

REMEDIES FOR LUMBAGO

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Some years ago people were wont to be mildly amused when they saw a friend with acute lumbago. Now public opinion has perhaps swung to the other extreme and everyone with backache fears a "prolapsed disc" and weeks in bed. Truth as usual, lies between the two extremes.

Many pains in the back *are* due to disc softening and displacement. These discs are "washers" of gristle (cartilage) which cushion the spaces between the vertebral bones. They are capable of swelling up, softening, and protruding pieces into the spinal canal where the roots of nerves going to the upper or lower limbs may be damaged by pressure causing the painful and disabling conditions of brachial neuritis and sciatica. The muscles of the back are held rigid and there is pain and inability to bend the spine forward.

Severe lumbago of this type requires a visit from the doctor who will probably order rest on a firm bed, using wooden boards under the mattress or folded blankets. Some persistent or recurrent cases require splinting of the spine by plaster of Paris supports and later by fitted spinal jackets or collars to enable one to go about.

The person liable to disc displacement should avoid being "caught bending" or worse half-bending, by a cough or sneeze which might be quite enough to displace a disc. Any lifting should be done with the back straight, bending the knees as furniture removers do. For this it is necessary to develop the muscles of the thighs and hips which are often far too soft. Bending over a sink to lift a window and bed making are common causes of displacements.

Fortunately many attacks of lumbago are slight and do not lead to sciatica or neuritis of an arm. The pain may be merely due to tension and spasm of muscles from cold or wetting or toxæmia. The severe backaches of smallpox and influenza are examples of pain due to general infection.

A Great Deal to Offer

Whatever the cause homœopathy has a great deal to offer for the cure of lumbago. In fact the number of remedies listed as capable of causing and hence curing pain in the back is very great. We can deal with only a few of the more common ones here but the permanent cure of recurrent backache may require careful study of the individual by an expert and a remedy based on the entire constitution.

I shall now mention the salient features of a few of the more frequently indicated remedies for simple backache, in alphabetical order.

ÆSCULUS is not only a good remedy for piles. It causes severe pain especially across the hips and in sacrum so that the patient can scarcely rise

from a chair or stoop. There is a weary feeling in back, arms and legs worse on exertion; and he can't walk much at all.

ANTIMONIUM TARTARICUM cures violent pains in the small of back with retching and cold sweat on attempting to move. Perspiration does not relieve the rheumatism (MERCURIUS). Heavy weight at the coccyx, dragging down. Pustular eruptions; and maybe also a moist rattling chest (bronchitis and pneumonia). The patient is drowsy and averse from being touched.

Both AESCULUS and ANTIMONIUM TARTARICUM come in for general infections, the latter especially for smallpox.

ARNICA is WORSE from injury, over exertion and excitement. Bruised soreness of back and great fear of being touched are the keynotes. The bed feels too hard, and if feverish the patient will be sore all over and restless like RHUS TOXICODENDRON.

Shooting Pains

BRYONIA. The pains of BRYONIA are well known to be of a sharp stitching and shooting nature much aggravated by any movement. It is especially good for painful stiff necks, right sided. Pains from the middle of the back may shoot into the chest hindering respiration. Although most BRYONIA pains are relieved by pressure, the spine may be tender to touch.

CALCAREA CARBONICA is not a remedy one thinks of in acute lumbago but in weak backs very easily strained from lifting and jarring it may cure. There is great stiffness and the patient is chilly and sweating and worse in cold wet weather, complaining of icy coldness in parts such as the nape, head and feet.

CALCAREA PHOSPHORICA I have also found very useful in painful stiff necks and lumbago, WORSE from draughts and snow-air, and on blowing the nose. This remedy may help growing girls with a tendency to scoliosis (spinal curvature) and severe "growing pains" in the lower limbs aggravated by cold. The legs are often cold, headaches are frequent and the menses are painful.

HYPERICUM. While ARNICA should help the early effects of injury HYPERICUM is more suitable when extreme sensitivity of the spine persists after a fall or jar. There is great pain radiating down the nerves on the slightest motion of neck or back and exquisite tenderness of the tail bone (coccyx) after falls on it, with difficulty in walking or stooping (cf LACHESIS, LOBELIA, MAGNESIA CARBONICA).

Backache Favourite

KALI CARBONICUM is one of my backache favourites. It suits especially old people and those who had pain for years after displaced discs, or sometimes from thinning and softening of the bones, and after miscarriages or difficult childbirth and hæmorrhage.

