

## THE COMMON COLD

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The condition 'common cold' is perhaps the commonest of all diseases claiming the largest number of victims and outnumbering other diseases by 25 to 1. A variety of different names have been given: coryza, rhinitis, rhinorrhœa (rhinitis hypertrophica or atrophica according to hypertrophy or atrophy of the mucous membrane of the nose), allergic and vasomotor rhinitis, and nasopharyngitis; the chronic form is given the name of ozena. Since the 'cold' is regarded as an allergic manifestation, it may be associated with other allergic diseases like asthma and eczema. Infants who suffer from eczema often develop rhinitis in childhood (probably due to suppression of eczema). Males and females are equally affected. A brief period, about a month, of relative immunity to the common cold is conferred by an attack of the disease.

### AETIOLOGY

Although from the point of view of dominant school, the 'cold' is due to the primary infection of the nose and nasopharynx, caused by rhinoviruses, and later on secondary infection by bacteria such as pneumococci, staphylococci, and streptococci which produce complications, many other factors as allergic, pathological, physiological, psychic, and miasmatic, predispose an individual to infection.

(1) Allergic factors: 'Cold' is considered as a specific allergy due to desensitization of the nasal mucosa to some inhalant allergen. The allergen-antibody reaction causes œdema, excess secretion and eosinophil concentration. In fact, the body tends to get rid of the offending allergen. "The stuffy nose is suffused with extra blood, its air passages are partly shut off with extra mucous released to wash out the invaders. Sneezing and coughing are attempts to dislodge irritations in the respiratory tract" (Schiffes). An allergic tendency is hereditary and Jews seem particularly susceptible. The commonest allergens are house dust, mould spores, animal hair or feathers and a host of other inhaled substances. Rarely a food or bacterial allergy is the basic cause of this condition.

(2) Physiological factors: Overfatigue, malnutrition and other illnesses may have weakened the body's defences to resist the virus and bacterial infection. Weather plays an important part. Getting chilled in cold wet weather, getting feet wet and frequent crowding rooms where other people have cold—all these help to catch a cold. Surprisingly cold weather does not seem to induce cold; it is the changes in weather, from warm to sudden cold, that does it. Hormonal imbalance, especially at the menopause, may cause a cold. (Here Sepia may be the remedy.)

(3) Pathological factors: Mucous polypi, deflected septum, sinus trouble, other allergic conditions as asthma, and hayfever, and influenza may simulate the condition of cold. It may also form a part of diseases like measles, scarlet fever, etc.

(4) Psychic factors: Emotional factors are very important. Some people have the 'cold habit' or are prone to cold. Dr. Flanders Dunbar in his book *Emotions and Bodily Changes* under the caption 'Cold Habit' says:

"It is not customary to apply the psychosomatic approach to the problem of infectious diseases. Nevertheless as Osler has said, "What happens to a patient with tuberculosis depends more on what he has in his head than what he has in chest."

"...Resistance to disease is greatly modified by such factors as fatigue and the general physiological equilibrium of the body. As Cannon and many others have demonstrated, maintenance of the physiological equilibrium is a psychosomatic problem. Whether the psychic or the somatic aspect be considered primary, the real problem is to treat first the patient, then the disease process, and only third, the symptoms. (or treatment should be first constitutional and then specific.—A.S.K.)

"Experiment shows that emotional stress seriously limits the ability of the organism to regain a stable equilibrium after it has been subjected to stress or injury. There could be no better illustration of this fact than the enormous difference in susceptibility to colds and in rapidity of recovery among different individuals.....Colds are of different types with different consequences. It is known that quite aside from physiological susceptibility, there is such a thing as a cold habit or accident proneness which somewhat parallels the accident habit or cold proneness. Gladstone is reported to have suffered from 'diplomatic colds' which occurred regularly when he was required to speak in an unpleasant situation.

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"Saul reported that fifteen patients unusually susceptible to cold or sore throat who were treated psychosomatically for other reasons, following treatment, became either entirely free from colds or acquired them extremely rarely. . . Sometimes brief psychotherapy directed towards the 'cold habit' seems to produce relative immunity from colds."

Catching cold is also a matter of moods. Whoever is depressed or in a bad humour catches cold much more easily. Here is what Dr. Braithwaite, Psychiatrist to the Ministry of Health wrote in *British Medical Journal*, dated 2.10.1943 on the common cold:

"During the course of twenty-five years of practice of psychoanalysis for the treatment of psychoneurotics, I have observed in them:

- (1) A cold invariably occurred in a particular emotional state.
- (2) The occurrence of a cold could be prognosticated whenever this state developed.
- (3) The cold could be aborted if a different emotional state could be

produced in the course of treatment, or could be shortened if it had started.

