

A Review on Homeopathic Management of Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD): A Holistic and Natural Approach

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Abstract: Background: Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) is a common digestive disorder characterized by acid reflux, heartburn, and regurgitation, significantly affecting the quality of life. Conventional treatments such as proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) and antacids provide symptomatic relief but may lead to long-term side effects. Homeopathy offers a holistic, individualized approach to managing GERD by addressing underlying causes and promoting natural healing. Methods and Methodology: This study explores the role of homeopathic remedies in GERD management through an evidence-based approach. A comprehensive review of homeopathic literature, clinical studies, and case reports was conducted to identify the most effective remedies. Additionally, patient case studies were analyzed to evaluate symptom improvement following homeopathic treatment. The individualized prescription method, based on symptom similarity and patient constitution, was emphasized to ensure targeted treatment. Results: The analysis revealed that homeopathic remedies such as Nux Vomica, Carbo Vegetabilis, Arsenicum Album, Lycopodium, and Pulsatilla effectively alleviated GERD symptoms in various patient cases. Improvements were noted in heartburn, bloating, acid regurgitation, and overall digestive health. The holistic approach of homeopathy, combined with dietary and lifestyle modifications, contributed to long-term relief and reduced dependency on conventional medications. Conclusion: Homeopathy offers a safe, non-invasive, and personalized treatment for GERD, addressing both symptoms and root causes. While further large-scale clinical trials are needed, existing evidence and case studies support its efficacy. Integrating homeopathic treatment with lifestyle changes can provide sustainable relief for GERD patients, enhancing their overall well-being.

Keywords: Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), Homeopathy, Acid Reflux, Holistic Treatment, Natural Healing, Digestive Disorders, Alternative Medicine

1. Introduction

- ICD-10: K21.9: Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease [1]
- ICD-11: DA22.0 Non- erosive gastro-oesophageal reflux disease.[2]

1) Overview of GERD:

- It is considered a disease when it causes frequent or severe symptoms or leads to damage. This reflux can harm the esophagus, throat, or respiratory system.[3]
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a chronic digestive condition in which the contents of the stomach flow back into the esophagus. It affects approximately 20% of individuals in the US, resulting in both financial burden and a reduced quality of life. GERD may arise from various factors that compromise the barrier at the meeting point of the esophagus and stomach, leading to symptoms like heartburn and regurgitation. It can also present atypical symptoms such as chest discomfort, persistent cough, or dental problems. GERD is classified into three categories: non-erosive reflux disease (NERD), erosive esophagitis (EE), and Barrett esophagus (BE), with NERD being the most prevalent. Treatment generally includes changes in lifestyle and proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), but an increasing number of cases are resistant to these treatments, necessitating a more tailored management strategy. [4]

Prevalence and impact on health

- Indian research on gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is scarce, and no prior meta-analysis has been conducted on its prevalence or risk elements. A systematic review of available studies in India concentrated on the prevalence and risk factors associated with GERD. Nine studies with 20,614 participants indicated GERD prevalence ranging from 5% to 28. 5%. The mean prevalence was 15. 6%. There was considerable variability in the data, and the sample size accounted for a significant portion. The main risk factors identified included age, body mass index (BMI), non-vegetarian diet, tea/coffee consumption, tobacco use, and alcohol use.[5]

Role of homeopathy in managing digestive disorders

- Homeopathy is a medical specialty that is over two hundred years old and offers numerous unique benefits in addressing a variety of gastrointestinal issues. Even though its development occurred before the identification of the human microbiome, it seems to align perfectly with microbiome ecology and holistic immune function. Homeopathic therapy promotes natural homeostatic processes that aim to restore harmony between the microbiome and the immune system, reducing both local and systemic inflammation, which in turn aids the overall superorganism. A brief overview of the gastrointestinal microbiome is provided here, emphasizing its relevance to overall systemic health. The essential principles of classical homeopathic medicine are outlined, and its scientific foundation is evaluated. The homeopathic

management of various gastrointestinal tract conditions is discussed along with evidence supporting its effectiveness.[6]