The pains are sharp and stitching like those of *BRYONIA* but in *KALI CARBONICUM* they occur spontaneously and shoot into the buttocks and thighs or round the lower chest, causing the victim to cry out. These pains often come on at 3 a.m. and compel the patient to get up and walk about. But there is great weakness in the back and walking far is impossible. The patient is nervous, querulous and chilly and sweats a lot. There is also the sensation as if the back would break (*AESCULUS*, *BELLADONNA*, *LYCOPodium*, *NATRUM MURIATICUM*, *NUX VOMICA*, *PHOSPHORUS*).

LACHESIS is not thought of particularly for lumbago but I have found it quite often of value. The spine is very sensitive in the lower back and it rivals *HYPERICUM* in coccydynia, when the patient feels as if sitting on something sharp. There is a desire to stretch and to be rubbed gently, and left sciatica and leg pain.

LACHESIS also helps painful stiff necks and jaws with pains tearing up from nape to top of head, with distressing hot flushes and volubility.

Remarkable Cure

LYCOPodium cures many a backache but the general symptoms more often guide one to it. I particularly remember a remarkable cure of old backache and right sided sciatica which had gone on to severe scoliosis from spasm so that the patient, a man of 41, was very twisted and crippled. The whole trouble cleared up and also an associated impotency after *LYCOPodium* 200.

There is marked stiffness and tension of the spinal muscles, relieved by warmth and limbering up. Sometimes burning between the shoulder blades and the famous *LYCOPodium* pain at the lower angle of right scapula (*CHELIDONIUM* also) may guide one to the remedy, also the flatulent abdomen, and mental loss of confidence.

NATRUM MURIATICUM is another good remedy for chronic backache and occasionally for acute attacks. The patient desires to press in the small of back against a hard cushion and will get relief at nights by lying on a mattress raised in the middle by folded blankets underneath it. The back and limbs feel weak and bruised and the patient is weepy, emotional, jumpy and has palpitation and sometimes a craving for salt.

NUX VOMICA. This wonderful remedy helps a great many sore backs which is not surprising when one considers the effects of strychnine on the spinal cord. There is usually digestive trouble with piles, constipation and frequent urging to stool and urine, and the "patient" is very irritable and impatient.

The lumbago is severe, with faintness and numbness of the lower limbs: better when lying in bed, but turning in bed is very painful and he has to sit up to turn. The pain often wakes him at 3 or 4 a.m. There is also painful stiff neck extending into an arm, worse in the morning, and after eating, and sensitive to touch.

PHOSPHORUS is thought of when there is burning pain in the spine between the shoulder blades, especially on the left side, but it is also a good remedy for lumbago, WORSE rising from stooping. The legs are weak and trembly. The main guides to PHOSPHORUS are the generals—fear for thunder, dark, and being alone, the thirst for cold drinks and the sexual irritation.

PICRICUM ACIDUM is somewhat similar in the last respect and there is heat, heaviness and dragging in the back, with great weakness.

PULSATILLA is not famed as a remedy for lumbago but again it is often called for especially by concomitant symptoms; weepiness, dyspepsia, etc. The neck and body feel stiff as a board and the small of back as if tightly bandaged. The pains are worse sitting (like COBALT, SEPIA and ZINC) but better after a night's rest. There is often a coldness of the back as if cold water were dropping down, and yet the patient in general can't tolerate a hot atmosphere. Moving gently about may make the pain more bearable. The tendency for the pains to shift about, and variability generally often draw attention to PULSATILLA.

Favourite of All

RHUS TOXICODENDRON. RHUS is perhaps the favourite of all remedies for lumbago and the very severity of a pain in the back makes us think of it—in any context. I remember a remarkably quick cure of nasty erysipelas of the left labius in a delicate young woman by RHUS TOXICODENDRON 10m. I was about to give BELLADONNA on the local appearance of redness and swelling and heat when she complained very bitterly of her backache for which she could get rest nowhere, so I gave RHUS instead. Next morning backache, fever, and erysipelas were all gone.

The main pointer to RHUS is the great restlessness; movement gives some relief but the distress soon recurs requiring the victim to move yet again. Do not put off by the extreme pain on first attempting to move—one might think, here is the BRYONIA modality, worse from motion. But when RHUS is needed the patient wants to move, must move, and once through the initial pain and stiffness, finds temporary relief from change of position.

The pains of RHUS are made worse by cold and wet and a soaking is often the cause of the trouble. Patients under RHUS should be warned to avoid cold bathing and getting the feet wet. Straining and heavy lifting are common causes of the lumbago and the pain is eased by lying on something hard (as in NATRUM MURIATICUM and SEPIA).

