

Erik Van Woensel

# General Physical Symptoms

Their meaning and application

Theory  
Case Studies  
Long Term Treatment

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## Foreword

I have decided to publish this book because I see in my classes that there is great need amongst students to get information about the physical general symptoms that remedies have as important symptom.

The physical general symptoms have always had a special place in the Materia medica of homeopathic remedies and in the case analysis. Already in the beginning of homeopathy Clemens Von Boenninghausen, one of Hahnemann's closest associates began to realize this very fact. He explained his ideas to S. Hahnemann who agreed with it.

Physical general symptoms are the most important tool homeopaths have to differentiate remedies that appear in the repertorisation of the distinctive symptoms of a case.

Therefore, it is important that homeopaths have the correct information about the physical general symptoms, so that they can come to the right conclusion when analysing a case and giving the most similar remedy.

This information will be accessible anyhow when I publish the Materia medica which I am preparing, but I understood that this would take too much time. There is an immediate need for it now and therefore this small work is published.

I hope that this book will help all those that try to apply homeopathy in the correct way. Especially because being able to find the right remedy will benefit our patients a lot.

Erik Van Woensel

Repton, 23 October 2025.

## About the book

This book gives information about the important physical general symptoms of homeopathic remedies. The physical general symptoms are the most important tool which homeopaths have to differentiate remedies.

Therefore, it is important that homeopaths have the correct information about these symptoms, so that they can come to the right conclusion when analysing a case and give the most similar remedy.

To be able to decide which remedies to put in which rubrics I have done research in different *Materia medicas*. The list can be found in the back of the book. (See *Bibliography* page 151)

Some remedies are put between brackets. These are remedies that already have shown their use for that general physical symptom but still need further investigation and confirmation. If homeopaths can give information about these remedies coming from cured cases, then this would be most welcome. This can help to make this information clearer. The development of our *Materia medica* is best done by many homeopaths who have confirmed information from cured cases. Already we can see in S. Hahnemann's *Materia Medica Pura* that many people contributed to gather the information.

There are general physical symptoms that we can clearly use to differentiate remedies because they have an opposite modality. These are *food modalities, position of sleep, sides of the body, temperature modalities and thirst*.

The other general physical symptoms (*discharges and time modalities*) cannot be used in that way. For instance, there is no opposite for burning discharge or for aggravation at 03:00 hours. This information I have added because it belongs to the list of general physical symptoms. But it cannot be used for differentiation where we look for contra-indicating modalities. (See *Differentiating remedies with general physical symptoms* page 40) One has to be careful not to use this information as negative symptoms, which are symptoms of a remedy not present in the case. We cannot differentiate remedies in this way. (See *Negative symptoms* page 41)

Food modalities can be divided into *negative* and *positive*. The negative are *aggravation* and *aversion*. The positive are *amelioration* and *desire*. The two positive modalities can be combined if necessary. The same can be done with the two negative modalities. Therefore, if a food modality does not have the modality one is looking for, one can always look if the other negative or positive modality is present. This idea is justified by the fact that patients have an aversion to something because it aggravates them and have a desire for something because it can give amelioration. The natural instinct refuses what can make the organism's condition worse and asks for that what can make it better. In the provings we often read this, that a prover develops aversion to something that disagrees with his or her condition.

Sleep modalities are divided into two:

- the remedies that sleep on the left or right side and
- the remedies that sleep on the back or abdomen.

For instance, a patient sleeps on the right side and the keynote of the needed remedy is sleeping on the back. This has no influence on the differentiation because the opposite of the sleeping on the right side is sleeping on the left side, not sleeping on the back.

After the lists of general physical symptoms, I have written a chapter about remedies with opposite physical general symptoms. There are remedies that are very similar for different reasons, but that have opposite general (or local) modalities. To help homeopaths to understand the remedy the patient needs, I have described some of these remedies.

I have also put some cases that show examples of changes in the general physical symptoms during treatment. These cases serve to understand the importance of paying attention to this during the treatment of a patient. I have decided to put the complete treatment of these cases, as I have done in the book *Levels of health case studies*.<sup>1</sup> I believe that it is very instructive for students to understand that homeopathic treatment is not the same as selecting one remedy and completely curing a patient. This is not very often seen anymore in our practices. The defence mechanisms of human beings have become too

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<sup>1</sup> Van Woensel E. Levels of Health - Case studies, Educatief Centrum voor Homeopathie, Groesbeek, Netherlands, second edition 2019.

degenerated for this. Usually, it takes more to come to a cure. Therefore, it is very important to understand the basic rules of homeopathic treatment. This is why I take the opportunity to describe such cases in detail. In this way I can give examples of what is written in my other books theoretically. Every case, when treated correctly and well, that is followed for years, is a treasure-trove of information that can clarify a lot of aspects of homeopathy.

