

Integrative Support for Breast Cancer Treatment Plans

Managing side effects with natural medicine

By Heidi Weinhold, ND

Receiving a breast cancer diagnosis and learning about the necessary, but possibly difficult, proposed conventional treatment is a lot to handle, leaving many women feeling like they have no control over their health or their lives. Yet, research shows a strong link between quality of life and survival in cancer patients.¹ Incorporating homeopathy into conventional cancer care to manage side effects of treatment approaches can enhance the quality of life for the patient and their partners, family, and support groups.

In my naturopathic practice, I use homeopathic medicines to help women manage emotional and physical symptoms related to breast cancer diagnosis and treatment. Homeopathy is a gentle, affordable, non-narcotic natural health discipline that is relevant from the moment of diagnosis and throughout all stages of cancer treatment.

In this article, I detail research-based reasoning to back my approaches to supporting women during various stages of breast cancer treatment and provide suggested homeopathic medicines in *Integrating Homeopathy into Breast Cancer Treatment Plans* on page 21 to help you or someone you love manage the most common side effects of conventional cancer treatment.

Diagnosis-related shock and stress

In 2019, I attended the International Center of Education and Development of Homeopathy Conference in Nice, France. Two family physicians from Spain and France discussed how they routinely administer homeopathy during patient intakes to help manage the emotional

stress related to a breast cancer diagnosis. I have since incorporated their invaluable suggestions with the following homeopathic medicines:

- *Ignatia* 30c – useful for women and their partners with grief, heartache, and sadness about the diagnosis; it can calm the patient, facilitating a better homeopathic case intake
- *Gelsemium* 30c – historically used during the Civil War to give soldiers courage; it helps women overcome anticipatory anxiety before a mastectomy, mammogram, or chemotherapy session
- *Nux vomica* 30c – helps decrease the chronic irritability and anger a woman may feel due to her breast cancer diagnosis and treatment
- *Staphysagria* 30c – helpful for women who feel a great sense of injustice after receiving a cancer diagnosis; it gently encourages them to release anger, hurt, and frustration

Mastectomy and breast reconstruction

Adjuvant chemotherapy is a standard treatment approach aimed at removing remaining cancer cells after breast cancer surgery. Women who delay the start of chemotherapy by more than 120 days after breast cancer surgery, often due to breast reconstruction recovery, have a 29% reduced survival time.² Scientific research supports using homeopathy to speed postoperative recovery following mastectomy and breast reconstruction procedures, as noted in the following three studies.

In a two-year randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled (RDBPC) study (a

study design generally perceived as the gold standard for clinical research), 53 women received either the homeopathic medicine *Arnica montana* 1M or placebo following unilateral total mastectomies.³ The women taking *Arnica* discharged significantly less blood via their post-surgical fluid drains than those taking the placebo. Reduced drainage can help speed wound healing and decrease the chances of developing infections after surgery.

In another 20-month RDBPC study, 55 women received two homeopathic medicines, *Arnica montana* and *Bellis perennis*, after undergoing mastectomies and breast reconstruction procedures. As a group, the women required less opioid pain medication, formed fewer seromas (postoperative fluid-filled “lumps”), and had their post-surgical fluid drains removed earlier than the group receiving a placebo.⁴

In a systematic review (a rigorous approach to reviewing existing scientific research on a particular topic), *Arnica montana* was more effective than a placebo when used to treat postoperative pain, swelling, and bruising.⁵

Based on this compelling research, I support my patients undergoing breast cancer surgery with the following homeopathic medicines:

- *Arnica montana* 200c – useful for bruising, bleeding, swelling, and soreness following surgery, trauma, or other injuries, such as sprains, strains, and concussion
- *Bellis perennis* 200c – helpful for post-surgical recovery, including bruising, soreness, and swelling

Radiation therapy burn

Approximately 95% of patients



experience some degree of radiation “burn” (acute dermatitis) during radiation treatment for cancer.⁶ A study of 254 women undergoing radiation therapy investigated how homeopathically formulated *Calendula officinalis* topical cream compared to the conventional topical cream trolamine in preventing acute dermatitis.⁷ The patients who applied *Calendula* cream twice daily or more to the irradiated areas reported less pain, a reduced occurrence of dermatitis, and fewer radiation treatment interruptions. I recommend using *Calendula* cream to prevent (and treat, if necessary) radiation burn and encourage my patients to apply it as often as needed.

Chemotherapy side effects

Nausea and vomiting are commonly

associated with chemotherapy, and oncologists typically add anti-nausea drugs to the intravenous (IV) chemotherapy fluids to help prevent these debilitating symptoms. However, anti-nausea drugs often have side effects, including constipation and indigestion, headaches, drowsiness, and more.⁸

Nausea and vomiting can escalate like the speed of a rolling snowball. To get ahead of it, I recommend patients take one of the following two homeopathic medicines as frequently as every 15-30 minutes, up to eight times per day until symptoms resolve:

- *Nux vomica* 30c – helps to relieve nausea, vomiting, and gastrointestinal discomfort

- *Ipecachuana* 30c – useful when patients experience nausea and vomiting despite taking conventional anti-nausea drugs; helpful for uncontrollable vomiting

