

# COVID-19 and lockdown

## An opportunity for homeopaths to bring lasting changes for better health

by Thierry Clerc, MSc, MARH, RHom



After a career in telecommunications engineering, Thierry retrained to become a full-time homeopath in Cambridge. His interest was ignited by several episodes of arthritis that almost crippled him. After being treated successfully by a homeopath, he decided to join 'the club', and since then has never felt so healthy and happy. Nutrition and blood testing to treat metabolic issues are a big part of his practice now, as he realised that people who had a healthy outlook on diet were responding much better to his homeopathic approach. With the pandemic, Thierry had to adapt and has primarily focused on his existing patients' community, with shorter consultations and email support to fulfil the need to improve their underlying health.

I first drafted this article in March 2020, at the beginning of lockdown, as a way to inform colleagues how best to help their patients. Like many practitioners, the lockdown significantly reduced my weekly appointments, but many of my patients asked for information on how to be best prepared for COVID-19. I updated this article in late July when the government started to publish their plans to tackle obesity. The link between deaths from COVID-19, and obesity or metabolic issues such as hypertension and diabetes, was clearly highlighted at the beginning of the crisis, and I tried to explain this very early to my patients.

When people have a deep understanding and an urge to be healthy, they are more likely to make positive changes. While the pandemic and the lockdown have brought stress and anxiety, they have also provided opportunities for lasting changes in diet and lifestyles as some people have been cooking more fresh food for themselves and their families.

However, the current government proposals to tackle obesity do not fill me with optimism. Little money is spent on actually supporting people to make healthy changes and some suggestions, such as better labelling or a partial ban on junk food advertising, have been tried before without success. But, although I doubt if the government will achieve much with its planned approach, it may help to raise

awareness that we all need to do our bit for our own health. I believe that health practitioners such as homeopaths are in a better place to help patients make lasting lifestyle changes.

The virulence of a virus that nobody had heard of a few months ago, and the rapid reaction of health authorities worldwide, have impacted the day-to-day lives of many. I had a busy practice in Cambridge, UK, and I was initially very despondent, as there seemed little room to push a message that promoted natural immunity and true health over the massive response and panic generated by COVID-19. After a few days of reflection on how to find something positive in the situation, I started to realise that this crisis also made people listen more to sources they



trusted, such as their own health practitioners.

We can help our patients reduce their likelihood of being seriously ill, before they get sick. We are in a fantastic place to inform and support our patients, in a way that the national health authorities or the government cannot. We have experience in healthcare, in improving the terrain and, most important, we have a direct trusting relationship with our patients and community. Most people now realise that their health is important and that they have an opportunity to make lasting changes. They have opened their minds to the damage that processed food or poor eating habits can bring to their level of energy, and their longevity.

Homeopathy is used for chronic symptoms as well as acute health issues. Often, during consultations, we can help patients realise that they can achieve a better level of

health by making lifestyle changes. We all have patients who say they are healthy except for ‘the usual’ four or six winter colds, ‘like everybody else’. A homeopath can provide therapeutic support and point out that, while it may be common for many people to have recurrent acute winter colds, this is not a sign of good health.

**Fresh fruit and veg are vital to good health**

Homeopathic treatment, organ support and individualised advice covering nutritional issues or anxiety can all reduce the occurrence of acute infections by strengthening our patients’ immune systems. In my view, all acute episodes can be easily treated if the vital force / immune system is strong.

#### **How homeopaths are best placed to prepare their patients during this pandemic**

Pandemics always affect people with a poor diet (the ‘poorly-nourished’), obesity, and people who suffer from conditions linked to metabolic issues (‘how we process food’). This is confirmed by recent studies on people who were hospitalised or who, unfortunately, died from COVID-19 ([www.medscape.com](http://www.medscape.com)).

From the beginning of the pandemic, the NHS classification of people at risk identified those with

## **The current government proposals to tackle obesity do not fill me with optimism**

▷ metabolic issues / weakened organs as the single most important factor. Early studies in the West showed that people who died from COVID-19 despite having no ‘chronic’ issues were more likely to be obese.

The best way to prepare for a pandemic is to have a healthy constitution which translates, nowadays, into losing weight if you need to and, in parallel, to reduce or eliminate sugar, alcohol, processed food (such as takeaways), and increase fresh vegetable and water intake. Weight alone is not the issue – how our hormonal and digestive systems deal with poor-quality food is also relevant.