It would be good if this would be done more and become a habit in the homeopathic community again as it was in the past. To process this information and make it available to the homeopathic community it is necessary to have an organisation that takes care of this. I have made a start on this with a project called *Archive for Homeopathy*. This project has been set up to collect cases with cured symptoms in order to improve the homeopathic reference sources. It is of great importance that this information is at the disposal of the homeopathic community to improve the accuracy of our prescriptions. J.T. Kent has made a tremendous contribution to the accessibility of the homeopathic information by making the *Repertory of the Homeopathic Materia Medica*. But he also writes in the *Preface* that we can only expect to have a complete and correct repertory if homeopaths send in verified symptoms.<sup>1</sup> More than a hundred years have passed since and as far as I know no serious attempt has been made to fulfil this wish. So with this project I am making a start to fill this gap and I sincerely hope that many colleagues around the world will be willing to cooperate in this project so that we can all benefit from it. As can already be seen in the cases in this book certain standards will be used to accept cases for such a project, like signs that prove a regeneration of the defence mechanism - known as *Directions of cure* - and long-term follow up (at least two years).

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<sup>1</sup> J.T. Kent, *Repertory of the Homeopathic Materia Medica*, Jain Publishers, New Delhi, reprint 1993, page viii.

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## What this book has to offer you

- Explanation of **what a symptom is** according to homeopathy.
- Explanation of the **difference between a general and local symptom**.
- The **hierarchy** between the **different general symptoms**.
- **Insight** in the **value of the general physical symptoms** in case analysis.
- Information about how to **recognize a useful general physical symptom**.
- Information about **how to use the general physical symptoms**.
- Lists of **important general physical symptoms** and the **remedies that have them as important symptom**.
- Explanation of **remedies** that have **opposed generals**.
- A **well-structured schedule** that can be used to assist you to arrive at a homeopathic prescription, enabling you to choose the **right strategy or technique** in order to make the **correct prescription**.
- **Example cases**, with a **long-term treatment**, to practise your knowledge on prognosis, case analysis, the application of general physical symptoms, Materia medica, potency selection and evaluation of the case.

# Physical general symptoms and their important remedies

Some general physical symptoms in this list can clearly be used to differentiate remedies because they have an opposite modality. These are *food modalities, position of sleep, sides of the body, temperature modalities* and *thirst*. The other general physical symptoms (*discharges* and *time modalities*) cannot be used in that way. For instance, there is no opposite for burning discharge or for aggravation at 03:00 hours. This information is put here because it belongs to the general physical symptoms and to have all the general physical symptoms complete.

