

CHAPTER : 9

COMMON DISEASES IN CHILDREN

The initial time after baby's birth is tender. In this stage diseases attack children very quickly. Development of a sick child is hampered. Therefore, mother should be extremely cautious regarding child's health. Many a time it is seen that parents take the child to a doctor only when the ailment has aggravated. Best efforts should be made to restrict the disease in the initial stage itself. To achieve this, it is important to have knowledge about common diseases of children.

Early symptoms of diseases

The early symptoms of diseases commonly occurring in children are-

1. **Changes in behaviour-** The behaviour of a sick child is irritable, obstinate and he cries more than usual.
2. **Loss of appetite-** A sick child drinks less milk and loses appetite.
3. **Irregular bowel movements-** A sick child either has loose motions or constipation.
4. **Change in body temperature-** In case of fever or cough-cold body temperature changes from normal.
5. **Changes in activeness-** A sick child feels lethargic, tired and discomfort.
6. **Changes in skin-** Different diseases affect skin differently and cause different changes in skin. Skin appears dry, rough, red or grainy and sometimes yellowed.
7. **Changes in weight-** A sick child does not gain weight as he should according to his age.
8. **Changes in sleep-** Child sleeps less or he wakes up abnormally from sleep.
9. **Stays with mother-** Child doesn't leave mother's lap as he does usually.

Therefore, if one or more symptoms out of the above are noticed in the child by parents, they should consult a doctor. Until the parents take the child to a doctor, following measures can be taken by the parents-

1. In case of fever, note the temperature from time to time.
2. If the child is in pain touch his stomach, ears, eyes, legs, hands to know the reason of pain by his reaction.
3. If the child refuses to take feed do not force him.
4. Give boiled water to the child for drinking.
5. Take special care of child's personal and food hygiene.
6. In case of cough-cold and other disease do not depend on home remedies for long, visit a doctor.

The main digestion-related ailments in children are-

1. **Diarrhoea-** It is common in children. Diarrhoea is a condition in which faeces are discharged from the bowels frequently and in a liquid form.

Causes-

1. Irregular eating habits and time.
2. Excessive consumption of milk by child
3. Consumption of fat-rich milk by an infant other than mother's milk.
4. Giving cold and rancid milk to child
5. Consumption of stodgy and spicy food by breastfeeding mothers.
6. Beginning of dentition in the child
7. More of winter or summer season
8. Child suffering from fever, cough and cold.

Treatment

1. Stop giving milk to the child except mother's milk.
2. Do not give solid food to child
3. Maintain hygiene of milk bottle, nipple and other utensils coming in contact with baby's milk.
4. Rice starch or barley water can be given
5. To compensate for the loss of water and salts, feed a preparation of 1 liter water with a pinch of salt and a handful of sugar at regular intervals to the child.
6. Take care of baby's personal hygiene
7. Take the child to the doctor as soon as possible and get proper treatment.
2. **Constipation-** Constipation is a condition in which there is difficulty in emptying the bowels, usually associated with hardened faeces.

Constipation is a common cause of painful defecation in children.

Causes

1. Less intake of liquids
2. Less intake of fiber- rich foods
3. Intestinal weakness
4. Providing nutrition to baby from milk other than mother's milk.

Treatment

1. Regularity in food intake and timing should be maintained.
2. Child should be encouraged to defecate at regular times.
3. Quantity of liquids should be increased in child's diet- add more water, fruit juices, vegetable soup in his diet.
4. If bowel movements remain irregular for 2 days enema should be given after consultation with a doctor.
3. **Loss of appetite-** Loss of appetite occurs when a child has a reduced desire to eat at set times.

Causes

1. Digestive disorder such as constipation, indigestion, etc.
2. Liver disease or intestinal infection.
3. The child is too tired

Treatment

Firstly find the reason behind loss of appetite. If the reason remains unknown visit a doctor for proper medicine.

4. **Milk vomiting (by infants)** - This is not a disease in general. Most babies vomit small amounts from time to time, and bring up some

milk when they burp. This is also known as possetting.