Here is some of the evidence or early warnings:

- 83% of COVID-19 hospitalised cases in France are obese: [https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2020/04/07/les-personnes-obeses-sont-plus-fragilisees-par-le-virus\\_6035831\\_3244.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2020/04/07/les-personnes-obeses-sont-plus-fragilisees-par-le-virus_6035831_3244.html)
- Famous UK cardiologist who asks people to change their diet on TV to prepare for COVID-19: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHAnzhRZFZ0&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3oRH0Buso97kITBuRXlOcmnl5OGj5W3CsFDpMFgICG62D3AYK6aFgCk6g>
- A famous American doctor who treated pre-WW2 epidemics by asking people to stop sugar: <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/05/23/archives/dr-benjamin-p-sandler-nutritionist-77-is-dead.html>, and <http://whale.to/v/sandler13.html>

In first world countries the vast

## We can help our patients reduce their likelihood of being seriously ill, before they get sick

majority of people are in poorer health than they should be, and they were in complete denial about this when the crisis arrived. For example, in the USA, the National Center for Health Statistics estimates that, in 2016, 39.8% of adults were obese (including 7.6% with severe obesity) and another 31.8% were overweight.

Another condition, metabolic syndrome, is heavily related to chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and hypertension, and also to obesity and poor immunity. It is estimated that around 25% of the world’s adult population have this syndrome, which means they are twice as likely to die and three times as likely to have a heart attack or stroke compared to people without the syndrome. They also have a fivefold greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Long-term stress, poor sleep, or drugs intake can induce metabolic syndrome, even in someone in a healthy weight range. People in this risk category need help with regulating basic body functions, with organ support, with losing weight, and generally to improve their constitution.



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Recurrent colds aren't a sign of good health

The public health authorities’ advice for improving health via diet or lifestyle are not usually very effective as they do not look at the individuality of each person. CAM practitioners, especially homeopaths, do, as we customise our treatment and advice.

The good news is that, at times of crisis, people are more ready to



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make changes, and the lockdown has provided that opportunity as many have been able to change their habits and adopt a different routine.

Homeopaths in Hahnemann's time were well ahead of their conventional colleagues by recommending good hygiene, a good diet, a good healthy lifestyle and

disinfection, well before these became mainstream. Hahnemann states in #7 of the *Organon* that removing any obvious or maintaining cause ('causa occasionalis') was as important as identifying the curative remedy. Assisting our patients to address obesity, poor diet, stress

The pandemic triggers obsession with the news

## The public health authorities' advice for improving health via diet or lifestyle are not usually very effective

and poor lifestyle is important if we want to help them only have a relatively mild acute of this infection, if one at all.

### Reaching out to our patients

Most people accept that there are two facets to an epidemic: the strength of the virus, and the ability of the body to defend and protect itself – referred to medically as developing an acquired immunity. We work with the body to help the terrain.

This is an important time and opportunity for CAM practitioners, especially homeopaths, to offer individualised support and suggestions so that our patients can develop a better ability to protect themselves from infection.

Explain what might make us more susceptible to infections; for example, being overweight, having a poor diet, metabolic issues such as diabetes or pre-diabetes, insomnia, or feeling stressed. These are all precursors of poor immunity. Explain all the conditions that make people more likely to get a severe form of infection, and be ready to help.

Explain also the good news: that effective treatment and lifestyle changes can significantly reverse these problems (and not mask them as some drugs may do). It is known that metabolic syndrome or insulin resistance can be greatly ameliorated through a healthy customised diet within a few weeks. High blood pressure readings can also dramatically improve in a matter of weeks with a good diet and breathing exercises. Homeopaths see

▷ many patients whose symptoms, such as insomnia or chest problems, improve soon after they start treatment.

In summary, this pandemic and the lockdown is a fantastic opportunity to make changes that improve health risks and vitality, and we homeopaths can significantly help.