## Discharges

**Acrid, irritating:** Am-c. Ars. Arum-t. Caust. Kreos. Nit-ac.

**Albuminoid:** Am-m. Nat-m.

**Bland:** Alumen. Puls.

**Bloody:** Arn. Carb-v. Chin. Crot-h. Ferr. Ham. Lach. Phos. Sul-ac. Ter.

**Burning:** Ars. Arum-t. Canth. Carb-ac. Carb-an. Kreos. Merc-c. Nit-ac. Sulph.

**Corrosive:** Am-c. Ars. Ars-i. Arum-t. Carb-ac. Caust. Kreos. Merc-c. Nit-ac.

**Offensive, fetid - cheese; like rotten:** Hep. Sanic. Thuj.

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## Food modalities

**Alcohol - agg.:** Ran-b. Nux-v.

**Alcohol - desire:** Aur. Lach. Med. Nux-v. Ran-b. Sel. Sulph.

**Apples - desire:** Ant-t. Ap-g. Guaj. Sulph. Ust.

**Bacon - desire:** Ars. Calc-p. Sanic. Tub.

**Bananas - aversion:** Elaps

**Bananas - desire:** Ther.

**Beans - agg.:** Carb-v. Chin. Lyc.

**Beer - agg.:** Chin. Kali-bi. Nux-v.

**Beer - aversion:** Chin. Nux-v.

**Beer - desire:** Kali-bi. Nux-v. Puls. Sulph.

**Bitter food and drinks - desire:** Nat-m.

**Brandy - agg.:** Nux-v. Op. Ran-b. Sel. Sulph.

**Brandy - desire:** Med. Nux-v. Op. Sul-ac. Sulph.

**Bread and butter - desire:** Merc.

**Butter - agg.:** Carb-v. Puls.

**Butter - aversion:** Chin. Puls.

**Cabbage - agg.:** Carb-v. Chin. Lyc. Puls.

**Chalk:** see Lime

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## Temperature modalities

### Remedies that easily feel cold

Abies-c. Abrot., Acetan. Acet-ac. Acon. Allox. Alum. Alum-p. Alumn. Am-c. Am-m. Ant-t. Anth. Apoc. Aran. Arg-met. Arist-cl. Ars. Astac. Aur-ar. Bad. Bar-c. Benz-ac. Blatta-o. Bol-la. Bor-ac. Cadm-met. Cadm-s. Calc. Calc-ar. Calc-p. Calc-sil. Camph. Caps. Carb-ac. Carb-an. Carb-v. Carbn-s. (Carc.) Card-m. Caul. Caust. Chel. Chin. Chin-ar. Chlol. Chlorpr. Chr-ac. Cimic. Cist. Coc-c. Coff. Colch. Con. Crot-c. Cupr. Cupr-act. Cycl. Dig. Dros. Dulc. Elaps Eup-per. Euph. Euphr. Ferr. Ferr-ar. Ferr-p. Gamb. Graph. Hell. Helo. Helo-s. Hep. Hydr-ac. Ign. Jatr-c. Kali-ar. Kali-bl. Kali-c. Kali-chl. Kali-cy. Kali-p. Kali-sil. Kalm. Kreos. Lac-ac. Lac-c. Lac-d. Lachn. Lat-m. Laur. Led. Lina. Mag-m. Mag-p. Mang. Merc. Merc-cy. Mez. Mosch. Mur-ac. Naja Nat-ar. Nat-c. Nat-p. Nat-sil. Nit-ac. Nux-m. Nux-v. Ol-j. Ox-ac. Penic. Petr. Ph-ac. Phos. Phys. Plb. Psor. Pyrog. Ran-b. Rhod. Rhus-t. Rumx. Sabad. Sanic. Sapin. Sarcac. Saroth. Sars. Senec. Sep. Sil. Spig. Stann. Staph. Stront-c. Sul-ac. Sumb. Symph. Tab. Tarent. Teucr. Ther. Thuj. Thy. Tub. Verat. Vip-a. X-ray Zinc. Zinc-p.

### Remedies that easily feel warm

Aloe Apis Arg-n. Ars-i. Aur-i. Bry. Cadm-i. Calc-f. Calc-i. Calc-s. (Carc.) Cob-n. Com. Croc. Ferr-i. Fl-ac. Hist. Hypoth. Iod. Iodof. Kali-i. Kali-n. Kali-s. Lach. Lil-t. Med. Meph. Nat-m. Nat-s. Op. Puls. Sabin. Sec. Spong. Sul-i. Sulph.

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## Remedies with opposite general physical symptoms

### Remedies with opposite general physical symptoms

There are remedies that are very similar for different reasons, but that have opposite general (or local) modalities. To help homeopaths to understand the remedy the patient needs, I have described below some of these remedies.

**Aconitum napellus:** is one of the main remedies for the treatment of sudden acute diseases with high fever. It is very similar to *Belladonna*, but the latter usually has no thirst and has right-sided symptoms while *Aconitum napellus* is very thirsty and tends more to have left-sided symptoms.<sup>1</sup> *Aconitum napellus* also is more restless than *Belladonna*, which is usually duller due to the congestion to the head.

*Ferrum phosphoricum* also is similar to *Aconitum napellus* in acute diseases with high fever and thirst but it is more suitable for right-sided pneumonia while *Aconitum napellus* for left-sided.

**Actaea spicata:** has joint complaints that are worse from motion, touch and cold. This is similar to *Bryonia alba* and *Guaiacum officinale*, but they are worse from warmth and better from cold.

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<sup>1</sup> Van Woensel E, Classical Homeopathy – Evidence Based Medicine, Volume 1, Educatief Centrum voor Homeopathie, Groesbeek, Netherlands, third edition 2025, case 9 Tonsillitis with fever and case 25 Pneumonia.