2) Understanding GERD

a) Definition and causes

- Definition of GRDS: Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a more serious and persistent condition in which GER leads to frequent symptoms that are troublesome or results in complications as time progresses.[7]
- Causes of GRDS
- Occasional acid reflux is quite common, often occurring as a result of consuming a large meal, resting after eating, or eating specific foods. However, recurrent acid reflux, or GERD, generally has additional causes and risk factors and can lead to more serious complications.
- GERD affects individuals of all ages and sometimes for unexplained reasons. It occurs when the valve that stops stomach contents from returning to the esophagus becomes weak or opens when it is not supposed to.
- GERD is more prevalent in individuals:
 - Who are obese or who are overweight due to increased pressure exerted on the abdomen
 - Who are pregnant, impacting approximately 40–85% of individuals during pregnancy
 - Who are taking specific medications, including certain asthma treatments, calcium channel blockers, antihistamines, sedatives, and antidepressants
 - Who smoke and those who have exposure to secondhand smoke
 - Moreover, a hiatal hernia is a condition where an opening in the diaphragm allows the upper part of the stomach to move into the chest. This reduces the pressure in the esophageal sphincter and heightens the risk of GERD.[8]

b) Common symptoms

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c) Risk factors and triggers

Several factors can increase the chances of developing GERD. These include being overweight or obese, having a family history of GERD, and having a hiatal hernia. Smoking or being around smoke, eating fatty foods, and drinking alcohol, coffee, or fizzy drinks can also contribute. Lying down within three hours after eating and taking certain medications like some antidepressants, blood pressure drugs, sedatives, and some asthma medications may raise the risk as well.[10]

3) Conventional vs. Homeopathic Approach

- Conventional treatment methods (PPIs, antacids, lifestyle changes)

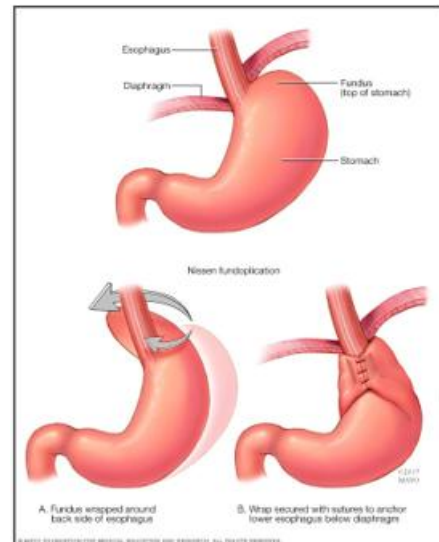


Figure 1: GERD Surgery [11]

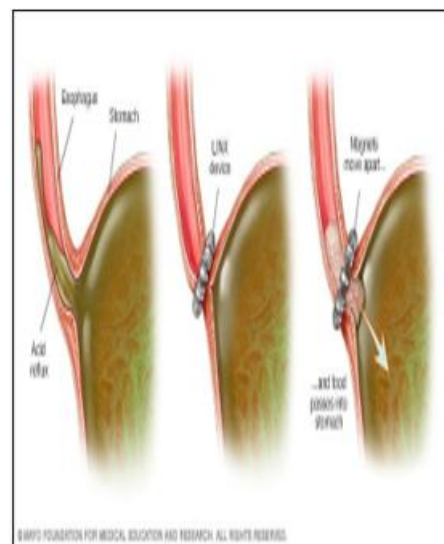


Figure 2: Substitute for esophageal sphincter [11]

Over-the-counter medications for GERD include antacids, which counteract stomach acid but do not restore the esophagus. Examples include calcium carbonate products such as Mylanta, Rolaids, and Tums. Excessive use may result in side effects like diarrhea or kidney problems. There are also histamine (H-2) antagonists, such as cimetidine, famotidine, and nizatidine, which decrease acid production for longer-lasting relief, although they work more slowly than antacids. Proton pump inhibitors, comprising lansoprazole,

omeprazole, and esomeprazole, are more potent and aid in healing the esophagus. Patients should notify their healthcare provider when beginning these medications.