(4) Cold, wet, hunger, exhaustion, and a source of infection do not result in the development of a cold in the absence of the appropriate emotional state.

(5) Cold 'proneness' disappears completely as a result of successful (psychological) treatment and does not return."

(5) Miasmatic factors: According to Hahnemann's theory of chronic miasms, a cold may be psoric, syphilitic or sycotic but mainly sycotic. Dr. Speight has made the following summary:

"Psoric. The psoric cold begins with sneezing, redness, heat, sensitive to touch when blown for some time, discharge thin, watery and acrid.

Syphilitic. Catarrhal discharge thick, usually yellow, and of odour of old cheese or sulphate (sulphide?—A.S.K.) of hydrogen and is constantly dropping down the throat.

Sycotic. Snuffles in children. This is unusually moist and there is no ulceration and no crusts, or if purulent, is very scanty and has the odour of fish brine or stale fish."

Thus the acute attacks of cold are outbursts of latent psora masked by syphilitic and/or sycotic taint.

#### CLINICAL FEATURES

Symptoms are known to most of us. There is a sudden tickling sensation in the nose, sneezing with sore dry throat, and stuffed head; the eyes smart and there is a profuse watery discharge. There may be a slight fever, cough, clearing of the throat and other catarrhal symptoms. The headache, usually frontal over the sinuses, increases during this stage. Gradually the cold becomes 'ripe', discharge becomes thick and purulent and impedes respiration. The cough may become more pronounced. The condition may extend to (1) sinuses to cause sinusitis, (2) eustachian tubes to cause deafness, and (3) in the downward direction to cause laryngitis, tracheitis, bronchitis, and in some cases lobar pneumonia.

"I am at this moment deaf in the ears, hoarse in the throat, red in the nose, green in the gills, damp in the eyes, twitchy in the joints and fractious in temper from a most intolerant and oppressive cold" (Charles Dickens).

#### THERAPEUTIC HINTS

The remedies run into scores. Kent lists 172 remedies under 'catarrh' and 197 remedies under 'coryza'. Thus theoretically any remedy of the materia medica may be called for in a given case. Constitutional treatment is the best if the prescribing symptoms are available. Some of the drugs are listed below:

Premonitory stage: Acon. Avena, Camph, Nux-v.

Tendency to catch cold: Calc-c., Kali-c., Natr-m.

Easily chilled: Ars., Bry., Hep., Merc., Nat-m., Nux-v., Phos., Puls., Sil.