# Case studies

## Case 1: Irritability

### First consultation

A 27-year-old woman recently became irritable and aggressive.[2] For instance when she is busy at work and someone disturbs her, she will shout something like 'leave me alone'. This all started when her job changed 18 months ago. She does not have time to help her colleagues as before, but they still come to ask her advice as a habit. So, she shouts at them to leave her alone. She is an economist engineer and has to check graphs and count costs. She starts from sudden loud noises [2]. She also seeks help because her family are also being affected by this behaviour...

### Prognosis of the first consultation

We make a prognosis to gain some insight in the condition of the patient's defence mechanism. This is the first step in the analysis. It is important to understand the condition of the defence mechanism, to be able to know which symptoms to select to find the first remedy, but also to be able to interpret the remedy reaction correctly. The defence mechanism is what is stimulated by the homeopathic remedy.

#### *Depth of the disturbance / Nature of the pathology*

The patient has emotional symptoms due to overexertion at work. Irritability is not high in the hierarchy of the emotional plane. In an ideal situation the defence mechanism would have developed skin problems. Probably because the mother is nervous, the patient is prone to develop nervous symptoms easier. There are also physical symptoms due to this overexertion. This is better for the prognosis.

The irritability, the vision problems, the trembling, the grimaces are all symptoms that show the nervous system is under pressure. None of the complaints she has are serious or affect vital organs.

#### *Personal medical history of the patient*

There is nothing in her personal medical history, that influences the...

#### *Differentiation of the remedies*

When differentiating remedies the general physical symptoms are the most important. Therefore, it is much easier if the case has at least one clear general physical symptom. We always start the differentiation using this clear general physical symptom. From the moment this is contra-indicated by the confirmed keynote of the remedy in the repertorisation, we have to look for another remedy, no matter how many confirmations there are. Therefore, we always start looking if there is any contra-indication. If we start looking for confirmations we will be misled and will not see the contra-indications anymore. So far in my books I have also paid more attention to the confirmations of the remedies, because I wanted to give information about the Materia medica of the remedies. This might have given a wrong impression to the readers. Therefore, in this book I will not do it in this way and simply show how it should be done in practice. The reader will learn quickly how practical this way of differentiating is and understand why C. von Boenninghausen and J.T Kent put so much emphasis on it.

The differentiation of this case is easy because we have clear general physical symptoms. The patient is worse from cold and sleeps on the abdomen. Remedies that are better from

cold or worse from warmth can be taken out of the list. *Natrum muriaticum* and *Sulphur* are contra-indicated because of the temperature modality.

*Calcareo carbonica* is not contra-indicated by the temperature modality. None of the symptoms are keynote of the remedy in the Materia medica. But it appears in two keynotes in the repertorisation: *Vision - dim - exertion of the eyes agg.* and *Eye - trembling - lids - upper - right*. *Calcareo carbonica* is one of the main remedies for people who are overworked as can be seen in the rubric *Mind - businessmen - worn-out businessmen; suited to*.

*Plumbum metallicum* is not contra-indicated. There are no confirmations.

*Nitricum acidum* is not contra-indicated. It is confirmed by irritability. It is in one of the keynotes in the repertorisation: *Vision - dim - exertion of the eyes agg.*

*Sepia officinalis* is not contra-indicated. It is confirmed by irritability and sleeping on the abdomen.

*Arsenicum album* is not contra-indicated. It is in one of the keynotes in the repertorisation: *Face - expression - smiling*.

*Cuprum metallicum* is not contra-indicated. It cannot be confirmed.

*Phosphorus* is not contra-indicated. It is one of the remedies that easily develop nervous symptoms.

*Causticum* is not contra-indicated. It is also a remedy that easily develops nervous symptoms.

The first differentiation of the remedies is easy because the general physical symptoms are clear. But the next step, differentiation with confirmed keynotes, is much more difficult. This is because many distinctive symptoms of the patient are no keynotes of remedies in the Materia medica. Therefore, we can use the technique *keynotes in the repertorisation* to see if there is confirmation in them. It is the easiest if the distinctive symptoms of the patient are also keynotes in the Materia medica, but in some cases this is not so. They are a bit more difficult to...

