

Amber (Succinum)

by Patricia Hatherly

I was intrigued by this case Patricia sent when I asked her for her take on nurturing. This remedy seems like a new age discovery, but it has ancient lineage. I couldn't help but think about flies trapped in amber, over-nurtured in a way for a long time. Just as in this case of the little girl who was given too much of a good thing.



On a cold winter's day last year, a little girl, just a few weeks shy of her third birthday, was brought to the clinic by her parents who were concerned that she had whooping cough. The parents reported that she's had a cough for a few weeks and it has been getting progressively worse. She's been waking about 11pm with the cough "gasping for air". They describe it as a gagging, choking cough that takes her breath away and causes her distress with dry retching.

She has rosy cheeks and her parents describe her as a hot child who kicks covers off at night; and, although it is a cold day, she is only wearing shorts and t-shirt with sandals. Since she's had the cough she's developed clear coryza which has become thick and yellow in the past 24 hours. Her parents have noticed that her voice has begun to sound hoarse.

Her birth was a straightforward natural event and she took to the breast well and is still breastfed. She has a good appetite for a variety of foods and loves to cook. Her favourite activity at the toddler group that she attends is cooking.

After she settled into the new environment of the clinic she hopped off her mother's lap to play with the toys. Interestingly she went straight to the shelf with the wooden blocks and lifted down a wooden boat and a few wooden trucks and began to play with them on the floor. I thought that was an unusual choice for a girl, so commented on it. The parents laughed and said that she is fascinated by such big vehicles (cars, trains, buses). She apparently loves tunnels and loves nothing more than to be stopped at a railway crossing to see a train up close.... "much excitement!" I made a mental note to check out: Mind; fear; trains, of and Mind; fear; tunnels, closed-in places.

She has no problems with bowels or bladder and is now dry through the night.

Her parents report that teething was "a nightmare with many sleepless nights" which settled when they got her some amber beads to wear. I note that she is still wearing them and that the mother is also. I ask why this is so, since she's long finished with getting her two year molars. Her mother explained that she loves her beads and wants to wear them 24/7 and that she, also, likes to wear hers.

The little one had not long gone to the breast during this part of the history taking; and, when mention of the amber beads came up, she reached up and held on tightly to her mother's beads. My thought was... an interesting gesture; I wonder if there's a remedy in our materia medica made from amber?... and went hunting to find, in Murphy's *Lotus Materia Medica*, a good overview of *Amber (Succinum)*.

It was intriguing to read that fumes of the crude acid produce ... "asthma; cough; sneezing; weeping and the dropping of watery mucous from the nostrils". Even more intriguing was the note that the oil was a popular remedy for whooping cough; being administered by rubbing it into the spine night and morning. The only mental symptom recorded is a "fear of trains and closed places".

I administered a dose of *Succinum* 1M and the mother ceremoniously removed both sets of beads. The cough settled in a matter of days and did not return.

So, here we have this lovely little case of

Succinum. How the word rolls gently off the tongue and possibly, for some conjures up synonyms such as succour and nurture. Those of us, however, who enjoyed a classical education that embraced Latin conjugations and declensions, recognise that the Latin root is *sucus* meaning "juice; sap; vital fluid in trees and plants"; and those of us, who come from a pure scientific background, instantly recognise that Succinic acid [C₁₀H₁₆O] (which can be derived from amber) is capable of restoring the energy balance at the cellular level, due to its integral role in the Krebs' Cycle.¹

It would be fair to say, therefore, that all the historic healing claims made for amber, which has long-enjoyed pride of place in folk-medicine lore ever since named as Succinum by the Dominican monk Albert the Great in the early 13th century, derive from the biological effects of Succinic acid at the molecular level.

Apparently Succinic acid is used commercially today, primarily as a sweetener; and the ironic thing about this case is that here we have a toddler enjoying all the health and psychological benefits of still being at the breast, suckling, nourished by a vital substance of infinite sweetness. In a manner of speaking, human milk is a "sap"...a "vital fluid" and, most certainly, we have a proving response here both as a result of the child wearing the beads and the mother adding to that burden via her breastmilk. It's a matter of too much of a good thing for too long....and I'm not referring to the breastmilk!

^[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citric_acid_cycle

About the Author: Patricia Hatherly BA DipEd BHSc (Hom) is a registered classical homoeopath who runs a busy clinical practice in Brisbane. She has spent 35 years working with families as a Lactation Consultant; Childbirth Educator and Parent Effectiveness Instructor, which, added to the wealth of personal experience acquired through breastfeeding 3 children, gives her a unique perspective on all matters pertaining to lactation. In 2002 she published the proving of Lac Maternum and has subsequently conducted a C4 trituration of Lac Humanum. Patricia lectures in Materia Medica and offers clinical supervision to students and new graduates, and is the author of two books on lactation.