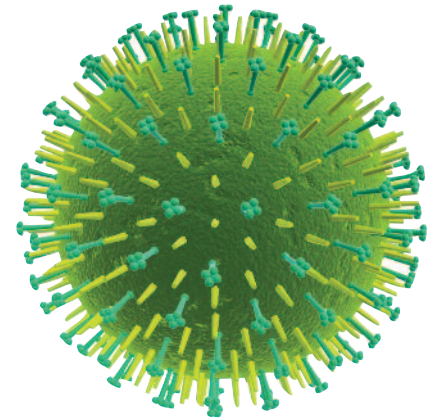
recovery times dramatically. It is very important to avoid the use of aspirin during flu symptoms as it can cause unwanted complications.

### The world’s best-loved flu remedy

The most well-known homeopathic remedy for flu is *Oscillococcinum*®. A Google products search shows this remedy gets fantastic reviews from the general public. By far the majority of reviews are 5-star (the maximum); only 3 of 53 purchasers express dissatisfaction, probably because the remedy was not a good enough match to their individual symptoms. Many people stress the need to take this remedy at the very first sign of symptoms, so it is a good one to keep on standby in your medicine cabinet, or pack in your hand luggage when you travel. Remember, in a virulent and dangerous epidemic it is best to stay home to minimize your risk, so having a good selection of remedies or a homeopathic kit at home is a very good idea.

### *Oscillococcinum*®

According to Boiron, one of the leading manufacturers and distributors of the remedy, it has been used by millions of people in more than 60 countries over the past 65 years. It is made from the heart and liver of a Muscovy duck and follows the usual homeopathic protocols of dilution and succussion, so that the final remedy is a microdose of the original substance. Since 2000, *Oscillococcinum*® has been one of the top ten selling prepa-



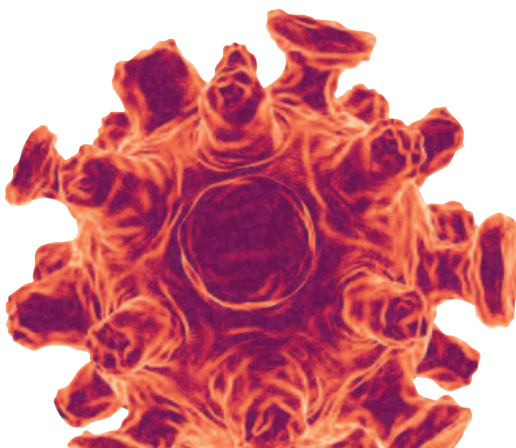
*locinum*® reduces the severity and duration of flu-like symptoms such as feeling run down, headache, body aches, chills, and fever.

### More great flu remedies

Of course, The Law of Similars remains very important, if you want to get the very best possible results with homeopathy. Always look at the totality of the person’s symptoms. Ask for details about where pains are located and where they extend to. Ask also if there is anything that makes the sufferer feel better or worse in themselves. Get them to tell you what makes their individual symptoms feel better or worse, too. Be on the lookout for anything strange, rare, or peculiar in their symptoms and any marked changes in their usual behavior or preferences. These are all great pointers to the correct remedy.

**Arsenicum.** Flu sufferers needing this remedy are chilly, anxious, don’t want to be left alone, and have a lot of burning pains. They want to sip on warm drinks, and they feel worse around midnight or 1 a.m. *Arsenicum* is useful in gastric flu, too, as it is an excellent remedy for diarrhea and vomiting.

**Baptisia.** Sudden onset, high fever, and extreme prostration are indicators for this remedy. The person is very sick and may be confused, dull, or even delirious. Their





muscles feel sore and bruised, their face is dark red, and they may have vomiting and diarrhea. Their discharges (e.g., sweat, saliva) have an offensive odor.

**Bryonia.** This is the remedy for flu with a slow onset and a very achy feeling that is worse for even the slightest movement. People who need *Bryonia* stay very still, and they get cross if disturbed. Even their eyeballs hurt to move. They often have a dry cough and dryness of the mucous membranes in general. They don't sip, they prefer really long drinks of cool water, probably so they don't have to move so much. This remedy was used often by homeopaths during the 1918 flu pandemic.