Prescription medications consist of more potent proton pump inhibitors, like esomeprazole and lansoprazole, which might lead to mild side effects such as diarrhea and headaches. Prescription-strength H₂ blockers like famotidine are also offered and typically have mild side effects.

GERD can frequently be controlled with medication, but if that is ineffective or if you choose not to take medication long-term, your physician may recommend surgery. One alternative is fundoplication, in which the upper part of the stomach is wrapped around the lower esophageal sphincter to prevent reflux, usually performed through a minimally invasive laparoscopic technique. Another alternative is the LINX device, which consists of magnetic beads that maintain closure of the junction between the stomach and esophagus while allowing food to pass. This device is also placed using minimally invasive surgery. There is also a newer technique called Transoral Incisionless Fundoplication (TIF), which tightens the lower esophageal sphincter without any cuts. TIF has a quick recovery time but cannot be performed on its own if there is a large hiatal hernia, although it may be effective when combined with laparoscopic repair.[11]

Limitations and side effects of conventional treatment

Conventional GERD treatments, like proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) and antacids, mainly provide symptom relief but do not address the root cause of the condition. Long-term use of PPIs can lead to issues such as rebound acid production, incomplete healing of the oesophagus, and increased complications like Barrett's oesophagus. Side effects of PPIs include nutrient deficiencies, a higher risk of bone fractures, kidney disease, and infections. H₂ receptor blockers may cause headaches and confusion, mainly in older adults, and their effectiveness can decrease over time. Antacids can lead to electrolyte imbalances and digestive issues, while prolonged use might worsen symptoms.

How homeopathy offers a natural and holistic approach

Homeopathy offers a natural and holistic approach to treating Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) by focusing on the root causes rather than just relieving symptoms. It helps the body heal itself, providing lasting relief without negative side effects.

Homeopathy addresses issues like a weak lower esophageal sphincter, poor digestion, stress, and lifestyle factors. It provides personalized treatment based on individual symptoms and emotional states. The remedies are made from natural ingredients in very diluted forms, making them safe for long-term use.

Additionally, homeopathy enhances digestive health and immunity while suggesting lifestyle and dietary changes for overall wellness. Specific remedies like Nux Vomica, Carbo Vegetabilis, and others target various GERD symptoms. Homeopathy aims for long-term management of GERD by treating the whole body.

4) Homeopathic Management of GERD

a) Principles of homeopathic treatment

Homeopathy adopts a holistic and individualized method to manage Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) centered around core principles:

- Law of Similars ("Like Cures Like")
 - A substance that produces symptoms in a healthy individual can alleviate similar symptoms in a sick individual.
 - Example: Nux Vomica, which can provoke acidity in large quantities, is utilized to manage GERD with acid reflux and indigestion.
- Individualized Treatment
 - Homeopathic solutions are assigned based on the distinct symptoms, constitution, and emotional status of the patient instead of a universal approach.
- Minimal Dose Principle
 - Highly diluted remedies activate the body's self-healing capacity without adverse effects or toxicity.
- Holistic Healing
 - Homeopathy targets the underlying cause of GERD, such as stress, ineffective digestion, or eating habits, rather than merely inhibiting acid production.
- Vital Force Stimulation
 - Remedies boost the body's inherent capability to restore digestive equilibrium and enhance the lower esophageal sphincter (LES) function. By employing these principles, homeopathy provides a secure, long-lasting, and efficient alternative for managing GERD without reliance on medications.

b) Individualized treatment approach

Homeopathy uses a personalized treatment approach for Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), focusing on the unique symptoms, triggers, emotions, and overall health of each patient. Unlike traditional medicine, which applies a one-size-fits-all solution, homeopathy tailors remedies to the specific issues of the individual. The treatment begins with a detailed analysis of symptoms, as different people experience GERD in varied ways, such as burning pain, bloating, or nausea. Homeopathy also considers factors that make symptoms worse or better, like eating spicy foods or taking warm drinks.