## Second consultation (two months after the first consultation)

The first days after taking *Calcareo carbonica* C200 the irritability got worse, thereafter her mood became milder. During the first month some pimples appeared on the upper eyelids of both eyes. The symptoms of the eyes became less. On the eleventh day after she took the remedy she had, painful but tolerable, cracking in the left wrist. It lasted for six days. She had it before. Six weeks after the remedy she got flu with dry cough and 39.5 degrees Celsius fever. She was very weak and did not have any appetite. She was diagnosed with tracheitis and was prescribed antibiotics. After five days she was still coughing and had

## Evaluation of the second consultation

After *Calcareo carbonica* C200 there was a clear positive reaction. First there was an initial aggravation, followed by amelioration and skin reactions. Then an acute disease developed with a high fever, which she had not had for a long time. The defence mechanism did not seem to be strong enough to overcome it and needs support. This means that she was on Level 7 of Group C. But the defence mechanism still functioned well enough to produce clear symptoms during the acute disease. Left-sided pneumonia belongs to *Calcareo carbonica*, as can be seen in the rubric *Chest - inflammation - lungs - left*. This is very good for the prognosis. If the defence mechanism develops symptoms of the chronic remedy during the acute disease it proves that it still was in a good condition, although it could not protect the vital organs. Otherwise, it would have had to change to another remedy pattern.

Because pneumonia is serious pathology and with the stimulus of the potency C200 the defence mechanism is unable to overcome the acute disease, I raised the potency. The patient was given *Calcarea carbonica 1M*.

### Third consultation (five months after the second consultation)

The patient recovered immediately *Calcarea carbonica 1M*.

Her vision was better until two months ago. Since then, it is as if there is a thin film on the eyes which she can wipe off.[2] It can be 3-4 times a day if she works with the computer otherwise the thin film can stay away for days. She wears lenses and is very strict about the hygiene.

She has loud cracking in the joints of knees, ankles and feet on ascending stairs for 2 months.[2] Sometimes she has pain in the left wrist.[1] She had it already before the first consultation.

After having pneumonia, she gained 7-8 kg weight.[1/2] She does not like quark [2]. Her thirst is normal.

She has itching spots on the inner part of the thighs and on the calves.[2]...

### Comment to the case

In the prognosis of this case it was not clear if the patient belonged to Level 3 or Level 7. The remedy reaction clarifies this. After *Calcarea carbonica 200C* we see how the defence mechanism was positively stimulated and was able to develop an acute disease with high fever again. As often happens when such an acute disease develops for the first time, the defence mechanism was not yet strong enough to control....

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## Case 2: Osteoarthritis

### First consultation

A 63-year-old woman comes to be treated for osteoarthritis. It started four years ago with shooting pain [2] in the hands that later also went to the knees. Her right ankle is swollen after taking a walk [1]. Her knees become weak when walking [2/3] and she starts to walk in an unstable way. The fingers hurt on exerting them [2]. She has nodes on the finger joints that are sensitive to touch [2]. After resting she feels stiff [2]. The pains are worse from cold wet weather [2].

Two years ago, she had pneumonia with high fever and had to spend two weeks in the hospital. Since then, she still is easily tired [2]. She smoked for forty years and stopped after getting pneumonia.

Three months ago, she was diagnosed with lichen sclerosus et atrophicus. She went to the gynaecologist because of severe itching. When she was 45 years old her menses stopped. The menses never gave her any trouble.

She has hypertension. It was found out by accident, because she measured it with her brother's device. It is controlled with *Atacand (candesartan)*.

The back of her feet can be a bit swollen in the evening.

She always used to be sensitive to cold [2]. This has become less since menopause. But still, she gets cold feet in winter. She perspires during sleep and has to take off the warm covers since her menopause started.

Her sleep is good. She prefers to sleep on the right side [2]...

## Evaluation of the fourteenth consultation

*Medorrhinum* has helped this patient a lot in the past, but it seems it is not the similar remedy anymore, because she stopped reacting to it even in a higher potency. We always raise the potency before changing the remedy to be sure that the patient needs another one. At this moment there is no doubt. We have to analyse the symptoms and repertorise again.

I want to make a remark about the emotional symptoms that appear in the case now. This type of symptoms are real *mind symptoms* as meant by S. Hahnemann in the Organon. He wrote that symptoms of the mind are the most important in a case,<sup>2</sup> but he was talking about pathological symptoms. This means that a real mental-emotional symptom represents a change in the natural psychological make-up of the patient...

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<sup>2</sup> Hahnemann S., Organon of Medicine, sixth edition, Jain Publishers, New Delhi, reprint 1982, paragraph 211.

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