**Eupatorium perfoliatum.** This is the remedy for flu with terribly severe bone pain on the surface of the bone (periosteum). The person is chilly, but wants cold food and drinks. This remedy has recently been used successfully to speed recovery from the symptoms of Dengue fever (commonly called Bone Crusher disease) in India, Sri Lanka, and Brazil.

**Gelsemium.** This was the most frequently used remedy in the 1918 flu pandemic. Symptoms come on slowly, often after getting wet or when the weather changes suddenly. Those who need this remedy are very achy, with weak shivers up and down the spine. Some use the

analogy of being in a glass coffin, as they have full mental awareness, but with heavy, almost paralyzed limbs. Even the eyelids are heavy and droopy. Headaches are usually in the occipital area (where the back of the head meets the neck). One strange symptom is that urinating can relieve symptoms. *Gelsemium* can also be a good post-flu pick-me-up remedy, if you feel weak and floppy.

**Hepar sulph.** People needing this remedy feel extremely cold all over and worse for the slightest uncovering. They tend to be extremely irritable and are prone to very sore throats, with sharp pains that affect the ears.

**Mercurius vivus.** People who need this remedy sweat a lot but, unusually, the sweating does not make them feel any better. They are generally smelly all over with bad breath. Another strange symptom is increased saliva with a constant, painful need to swallow. They may have a bad taste in their mouth. They are like human thermometers, hypersensitive to temperature changes, one moment throwing covers off and then wanting them back on again.

**Nux vomica.** This is another remedy that helps with more gastric flu. People who need it have diarrhea and vomiting and can feel quite toxic and liverish (i.e., bilious and irritable). A strange symptom is their nose runs during the day but stops at night. They are impatient and cross (see *Bryonia*). They feel chilly and hate the slightest draft.

**Rhus tox.** This remedy is good for the type of flu that comes on in cold damp weather. The joints are often greatly affected, with a lot of stiffness; like a creaky gate, the joints may loosen up after moving, but get tired very easily and stiffen up again. These flu sufferers are often extremely restless in bed and just can't get comfortable. One strange symptom is that the tip of the tongue may have a red triangle.

## Remedies in action

In the early 1990s, there was an outbreak of Influenza A in Ireland. At the time, I was one of four homeopaths all working within a few miles of one another and we conferred to try to find the key symptoms common to our various clients. The main one was their overwhelming chilliness.



Jude Law plays Alan Krumwiede, a freelance web journalist, who gets the jump on a big news story. He is one of the first to realize the world is facing a deadly, fast-spreading pandemic. Alan is highly suspicious of the motives of pharmaceutical companies and government agencies. When he himself falls sick, he chooses an alternative route, dosing himself with a (fictitious) natural remedy called "Forsythia" on his vlog (video log). After making a rapid online recovery, he begins to attract millions of hits, as people desperately try to get information and protect themselves from the virus, which is killing one in four people who contract it within days.

Alan claims "Forsythia" is natural and side effect-free, but he never specifically alludes to homeopathy. However, at one point, an exasperated official who is debating with him says the government would consider using a homeopathic remedy if it could be scientifically proven to work. [Comment: Certainly a combination *genus epidemicus* homeopathic remedy could have been made available much more quickly and inexpensively than the CDC took to produce a vaccine, even in this movie with its typically neat Hollywood resolution!]

Although Alan is not presented as a particularly sympathetic character, profiting as he does from the surge in "Forsythia" sales (and sporting an additional snaggle tooth that does nothing for Jude Law's natural good looks), he does come across as genuine in his beliefs. He takes personal risks to get his message out to the public and relentlessly exposes government double-speak. At one dramatic high point, he even catches a high-ranking government spokesman in an outright lie on live TV.

The film, like many recent documentaries, captures the Zeitgeist of growing public mistrust of the FDA and the CDC's cozy relationship with the pharmaceutical and food producing corporations they are supposed to oversee.



They could be lying near a roaring fire with layers of warm clothing and piles of blankets or quilts on top of them, and yet they could not get warm. Most of these clients did very well on *Hepar sulph*. When I eventually succumbed to the same flu, *Hepar sulph* helped me to recover within a couple of hours.