Emotional and psychological factors are important as well, since stress and anxiety can worsen GERD symptoms. For instance, certain remedies are suited for specific emotional triggers, like using Nux Vomica for stress-related issues. The patient's constitution and lifestyle also play a role in determining the right remedy. For example, someone who often overeats and leads a sedentary life might benefit from Nux Vomica, while another individual with sluggish digestion may find relief with Lycopodium.

Remedies are chosen based on individual symptoms. Nux Vomica is for acid reflux from stress or overeating, Carbo Vegetabilis helps with bloating and gas, Arsenicum Album addresses burning pain and regurgitation, Lycopodium is for bloating and food sensitivities, and Pulsatilla is suited for GERD triggered by rich foods in sensitive individuals.

In addition to remedies, homeopathy emphasizes holistic

management, offering advice on diet, meal timing, stress management, and overall wellness to achieve lasting relief.

Key homeopathic remedies for GERD:

Primary Remedies

Carbo vegetabilis helps relieve bloating and gas with belching.

Lycopodium is good for discomfort and indigestion, especially after eating onions or garlic, and features waist bloating.

Natrum carbonicum suits mild people struggling with digestion, causing indigestion and heartburn from certain foods, particularly dairy, which may lead to gas or diarrhea.

Nux vomica eases nausea and cramps from overeating spicy foods or drinking alcohol.

Pulsatilla helps with gastric discomfort after overeating fatty foods, causing bloating and slow digestion.

Antimonium crudum addresses indigestion from rich or acidic foods, improving with heat on the abdomen.

Arsenicum album is for those feeling anxious and fatigued, often worsened by food appearances, and may bring a burning stomach sensation.

Bryonia is for a heavy stomach feeling with rising acid, where movement worsens pain, and individuals crave stillness.

Cinchona officinalis helps with abdominal bloating and odor, sometimes with diarrhea.

Colocynthis relieves cramps that ease with bending and pressure, while Magnesia phosphorica helps with cramps relieved by heat.

Natrum phosphoricum is for sour mouth taste, burning feelings, and issues after dairy or sugar, with a craving for fried eggs.

Phosphorus helps with burning stomach pain that improves with cold, refreshing foods but may lead to nausea when warmed.[12]

5) Lifestyle and Dietary Recommendations

Foods to avoid and include

Foods widely recognised as heartburn triggers lead to the relaxation of the esophageal sphincter and slow down the digestive process, allowing food to remain in the stomach for a long period. The most significant offenders? Foods that are rich in fat, salt, or spice such as:

Deep-fried dishes, Fast food, Pizza, Potato chips and various processed snacks, Chili powder and various peppers (white, black, cayenne), Greasy meats such as bacon and sausage, Cheese.

Other items that may create similar issues include:

Tomato-based sauces, Citrus fruits, Chocolate, Peppermint, Carbonated drinks, Moderation is essential as many individuals may not choose to or can fully cut out these foods. Aim to steer clear of eating troublesome foods late in the evening before bedtime, so they do not remain in your stomach and ascend your esophagus when you lie down at night. It's also wise to consume small, frequent meals instead of larger, heavier ones and to steer clear of late-night dinners and snacks before bed.[13]

Foods that help prevent acid reflux:

High-fiber foods can help you feel full and reduce the chance of overeating, which may prevent heartburn. Include whole grains like oatmeal and brown rice, root vegetables such as sweet potatoes and carrots, and green vegetables like asparagus and broccoli in your diet.

- Alkaline foods, which have a higher pH, can help balance stomach acid. These include bananas, melons, cauliflower, fennel, and nuts.
- Eating watery foods can also lower stomach acid. Choose foods like celery, cucumber, lettuce, watermelon, broth-based soups, and herbal tea. [13]

Eating habits and meal timings

You can modify your dietary habits to assist in alleviating your GERD symptoms:

Decrease portion sizes. Large portions cause the stomach to swell, which inhibits the sphincter at the top of your stomach from sealing properly, leading to the backflow of stomach contents into your esophagus.