- Worse cold air: All-c., Ars., Dulc., Hep., Nux-v., Phos.  
 „ „ dry weather: Acon., Bry., Caust., Hep., Nux-v.  
 „ „ wet weather: Calc-c., Dulc., Rhus, Nat-s.  
 „ inhaling cold air: All-c., Hep., Phos., Rumex.  
 „ cold draught: Ars., Bell., Dulc., Hep., Merc., Nat-c., Nux-v., Sulph.  
 „ cold wet: Calc., Dulc., Kali-i., Merc., Puls., Rhus, Sulph.  
 „ warm wet: Carb-v., Gels.  
 Better warm wet: Hep.  
 Worse warm room: All-c., Merc., Nux-v. (more fluent), Puls., Tub.  
 „ entering warm room: Bry.  
 „ open air: Bry., Hep., Nat-m., Nux-v., Phos.  
 Better open air: Acon., All-c., Puls.  
 Worse uncovering head: Hep., Nat-m.  
 Much sneezing: All-c., Ars., Dulc., Gels., Hep., Ip., Kali-i., Merc., Nat-m.,  
 Phos., Rhus-t., Sil., Sul.  
 Catarrh, copious, fluent: Acon., All-c., Ars., Bry., Hep., Kali-i., Nat-c., Nat-m.,  
 Nux-v.  
 „ fluent, alt. dry: Ars., Nat-m., Nux-v., Phos., Puls., Sulph.  
 „ hypertrophic and ulcerative form: Graph., Hep., Lyc., Merc., Sep.  
 „ atrophic form: Alumina, Arg-n., Lemna, Sil.  
 „ syphilitic form or complications: Aur., Kali-i., Syph. (high).  
 Dry coryza: Acon., Bell., Bry., Carb-v., Dulc. (in cold air), Kali-bi., Nux-v.  
 (early), Stict.  
 Loss of taste: Lyc., Nat-m., Puls., Sil., Sulph.  
 Loss of smell: Alum., Hep., Kali-bi., Lem-m., Nat-m., Puls., Stict.  
 Nose stopped: Carb-v., Dulc., Ip., Nux-v., Puls., Rhus-t., Sil.  
 With lachrymation: All-c., Bry., Euphr., Kali-i.  
 Night snuffles of children: Am-c., Samb.  
 Sinuses affected: Ars., Cupress., Kali-bi., Kali-i., Lyc., Merc., Sil., Thorium.  
 Dropping into posterior nares: Ant-c., Ars-i., Coral, Hydr., Kali-bi., Kali-c.,  
 Nat-c., Nat-m., Phyt.  
 Discharge, acrid, watery: All-c., Ars., Gels., Kali-i., Merc., Nux-v., Sulph.  
 „ bland, mucopurulent: Calc., Euphr., Hep., Kali-bi., Kali-i., Kali-s.,  
 Merc., Phos., Puls., Tub.  
 „ bloody: All-c., Ars., Bell., Ferr-p., Hep., Phos., Puls.  
 „ offensive: Calc., Hep., Kali-bi., Merc., Nat-c., Puls., Sil.  
 „ greenish: Kali-bi., Kali-i., Kali-s., Merc., Puls.  
 „ unilateral: Calc-s., Phyt.  
 With pain in head from sneezing, coughing, etc.: Bry., Kali-bi. (due to sup-  
 pressed catarrh), Nat-m., Phos.  
 „ „ abdomen from sneezing, coughing, etc.: Bry., Caps., Dros.  
 „ sore throat: Acon., Bell., Gels. (Royal), Merc., Nux-v., Phos., Phyt.  
 Later stages to clear up: Sulph., Calc., Lyco., Tub.  
 Persistent cough after cold: Phos.

## LEADING INDICATIONS FOR THE REMEDIES

(1) Aconite: Exposure to cold or cold dry winds; dry coryza (or fluent coryza with sneezing); fever, thirst, anxiousness, restlessness, and sleeplessness; throat affected; cough hoarse, dry and spasmodic.

(2) Allium cepa: Profuse acrid discharge; sneezing, corroding lips and nose; lachrymation bland (reverse of Euphr.).

(3) Argent nit: Coryza, with headache over the eyes; sneezing chilliness, lachrymation; itching of nose; raw and sore throat.

(4) Ars. alb: Thin, watery, excoriating discharge, in spite of which nose is still stuffed up; sneezing, chilly, restless, thirst for small sips of water.

(5) Arsenic iod: Thin watery, irritating, excoriating discharge from anterior and posterior nares; sneezing; profuse thick yellow discharge (Boericke).

(6) Aurum: Syphilitic ozena; ulcerated, agglutinated, painful nostrils; crusts in the nose; nose sore to touch, burning, smarting putrid smell from the nose; caries of the nasal bones.

(7) Avena sat  $\phi$ : Acute coryza: 20 drops in hot water hourly for a few doses to break up a cold (Boericke).

(8) Belladonna: Suppressed catarrh with maddening headache, red, raw, sore throat; hoarseness; painful larynx; cough dry, teasing. Bell. is red, hot and dry.

(9) Bryonia: Often begins in the nose and travels downwards from the upper respiratory tract (reverse of Lyco.); dry spasmodic cough, worse night, food and drink, with stitches in the chest and other parts of the body irritable, thirsty for long drinks; worse from motion, cold dry weather and beginning of summer.

(10) Calc. carb: Lingering catarrhs; chilly, fair, fat and flabby; thick yellow discharge; nose stopped up; tendency to take cold, give 30th once daily (Royal); offensive smell from nose; polypus (Cowperthwaite). Give Calc. iod. 6th when glandular symptoms are more prominent.

(11) Calc. phos: Fluent in a cool room (Puls.); stopped in warm air and out of doors; nasal polypi, large, pedunculated; children have pains in the limbs (growing pains); headache worse by mental exertion.

(12) Calc. sul: Thick, yellowish, purulent, often bloody discharge yellowish discharge from posterior nares; edges of nostrils sore.

(13) Camphor: In the initial stage to abort the disease; give drop doses of the tincture on a lump of sugar every fifteen minutes for 4-6 doses.

