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Childhood diarrhoea and homoeopathic management

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Abstract

Childhood diarrhoea is the most frequent gastroenterological disorder, and the main cause of dehydration in childhood. It is manifested by a sudden occurrence of three or more watery or loose stools per day lasting for seven to 10 days, 14 days at most. It mainly occurs in children until five years of age and particularly in neonates in the second half-year and children until the age of three years.

Keywords: gastrointestinal infections, viral and bacterial infections, malnutrition and more rarely alimentary intoxications and other factors

Introduction

Diarrhoeal disease is the second leading cause of death in children under five years old, and is responsible for killing around 55000 children every year. Diarrhoea can last several days, and can leave the body without the water and salts that are necessary for survival. In the past, for most children's, severe dehydration and fluid loss were the main causes of diarrhoea deaths. Now, other causes such as septic bacterial infections are likely to account for an increasing proportion of all diarrhoea-associated deaths.

Definition

Diarrhoea is defined as the passage of three or more loose or liquid stools per day (or more frequent passage than is normal for the individual). Frequent passing of formed stools is not diarrhoea, nor is the passing of loose, "pasty" stools by breastfed babies.

Causes of Diarrhoea

Infection: Diarrhoea is caused by a host of bacterial, viral and parasitic organisms. Infection is more common when there is a shortage of adequate sanitation and hygiene and safe water for drinking, cooking and cleaning. Rotavirus and *Escherichia coli*, are the two most common etiological agents of moderate-to-severe diarrhoea in low-income countries.

Malnutrition: Children who die from diarrhoea often suffer from underlying malnutrition, which makes them more vulnerable to diarrhoea. Each diarrhoeal episode, in turn, makes their malnutrition even worse.

Food poisoning: Can also cause diarrhoea in kids. Symptoms usually come on quickly, may include vomiting, and tend to go away within 24 hours.

Two functional GI disorders that cause chronic diarrhoea in children are toddler's diarrhoea and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Toddler's diarrhoea

Toddler's diarrhoea—also called functional diarrhoea, or chronic nonspecific diarrhoea of childhood—is a common cause of chronic diarrhoea in toddlers (ages 1 to 3), and preschool-age children (ages 3 to 5).

Symptoms of Diarrhea

- Severe dehydration (at least two of the following signs)
- lethargy/unconsciousness, sunken eyes, unable to drink or drink poorly, skin pinch goes back very slowly (≥ 2 seconds)
- Some dehydration (two or more of the following signs): restlessness, irritability, sunken eyes, drinks eagerly, thirsty.

- Cramping and Belly (abdominal) pain, Swelling (bloating).
- Upset stomach (nausea), Urgent need to use the bathroom
- Fever with Bloody stools.
- Childhood Diarrhoea can be diagnosed:
- Child may have lab tests to check blood and urine.
- A stool culture to check for abnormal bacteria or parasites in your child's digestive tract. A small stool sample is taken and sent to a lab.
- A stool evaluation to check the stool for blood or fat
- Imaging tests to rule out structural problems
- Tests to check for food intolerance or allergies
- A sigmoidoscopy. This test lets the healthcare provider check the inside of part of your child's large intestine.

Prevention and treatment

- Key measures to prevent diarrhoea include:
- access to safe drinking-water; use of improved sanitation;
- exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life;
- health education about how infections spread; and
- rotavirus vaccination.
- Zinc supplements: zinc supplements reduce the duration of a diarrhoea episode by 25% and are associated with a 30% reduction in stool volume.
- Rehydration: with intravenous fluids in case of severe dehydration or shock.

Homoeopathic Management

- **Arsenicum album:** This remedy relieves foul-smelling, burning diarrhoea from food poisoning, associated with weakness and relieved by heat or hot food.
- **Bryonia:** This remedy is often helpful for diarrhoea during flu (especially when the person feels grumpy and wants to lie still and be left alone). It may also be helpful for diarrhoea that occurs when a person gets overheated, then drinks a lot of cold water.
- **Chamomilla:** Hot, green, watery diarrhoea with abdominal pain and gas suggests a need for this remedy.
- **Gelsemium:** This remedy is often indicated if trembling and weakness accompany diarrhoea, especially when nervousness, fear, or emotional upset is the cause.
- **Pulsatilla:** If diarrhoea occurs after eating rich and fatty foods, this remedy can be helpful. Queasiness and abdominal pain are likely to occur, and the diarrhoea has a changeable appearance.
- **Conclusion:** Promote national policies and investments that support case management of diarrhoea and its complications as well as increasing access to safe drinking-water and sanitation in developing areas in country ;build capacity in implementing preventive interventions, including sanitation, source water improvements, and household water treatment and safe storage; develop new health interventions, such as the rotavirus immunization.

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