Excellent Remedy

SEPIA has a great deal of chronic backache often connected with uterine and pelvic troubles but it is also an excellent remedy for acute lumbago, sometimes with spasm causing lumbar scoliosis, so that one hip sticks out prominently. Like NATRUM MURIATICUM and RHUS TOXICODENDRON there is

relief from pressing against something hard. The choice is made by noting the concomitants. When SEPIA is the remedy we have a weepy, irritable, anxious patient, nauseated and faint from the pain. The well known SEPIA bearing down in the vagina, and sensation of sinking in the abdomen may be present.

SULPHUR is another wonderful relief to the sufferer from recurrent or acute lumbago—when the symptoms agree. The main indication is the great difficulty in rising from a chair, and in straightening up the back and standing for any time. The lumbar spine feels hot and weak and is very sensitive to jarring. There may be itchy piles, constipation and hunger, and the pains are made worse by the warmth of the bed.

Deep Seated Troubles

TUBERCULINUM BOVINUM is a favourite remedy of mine for back pains and I have found it excellent in deep seated troubles such as that distressing condition ankylosing spondylitis where the whole spine becomes stiff like a poker and the patient can't even turn his head. I am not suggesting that this remedy can restore mobility to a poker spine but in the earlier stages of the disease it can do great good and give relief to the pain for long periods. I find the highest potencies best here.

The modalities are somewhat like those of RHUS TOXICODENDRON—stiffness on commencing motion with relief by continuing and worse from cold and damp. TUBERCULINUM cures deeper troubles e.g. arthritis where acute episodes might indicate RHUS (compare CALCAREA CARBONICA).

The TUBERCULINUM patient relapses easily and has little stamina. There is often a family history of tuberculosis, and the restlessness is not only physical but mental so that the patient has difficulty in settling down and is always wanting to be off on his travels, or to try living in another place. The pains are worse from every change of weather, good to bad and vice versa.

ZINC fittingly ends this alphabet of lumbago drugs—albeit we have reached it with several notable omissions. The ZINC backache is very severe, especially when sitting; also when starting to walk with some relief from continuing like CALCAREA CARBONICA, LYCOPodium, RHUS TOXICODENDRON and TUBERCULINUM BOVINUM.

The pains extend to the limbs with great weakness trembling and jerking of the whole body during sleep. Sometimes the patient cannot keep a leg or foot still and there may be convulsions after spinal injury (CICUTA, HYPERICUM). The nervous tissue—spine and peripheral nerves—is the seat of the trouble, and ZINC cases usually require careful skilled investigation to establish a diagnosis. Of course a diagnosis of the cause of the pain should be requested from one's doctor if the disability is severe or persistent.

(Continued on page 571)

For the benefit of the readers of your esteemed Journal, the relevant information can be published in any form liked by your goodself. With many thanks.

Bhumananda

REMEDIES FOR LUMBAGO

(Continued from page 562)

Serious diseases affecting the spinal bones like cancer and other tumours (some removable) tuberculosis (curable nowadays) blood disorders, softening of the bones, spondylitis, arthritis, aneurysms, must be eliminated. Even a gastric or duodenal ulcer situated on the posterior wall can sometimes cause severe pain only in the back. Because of these possibilities I strongly deprecate amateur manipulations of the spine, which in tuberculosis for instance might lead to permanent damage with paralysis.

Careful manipulation by a trained osteopath after X-ray examination is another matter and some acute lumbago cases have been given dramatic relief by this means. Where disc displacement is massive however, manipulation is dangerous because of possible damage to the delicate tissues of the spinal cord, and open operation may, though rarely, be necessary.

With knowledge of the few remedies listed one can do a great deal for acute lumbago, and the cases that resist this simple and safe medical treatment can be considered for manipulation after an X-ray.

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FOOT-AND-MOUTH

(Continued from page 563)

be hoped that members of the veterinary profession who are concerned with this pressing problem and allied challenges will look into the Swiss experience with open minds.

Dr. Schmidt wisely suggests that it would be a good plan to make fresh nosode potencies each year because of possible variation in the strain of the "genus epidemicus". As he says, saliva from infected animals in the regions where the disease is still rife could be used.

An interesting feature of this report is that the means used as a prophylactic was orally administered, thus eliminating the expense, the fiddle-faddle, and the risks inseparable from the injection method—a considerable gain though albeit a subsidiary one.

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