In older clients it is not uncommon to see post-viral fatigue syndrome after flu, especially if they have become dehydrated through prolonged bouts of sweating, diarrhea, or vomiting. One of my clients, Bea, was a very active, lively woman in her early 70s. She loved to dance and go out socializing, but after a nasty bout of flu she could not shake off a persistent feeling of weakness. After one dose of *China 30c*, she was quickly returned to her former good health.

### Prevention is better than cure

Many people rely on an annual flu vaccine to protect them from flu. Before getting a flu shot, educate yourself on the risks and benefits so you can make a properly informed choice. A recent study published in *The Lancet: Infectious Diseases* showed that for every 100 people who are vaccinated, only 1.5 were prevented from getting the flu.<sup>3</sup>

After reviewing the evidence from hundreds of flu vaccine studies, epidemiologist Tom Jefferson of the Cochrane Collaboration states that flu vaccines are a gamble and not very

## The best protection against the flu is still a healthy immune system.

effective; they work best for those with healthy immune systems in the first place (for whom vaccines are not typically recommended). He also questions the motives behind the recent World Health Organization redefinition of the word “pandemic,” which lowers the threshold to the point that a regular flu season could be called a pandemic. When asked how he himself prepares for flu season, Jefferson said washes his hands frequently.<sup>4</sup>

So, the best protection against the flu is still a healthy immune system. Here are some tips to get you in tip top shape for flu season.

### You'll run better on high quality fuel

- ▶ Drink mostly water. Cut back on stimulants (coffee, tea), tobacco, and alcohol.
- ▶ Avoid all processed foods. Reduce your intake of wheat, sugar and dairy (unless you are lucky enough to have access to raw dairy).
- ▶ Eat lots of organic vegetables and some fruit in as many different colors as you can.
- ▶ Begin every day with a freshly made juice—leafy greens with a little carrot, apple, and ginger root.
- ▶ Eat a little organic, unsweetened fermented food every day (yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut).
- ▶ Avoid animal products that contain growth hormones or antibiotics; always buy organic.
- ▶ Sprout seeds and eat the sprouts daily. Sprouted broccoli is especially good for you.

### Catch some rays

Try to go out if it is sunny and expose as much skin as you can to top up your



vitamin D levels. Take cod liver oil to enhance your Vitamin D levels in the winter months.

### Take a rest

A field that has rested gives a beautiful crop. Get at least 8 hours sleep each night and more than that if you are still tired on waking.

### Don't sweat the small stuff...

and remember, it is all small stuff. Meditate, by focusing on your breath and observing your thoughts without attachment. Ideally do this when you are doing a daily chore like washing the dishes, so you get into the habit of a daily practice.

Feeling stressed about something? Visit [www.thework.com](http://www.thework.com) and use the free resources there to work on it.

### Footnotes

1. *Influenza 1918* is a PBS film. The transcript is available online at [www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/influenza](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/influenza)
2. If the 2011–2012 flu season is a bad one, the NCH website will keep you posted about *genus epidemicus* information just as during the H1N1/Swine flu season a few years back. From the home page, click on “Articles” and then “Flu” where a wealth of information about the flu can be found. [www.NationalCenterForHomeopathy.org](http://www.NationalCenterForHomeopathy.org)
3. • “Shock vaccine study reveals influenza vaccines only prevent the flu in 1.5 out of 100 adults (not 60% as you’ve been told),” by Mike Adams, October 27, 2011, [www.naturalnews.com/033998\\_influenza\\_vaccines\\_effectiveness.html](http://www.naturalnews.com/033998_influenza_vaccines_effectiveness.html)
- “Efficacy and effectiveness of influenza vaccines: a systematic review and meta-analysis,” by M. Osterholm et al., *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, Early Online Publication, 26 October 2011
4. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HdJ4n0Ewu4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HdJ4n0Ewu4) or search YouTube.com for “Tom Jefferson Talks About Swine Flu Vaccine.”



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Aspinwall is an experienced, classical homeopath with a busy practice in Santa Barbara, CA. She is a regular contributor to *Homeopathy Today*, *Homeopathy Radio*, and *Natural News*. Mary

designed a range of homeopathy kits in the early 90s that are international best sellers and runs an educational website for the public. Check out her blog for practical, topical advice, free homeopathy training, and free e-books. [www.homeopathy-world.com/blog](http://www.homeopathy-world.com/blog).