Cancer Treatment-Related Fatigue

Cancer Treatment-Related Fatigue (CTRF) is a condition that stems from the body’s attempts to repair damage related to aggressive oncology treatments. It affects up to 90% of patients undergoing radiation therapy and 80% of those treated with chemotherapy.⁹ A person with CTRF has a persistent and overwhelming sense of exhaustion not relieved by rest, an overall feeling of weakness, and memory and concentration difficulties. CTRF symptoms significantly affect quality of life, impair daily living, making even sim-

Integrating Homeopathy into Breast Cancer Treatment Plans

STAGE	INDICATION.....	REMEDY	DOSING SCHEDULE
Emotional stress at time of diagnosis	Anger..... Anticipatory anxiety..... Grief, heartache..... Suppressed anger, feeling of injustice	<i>Nux vomica</i> 30c <i>Gelsemium</i> 30c <i>Ignatia</i> 30c <i>Staphysagria</i> 30c	Take five pellets of indicated remedy to provide immediate relief, helping person process emotions and focus.
Mastectomy and breast reconstruction & recovery	Postoperative bruising, swelling, and pain; helps speed recovery time.....	<i>Arnica</i> 200c <i>Bellis perennis</i> 200c	Take five pellets of each remedy on the day before surgery and on the day of surgery. Immediately after surgery, dissolve five pellets in water and take a spoonful four times daily for seven to 10 days after surgery.
Radiation therapy burn	Calms redness and rashes and soothes skin; helps prevent radiation burn.....	<i>Calendula</i> cream	Apply a thin layer to affected area two to three times daily. Caution: <i>Do not apply within three hours before radiation therapy, and avoid applying on radiotherapy "tattoos."</i>
Cancer treatment-related fatigue	Cancer-related fatigue, concentration difficulties, and mental lethargy.....	<i>Encer</i> ®	Chew one tablet for one minute before swallowing, twice daily. May be taken during conventional cancer treatment for up to 12 weeks if needed. Avoid: <i>Do not take within six hours of bedtime.</i>
Chemotherapy side effects	Nausea, bloating, cramping, and constipation associated with chemotherapy.....	<i>Nux vomica</i> 30c	Take five pellets every 30 minutes for up to six to eight doses per day, as needed for nausea and vomiting after chemotherapy.
Hormone therapy side effects	Joint pain and stiffness associated with aromatase inhibitor therapy.....	<i>Rhus toxicodendron</i> 9c <i>Ruta graveolens</i> 5c	Take five pellets of each remedy in the morning and evening beginning a few days before starting hormone therapy and continuing for three months.

ple tasks daunting, and can linger even after treatment is over.

In a clinical study involving 124 oncology patients, 73% reported an improvement in CTRF symptoms after homeopathic treatment.¹⁰ The most prescribed homeopathic medicines, given twice daily, included the following:

Phosphoric acid 30c – extreme tiredness; the person is often emotionally dull, mentally weak, and has a craving for fruit and fruit juices

Cadmium sulphuricum 30c – tiredness; the person may be chilly and nauseous

X-ray 6c – weakness and exhaustion; the person may be chilly, have a poor appetite, and have trouble sleeping

Radium bromatum 30c – helpful after radiation treatment of cancer; the person often feels worse at night and may be sensitive to heat and have joint pains

Encer®, a homeopathic product for relieving fatigue symptoms, contains a combination of these four medicines. I recommend taking Encer® twice daily. Refer to *Integrating Homeopathy into Breast Cancer Treatment Plans* on page 21 for additional instructions.

Hormone therapy side effects

According to the American Cancer Society, approximately two-thirds of breast cancers are hormone receptor-positive, meaning naturally occurring hormones, such as estrogen and progesterone, fuel cancer cell growth.¹¹ Hormone therapy is often used after breast cancer surgery to reduce the risk of cancer recurrence. Oncologists prescribe drugs called aromatase inhibitors to block nearly all estrogen production in the body. Homeopathy can help reduce the adverse side effects of these drugs.

In a six-month observational study, researchers found that patients taking *Rhus toxicodendron* 9c and *Ruta graveolens* 5c experienced less pain and stiffness associated with aromatase inhibitors.¹²

Women taking the homeopathic medicines had less frequent and intense pain, fewer sites of pain, and required less pain-relieving medication than those taking conventional medications. After three months, the women taking homeopathic medicines had fewer sleep disruptions due to joint pain than those taking conventional medication.

I recommend that my patients begin taking *Rhus tox* 9c and *Ruta* 5c a few days before starting hormone therapy and continue taking doses twice daily for three months.

- *Rhus tox* 9c – stiff pain that feels better with warmth and worse during cold, damp conditions; the person may find relief from moving around
- *Ruta* 5c – stiff pain that feels better with warmth and worse during cold, damp conditions; the person may feel better lying still

Homeopathy as a support for you

I hope that the homeopathy dosing chart for integrating homeopathy into breast cancer treatment plans and the evidence discussed in this article will help you or a loved one to confidently dialogue with oncologists, introducing homeopathy for integrative breast treatment care. To find a professional homeopath to help, visit HomeopathyCenter.org/find-a-practitioner. 🌊

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Dr. Heidi Weinhold received her bachelor's degree in biology from Washington & Jefferson College and her doctorate in naturopathic medicine from Sonoran University of Health Sciences in Tempe, Arizona. In 2013, she received the Alumni Award from Sonoran University of Health Sciences in recognition of her contributions to the advancement of naturopathic medicine. Her alma mater further honored her in 2017 with an honorary doctorate of Humane Letters. Dr. Weinhold has a private practice in Canonsburg, PA.