**Checklist for an online consultation**

Many patients need to self-isolate or self-distance, even now that lockdown is easing. I have updated my regular list of questions for online consultations, and here are some suggestions that may be helpful to others:

- Have an acute questionnaire ready, as any acute issues need to take priority over chronic issues. Acutes always take so much energy from the vital force.
- Explain clearly that any weakness in the body will be hit during an acute as the body diverts resources to fight the virus. This is why it is so important to improve our overall fitness in case we get infected.
- Provide a first-aid kit or a list of key remedies for your patients, for COVID-19 and any other ailments a patient may be prone to.
- Ask for your patient’s weight and height, and check their body mass index. The healthy medical range is 19-25; anything above 30 significantly increases health risks, and needs to be addressed.
- Ask for waist and hip measurement, to define if they have significant central obesity, another marker of metabolic issues such as fatty liver syndrome.
- Offer a review of a food diary. I currently suggest a seven-day food diary, and I also ask my patients to include their total water intake, sleep patterns and a rating for their emotional state.
- Offer a home test kit for Vitamin D levels. They are pretty cheap, and low levels of Vitamin

D are heavily linked to poor immunity and respiratory issues. Advise people to take advantage of the sun for one or two hours a day, even at the window, or to supplement.

- Other companies now offer a wide range of high-quality blood test kits that can be used at home. If you are interested in blood testing, this is worth checking.
- If your patient has a known condition/s, ask them to track it (or them). I ask for blood pressure and heartbeat readings to be taken twice a day, and the same for blood sugar levels. Monitors are very cheap. If progress is tracked, patients tend to be more motivated.
- Discuss any trace of emotional issues such as depression or anxiety, and notice how this affects day-to-day life. A key element is also an obsession with checking social media or the news, which is not helpful.

**This pandemic and the lockdown is a fantastic opportunity to make changes that improve health risks and vitality**

**Healthy habits make us feel calmer and fitter; bad habits make us feel heavy and tired, even if they bring short-term happiness**

Other areas to investigate include:

- Loneliness – check that your patients have a healthy social network.
- Addiction to social media and news; this is a recurrent problem made worse by this crisis. I often suggest limiting exposure to news or social media to two or three times daily, and to suggest some practical steps such as switching off the phone.
- Other poor habits.

I often say that healthy habits make us feel calmer and fitter (not especially happier), and bad habits make us feel heavy and tired, even if they bring short-term happiness.

Many people need to make drastic changes in how they spend or see their life. The number one priority should be our own health and ‘true contentment’ – then we can reach out and enjoy time with others.

**Who is at an increased risk and how we can help**

The NHS wrote to all general practitioners (GPs) defining groups / situations as being at increased risk from COVID-19. Here is the list and how we can help:

Situation increasing risk	Can nutrition / metabolic adjustment & lifestyle help?	Can organ support / detox / supplement help?	Can constitutional or therapeutic support help?
70+ years old	Possibly	Possibly	Yes
Pregnancy	Possibly	Yes	Possibly
Hypertension	If overweight, definitely; breathing techniques possibly	Yes	Possibly
Other heart conditions	Most likely, including breathing techniques	Yes	Possibly
Asthma	Possibly	Yes	Possibly
Other lung conditions	Possibly	Yes	Possibly
Kidney or liver conditions	Possibly	Yes	Possibly
Brain and nerve disease	Possibly	Yes	Possibly
Diabetes and poor insulin regulation	Yes	Yes	Possibly
Spleen problems or spleen removed	Possibly if overweight	Yes	Possibly
Weak immune system due to a health condition	Possibly if overweight	Yes	Possibly
Weak immune system due to intake of conventional drugs such as tamoxifen, methotrexate, steroids, chemotherapy, or those for HIV / AIDS	Possibly	Yes	Possibly
Obesity or severely overweight	Definitely	Yes	Possibly

Furthermore, the following issues may affect how patients respond to an infection, as they are known to increase health risks / reduce immune functions:

Situation increasing risk	Can nutrition / metabolic adjustment & lifestyle help?	Can organ support / detox / supplement help?	Can constitutional or therapeutic support help?
Depression, due to lockdown or worries about health	Possibly	Yes	Yes
Anxiety, due to money or health problems	Possibly	Yes	Yes
Insomnia	Possibly	Possibly	Yes
Over-use of recreational or prescribed drugs (alcohol, cannabis, sleeping pills etc)	Possibly	Yes	Possibly
Addictions (social media, news, drugs)	Possibly	Yes	Yes

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