

# The Cough of Cardiovascular Disorders

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**Abstract:** Cough as a symptom of heart disease is discussed, together with five often indicated homeopathic remedies. **Keywords:** cough, heart disease, of; indicated homoeopathic remedies; *Spongia tosta*, *Laurocerasus*, *Naja*, *Digitalis*, *Lachesis*.

Cough is one of the five most common symptoms for which patients seek consultation with a doctor.<sup>1</sup> Although there are a number of different causes, most coughs are of a respiratory nature, prompting both the patient, and possibly even the doctor, to think of a cough mixture as a first approach to treatment. Cough is an explosive, expiratory maneuver that is reflexively or deliberately intended to clear the airways. Coughing may be a normal response to the presence of mucus or other foreign material in the airways.<sup>2</sup> However, there is always the possibility of a more serious underlying cause, such as bronchogenic carcinoma and congestive cardiac failure, especially when the cough is of a chronic nature. Both mitral valve disease and left ventricular failure are known to produce chronic cough.<sup>3</sup>

Patients suffering from heart disease may present with a chronic, painful, dry cough associated with dyspnoea and palpitations. This cough is usually aggravated at night during sleep, waking the patient.<sup>1</sup> Cough develops as a late symptom in mitral stenosis and is preceded by increasing dyspnoea. In left ventricular failure, it is concomitant with paroxysmal, nocturnal dyspnoea.<sup>4</sup>

Unaware that their cough may be indicative of a serious condition, many patients resort to self-medication with cough mixtures. Such preparations, often sold over the counter, should carry a warning that any cough lasting more than two weeks requires medical attention. In seeking to “clear” their cough, the cardiac patient may be exposed to further harm as most cough mixtures are contraindicated in heart disease.

The homeopathic materia medica documents remedies, which when correctly selected, have proved successful in the treatment of patients suffering from cardiac cough. The focus of this paper is the treatment

of cough as a symptom of cardiovascular disease. A symptomatic picture of the major remedies for this condition is given, illustrating and differentiating the specific features of the cough, with modalities and concomitant symptoms, thus giving a clear picture for choosing the indicated remedy.

## ***Spongia tosta***

*Spongia* is indicated in the dry, chronic, sympathetic cough of organic, heart disease. It is a dry, barking, croupy cough that is accompanied by hoarseness. It is worse during inspiration and before midnight. It is better after eating or drinking, especially warm drinks. There are rapid violent palpitations with dyspnoea and a suffocative precordial pain that suddenly awakens the patient after midnight. *Spongia* is also indicated for valvular insufficiency<sup>5</sup>

## ***Laurocerasus***

*Laurocerasus* is especially effective in cardiac patients who present with a spasmodic, tickling, dry cough. There is cyanosis and dyspnoea; worse sitting up. Exercise causes pain around the heart. The patient clutches the heart, gasping for breath. It has relieved patients suffering from mitral regurgitation. Characteristic symptoms are: cough with a whistling sound, as if mucus were hanging in the throat; cough accompanied by fluttering in the region of the heart and gasping for breath; and stitching heart pains.

## ***Naja tripudians***

In *Naja* there is marked dyspnoea and inability to lie on the left side. There is an irritating, dry cough, dependant on cardiac lesions. This remedy may be indicated in cardiac hypertrophy with valvular lesions,

especially when the heart has been damaged by infectious disease.<sup>5</sup> The pulse is irregular, and weak. Often the patient presents with anginal pain that radiates to the throat, neck, left arm and hand. Violent palpitations, worse from the slightest exertion, lying on the left side or from talking may be experienced. On physical examination, Naja patients often present with loud cardiac murmurs and edema of the extremities.<sup>7</sup>

### **Digitalis**

*Digitalis* is a specific remedy for heart troubles with slow and intermittent pulse. The heart is weak without valvular complications. With deteriorating heart function, general edema and suppression of urine develops. There is extreme exhaustion, and the patient feels as if he is dying.<sup>8</sup> A dry, spasmodic cough may develop, worse especially on deep inspiration.<sup>6</sup> The cough is accompanied by a raw, sore feeling in the chest. The patient complains of dyspnea and a constant desire to take a deep breath.<sup>5</sup>

### **Lachesis**

*Lachesis* is useful in the distressing cough that accompanies organic heart disease.<sup>9</sup> The cough is dry and spasmodic and comes in suffocative fits. It comes on after sleep and in the open air. The patient is constantly obliged to take a deep breath, worse when sitting. The patient may complain of a sensation of constriction about the heart with palpitations, which causes great anxiety. A dry, hacking cough may be caused by touching the throat.<sup>6</sup>

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