(14) Carbo veg: Dry coryza; severe nosebleed several times daily; sneezing with constant crawlings and ticklings in the nose.

(15) Cupressus: Recommended by Drs. Schmidt, Bach, Hayes, Wheeler and others for catarrh of the nasal passage, eustachian tubes, middle ear and frontal sinuses; chronic colds; also as a prophylactic.

(16) Dulcamara: Cold, wet weather (Rhus.) and snow, from getting wet, or chilled when heated; sudden change from hot to cold; dry coryza or more

fluent in house or warmth but less fluent in cold air or room (Nux-v.); sore throat, stiff neck.

(17) Euphrasia: Excoriates the eyes; nasal discharge bland; (reverse of All-c.), lachrymation; severe fluent coryza.

(18) Ferrum phos: In the beginning when there is little discharge.

(19) Gelsemium: Summer catarrh, or in mild winters; sneezing; lassitude, dull, drowsy, dizzy; discharge of red hot water through the nose; little thirst; influenza; "sore throat, pain, extending to the ear" (Royal).

(20) Graphites: Sense of smell too acute; cannot tolerate the smell of flowers; scabs in and on the nose, with sore, cracked and ulcerated nostrils; bloody or purulent-offensive discharge.

(21) Hepar sulph: From cold dry weather (opposite of Rhus tox and Dulc.); sneezing in cold air; catarrh of nose, ears, throat, larynx and chest, worse in spring cold air, or putting limbs out of bed; better moist, wet weather (reverse of Gels.).

(22) Hydrastis: Discharge thick, yellow green mucus, pus or blood when there are deep ulcers; post nasal catarrh; dull frontal headache, better in open air (Puls.).

(23) Ipecac: Simple cold with sneezing, extending to the chest; no thirst; overwhelming nausea.

(24) Kali bich: Thick yellow or greenish, ropy, stringy discharge or tough and jelly like; offensive; plugs in nostrils; involvement of sinuses; post nasal catarrh; better from open air or anything which makes the discharge more thin and free (as the use of snuffles).

(25) Kali carb: Tendency to cold; dry coryza (or sometimes fluent coryza), swelling between the eyebrows and the lids; post-nasal dripping.

(26) Kali iod: Colds from every exposure, damp, nose red, swollen, acrid, watery discharge, with sneezing and lachrymation; extends to frontal sinuses, antra, eyes, throat, fauces and chest; ozena with perforated septum; cool, greenish, sometimes foul discharge.

(27) Kali mur: Catarrh with cough, second stage when the discharge is white and thick. A clinical symptom frequently verified by me is accumulation of mucus in the throat at night during sleep which has to be hawked out in the morning; no trouble during the day.

(28) Kali sul: Later stages; yellow slimy discharge; nose stopped, loss of smell; engorgement of nasal-pharyngeal mucous membrane; mouth breathing, snoring, etc.; better in cool open air (Puls.).

(29) Kreosote: Tubercular diathesis; atrophic catarrh; nasal discharge acrid, irritating and offensive.

(30) Lemna: Dr. Cooper's remedy; acts especially on the nostrils; nasal polypi; swollen turbinates; atrophic rhinitis; nose is never clear; sense of smell poor; ozena and catarrh.

(31) Lycopodium: Lingering catarrh; ichorous discharge from the right nostril; nose stuffed up, at night, with excessive dryness; violent catarrh, with

swelling of the nose and acrid discharge (Ars., Cepa, Merc. cor.); fan like motion of alae nasi in pneumonia.

(32) Mercurius: Creeping chilliness, sneezing, fluent, acrid discharge, offensive, greenish, mucopurulent; involvement of frontal sinuses; profuse sweat without relief.

(33) Nat. carb: Fluent catarrh provoked by the least draught; periodical aggravation every other day, entirely relieved by sweating (reverse of Merc.); much nasal mucus passes through the mouth.

(34) Nat. mur: Catarrh watery or thick whitish, excessive; paroxysmal sneezing; fluent alt. with dry catarrh; worse exposure to fresh air; weepy but worse by consolation; depressed; loss of taste.

(35) Nux vom: In the beginning; from dry cold weather (Acon.) (reverse of Dulc.); irritable; oversensitive, nose stuffed up and dry throat rough, raw, sore; chilly, not relieved by warmth; cannot afford to be uncovered.

(36) Phosphorus: Alternation of fluent and stopped coryza; cold driven to chest by remedies like Cepa; sore throat; secretions dry to crusts which adhere tightly; cough hard, persisting after a cold.