Cease eating when you reach 75% fullness. This helps your stomach to process food more quickly, lowering the likelihood of a GERD episode.

Take your time. Set your eating utensil aside between bites to give your stomach's sensory receptors time to communicate to your brain that you are satisfied.

Use smaller dishes and bowls. This can help you achieve a feeling of satisfaction when consuming smaller quantities of food.

Avoid severe hunger. This way, when you do get the chance to eat, you can prevent overeating in a single meal. Consuming small portions every four to six hours is a recommended eating schedule for individuals with GERD.

Establish an evening eating cutoff. Your metabolism functions most efficiently earlier in the day, which is why it's advisable to create an eating deadline for yourself in the evening. Doerfler suggests 7:00 pm or 7:30 pm as your eating deadline to allow your stomach adequate time to empty before you go to bed. She notes that most overeating occurs nearer to bedtime. Additionally, it may be beneficial to raise the head of your bed while sleeping, to prevent your gastrointestinal acids from flowing back into your esophagus.[14]

- Stress management and relaxation techniques: Stressful tasks, as opposed to neutral tasks, led to considerable increases in blood pressure, personal assessments of anxiety, and mentions of reflux symptoms.

In spite of heightened symptom reports, stressful tasks did not result in a significant rise in objective indicators of esophageal acid exposure. Participants who underwent a relaxation intervention following the stressful task exhibited notably lower heart rate values and personal assessments of anxiety compared to participants who received the attention-placebo control intervention. Participants who received relaxation training also reported significantly lower reflux symptom ratings and overall esophageal acid exposure than those who received the attention-placebo control intervention. Relaxation might be a beneficial supplement to conventional anti reflux therapy for patients who experience heightened symptoms during stressful situations.[15]

- Importance of regular physical activity

Regular exercise is essential for managing Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) by enhancing digestion, minimizing triggers, and fostering overall wellness.

Key Benefits:

- 1) Boosts Digestion – Exercise activates the digestive system, preventing acid accumulation and minimizing reflux occurrences.
- 2) Supports Weight Control – Being overweight is a significant GERD risk factor; physical activity assists in keeping a healthy weight, alleviating pressure on the lower esophageal sphincter (LES).
- 3) Enhances LES Performance – Consistent physical movement fortifies muscles, including those of the LES, inhibiting acid regurgitation.
- 4) Decreases Stress and Anxiety – Stress exacerbates GERD symptoms; activities such as yoga, walking, and deep breathing foster relaxation and digestive harmony.
- 5) Promotes Healthy Lifestyle Practices – Physically active individuals tend to uphold a balanced diet and appropriate meal timings, which are crucial for GERD management.

Recommended Activities:

- Gentle exercises such as walking, cycling, and swimming.
- Yoga and stretching to alleviate stress and enhance digestion.
- Avoid vigorous workouts immediately after meals, as they can aggravate reflux.

Incorporating consistent physical activity into your daily routine can greatly diminish GERD symptoms and enhance overall health.

6) Case Studies and Clinical Evidence

Homoeopathy Perspective in Treating A Case of Barrett's Oesophagus

Homeopathy addresses patients in a holistic manner and takes into account both linear and non-linear causes. In situations where the cause remains unidentified, the homeopathic doctor may delve into the details of the case by examining the individual's comprehensive life circumstances and formulate his prescription based on those unrecognizable (non-linear) causes. Since GERD/Barrett's esophagus requires prolonged case monitoring, along with the most appropriately chosen medications tailored to specific symptoms, he can also influence the patient's lifestyle by recommending an appropriate diet and regimen to manage disease progression

initially and facilitate long-term recovery. This case exemplifies how a well-structured homeopathic treatment plan effectively alleviated the patient's chronic symptoms.[16]

Homoeopathy as an emerging alternative for GERD Management: A Comprehensive Review Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a common condition where stomach contents flow back into the esophagus, causing uncomfortable symptoms and complications. It often happens due to issues with the lower esophageal sphincter. Treatment usually involves lifestyle changes, medications, and surgery, but long-term use of medications can be worrying. There is growing interest in homeopathy as an alternative treatment for GERD.