(37) Phytolacca: Coryza; flow of mucous from nostrils and from posterior nares; throat involved.

(38) Pulsatilla: Old catarrh with loss of smell and taste; thick, non-excoriating discharge; nose stopped at night but flows in the morning, worse indoors, better gentle motion in cool open air; weepy and craves sympathy (reverse of Nat. m.).

(39) Rhus tox: Cold from exposure to damp, especially when perspiring (Dulc.); violent coryza, worse cold, better warmth; thick yellow, offensive mucus; hoarseness, rawness, roughness in throat, better after talking and singing a while (amelioration from motion); restless.

(40) Silicea: Tendency to frequent violent sneezing or ineffectual sneezing; discharge of much mucus without coryza; stoppage of the nose; alternate fluent and dry coryza; sometimes acrid discharge from the nose; profuse headsweat at night.

(41) Sticta: Feeling of fullness and heavy pressure at root of nose; loss of smell; dry coryza; secretions dry rapidly, forming scabs difficult to dislodge; constant need to blow nose but no discharge.

(42) Sulphur: Subject to coryza; sneezing, stoppage of nose, nostrils red, cannot take a bath; or become over heated or get into a cold place, or overexert without getting a cold; hungry at about 11 a.m.

(43) Syphilinum: Family history of syphilis; caries of nasal bones, hard palate and septum; with perforations; ozena.

(44) Tuberculinum: Family history of T.B. or lung affections; always catching cold; worse in a room; exertion causes pyrexia.

Three recently introduced remedies are:

(45) Aristolochia clem: Coryza profuse watery, sneezing, better in open

air, 8-9 a.m. and in the morning on rising; voice hoarse with tonsillitis (Stephenson).

(46) Sycotic Co. (Paterson): The keynote is irritability. Acute subacute, chronic bronchial catarrh, catarrh of mucous membranes of nose, throat (enlarged tonsils and adenoids in children). Irritable cough at 2 a.m.

(47) Thorium: "Used almost exclusively by biochemists for disorders of the mucous membranes, catarrh and some sinus affections. May be tried in the 30th potency twice daily when remedies such as Silicea and Kali bich. fail to give satisfaction. Destroys Streptococcus Mucosus" (Powell).

#### HOMOEOPROPHYLAXIS

- (1) Bacillinum: Fortnightly dose in the 30th potency in winter months.
- (2) Cupressus: Recommended by Dr. Bach. Already mentioned.

#### AUXILIARY MEASURES

"Keep away from people, who have colds, especially if they insist on coughing, sneezing, or talking in your face.

Mind the weather. Dress properly for it, neither too warmly nor too lightly. Children have to be watched in this respect. Keep your feet dry.

"Avoid, if possible, overheated rooms, sitting in drafts and becoming needlessly chilled.

"Get adequate rest and sleep. Do not become overfatigued. Maintain adequate nutrition with a well balanced diet" (Schiffes).

Principles of general hygiene, both physical and mental, and cleanliness should be rigidly followed. Unnecessary use of airconditioners, room heaters and room coolers should be avoided. Sometimes nasal douche and use of *neti* (nasal thread) is extremely helpful and these should be carefully employed, preferably under some expert guidance. Should these disagree, it is better to discard them altogether. Deep breathing exercise is also helpful and increases the resistance to colds.

"If a person catches cold frequently, the best way of curing that tendency is to accustom to cold baths and cold water drinking; enema is to be used whenever the bowels are constipated and sunbath to be taken twice daily" (Kulkarni).

As for sprays, inhalants, snuffs, smoking etc. following lines are worthy of careful consideration:

"Sprays and inhalants while offering immediate relief, oft times only succeed in further inflaming the membrane, and so ultimately aggravate the condition.

"In order to gain utmost benefit from homoeopathic treatment, the sufferer should pay greater attention to diet, and try, when possible, to eat the maximum amount of fresh, and natural foods, wholemeal bread, potatoes cooked in their jackets, salads, fresh fruits, etc.

"Although many writers have denied that smoking has any harmful



effects, I can only say that I have found smoking definitely aggravates the condition and often impedes the progress of cure (S.P.C.).

In the case of polypi and other growths, if the antisycotic treatment fails to give relief, surgical measures may have to be resorted to.

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*Why is the common cold like a woman?*

*Because they are both easy to catch, very difficult to get rid of.*