This review looks at existing studies on homeopathic remedies for GERD. Eight clinical studies were identified, showing positive results. Research by Renu Mittal noted improvements in symptoms and quality of life with homeopathic treatment. Dr. Leena Dighe found these medicines effective for GERD and related conditions. Other studies highlighted the importance of patient-provider relationships and confirmed homeopathy's potential for gastrointestinal problems.

The findings suggest that homeopathic treatments may help manage GERD and related issues. They call for more research, including randomized trials, to support homeopathy's role in gastroenterology.[17]

A Retrospective Study to Analyse the Effect of Homoeopathic Medicines in the Treatment of Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease [GERD]

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a common condition where stomach contents flow back into the esophagus, causing symptoms like heartburn, especially after eating. This study aimed to assess how homeopathic treatments affect GERD and how factors like diet, occupation, age, gender, and medical history relate to the condition. The research involved reviewing records of 70 patients at a gastroenterology clinic in India from January to December 2019. Among these, 28 patients with higher GERD scores were analyzed. The study used a gastrointestinal symptom rating scale (GSRs) for evaluations over five visits. Statistical analysis with IBM SPSS showed a significant change in the total GERD scores.[18]

Role of Homoeopathy in the treatment of cases of heartburn with the help of different repertory and materia medica pura The text addresses the different feelings and kinds of pain linked to heartburn and points out that current treatments and compilations may not adequately encompass all experiences. It implies that the framework for heartburn is incomplete as numerous repertories concentrate on modalities yet overlook various sensations or pains. A brief enumeration of sensations occurring during heartburn comprises burning, a tight feeling, choking, pricking, scraping, splinter-like feelings, and excoriation, with each connected to particular remedies. The writer concludes that grasping these sensations can enhance the identification of symptoms and broaden therapeutic choices.[19]

The Study of Homoeopathic Medicines for Treatment in Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) is a multi-symptomatic disorder that includes heartburn, gastric content regurgitation, sour eructation, non-cardiac chest pain, discomfort, and mental irritability. Prolonged suffering from GERD may lead to esophagitis, peptic ulcers, and Barrett's esophagitis. Several medications are mentioned in homeopathic literature for treating GERD. The complaints of GERD were analyzed using the synthesis repertory to develop the totality of symptoms for selecting the similimum.

2. Materials and Method

For this study, 30 patients diagnosed with gastroesophageal reflux disease were chosen, spanning an age range of 18 to 65 years. The changes were evaluated before and after the treatment. Treatment response was measured by the FSSG score and GERD questionnaire score both pre and post treatment. Following a thorough study and repertorization, the appropriate remedy was prescribed to the patients.

3. Result

A total of 30 patients were part of the study. Among them, 23 (76.66%) were male, and 7 (23.33%) were female patients. Homeopathic medicines were prescribed based on the totality of symptoms. The treatment response was assessed using the FSSG score and GERD questionnaire score before and after the treatment. A marked improvement was observed in 56.66% of patients, there was moderate improvement in 33.33% of patients, and mild improvement in 10% of patients. Statistically significant improvement was noted in the GERD symptom score comparing pre-treatment and post-treatment at p. [20]

4. Conclusion

Managing Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) requires a holistic approach that goes beyond conventional symptom suppression. Homeopathy offers an individualised, natural, and side-effect-free treatment by addressing the root causes of GERD, such as digestive imbalances, stress, and lifestyle factors. Remedies like Nux Vomica, Carbo Vegetabilis, and Arsenicum Album help restore digestive health while promoting overall well-being.

Additionally, regular physical activity plays a vital role in GERD management by improving digestion, strengthening the lower esophageal sphincter (LES), reducing stress, and maintaining a healthy weight. Gentle exercises like walking, yoga, and stretching can significantly contribute to long-term relief. By combining homeopathy, lifestyle modifications, and regular physical activity, GERD patients can achieve sustainable relief and improved quality of life without dependency on conventional medications. A holistic, patient-centric approach ensures long-lasting digestive health and overall wellness.

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