Causes-

1. Weak digestive system of baby
2. Entry of air in the stomach of the baby while drinking milk
3. Feeding protein and fat rich milk to baby.
4. Laying the baby on stomach side after feeding milk
5. Feeding excessive milk to baby

Treatment

1. Use the correct method while feeding milk to baby so that air does not enter stomach
2. After feeding milk hold the baby over shoulder, rub your hand on his back so that he belches.
3. Do not lay the baby on stomach side after feeding milk
5. **Worms in stomach** - There are three types of worms that can be present in stomach-
 1. Round worms
 2. Tape worms
 3. Hook worms
1. **Round worm**- This worm is generally 8 inches in length and resides in intestines. Infection like indigestion, stomach ache and bloating occurs by consuming food or drink contaminated with the worm's eggs.
2. **Tape worm**- This worm is generally found only in children's stomach. These are small in size and white in color. Some symptoms of worm being present in child's stomach are itching in the anal passage, peeing in bed, loose motions, etc.
3. **Hook worm**- This is a small size worm found in intestines. They adhere to the walls of

intestines and suck blood. Anaemia, weakness, hampered development, reduced digestion, loss of appetite etc symptoms indicate presence of worms.

Causes of entry of worms in body-

1. Eating, cooking or serving with dirty hands
2. Consuming contaminated food and water
3. Children playing in dirt
4. Eating of dirt by children
5. Not washing hands after defecation

Treatment

1. Maintaining hygiene of home and surroundings
2. Preventing children from eating dirt
3. Giving boiled water to children for drinking
4. Do not give excess sweets to children
5. Get the stools examined and taking medication on doctor's prescription.
6. **Cold-cough**- This is a very common ailment in children. Changing weather especially winter causes cold and cough. If the common cough and cold is neglected they take an ugly turn and gives rise to pneumonia and bronchitis. Therefore, this ailment should not be taken lightly and its treatment should be availed of at the earliest.

Causes

1. Excess of cold weather
2. Children playing in water in winters
3. Coming in contact with infected person
4. Sudden change in temperature.
5. Taking the child in open space immediately after bathing with hot water

Treatment

1. Prevent the patient from cold
2. Sponge and not bathing the patient prevents further aggravation of cold
3. Keeping away from cold things
4. Wearing sufficient woolen clothes in winter
5. Do not take the baby for bathing immediately after oil-massage.
6. Let the baby rest for ample time
7. Keep the clothes and towel of patient separate
8. If cough and cold persists for more than 3-4 days, consult a doctor.
7. **Goitre** -
This is related to throat.

Symptoms

1. Swelling of glands on both sides of throat
2. Glands become large and inside of throat turn red.
3. Heaviness and pain in ears
4. Difficulty in eating- drinking
5. High fever and vomiting

Treatment

1. Consult a qualified therapist
2. Keep the neck covered with muffler
3. Give liquid or easily digestible food to patient
4. Gargle with salty or alum-rich boiling water
8. **Eye pain** - Paining of eyes of infants is a common problem which is a result of unclean eyes.

Causes

1. Unclean surroundings
2. Working in dim light
3. Entry of dirt, soil in eyes
4. Use of dirty hands or dirty clothes for cleaning eyes

Treatment

1. Prevent the eyes from sunlight and intense light
2. Clean eyes with boric lotion
3. Using clean hands, water, cloth for cleaning eyes
4. Preventing eyes from entry of dirt, soil, etc,
5. Consult an eye doctor
9. **Fever**- Fever is defined as having temperature above the normal range (98.4°F) which can be felt by touching the body.

Causes

1. Physical weakness
2. Cough-cold
3. Malaria, typhoid etc
4. Growth of tonsils

Treatment

1. Let the child rest in a peaceful and comfortable environment
2. Give light and easily digestible food to eat
3. If fever is accompanied by cough and cold keep the child adequately covered
4. Consult a doctor
5. In case of high fever place cloth strips dipped in cold water on child's forehead
10. **Convulsions**- A convulsion is a medical condition where body muscles contract and relax rapidly and repeatedly, resulting in an uncontrolled shaking of the body. Teeth tighten, face becomes yellow, and child brings the hand in a fist and loses consciousness.

Causes

1. Damage to brain due to infection

2. Child suffering from meningitis
3. High fever- malaria, pneumonia etc
4. Epilepsy seizures
5. Congenital defect in brain
6. Gastroenteritis in stomach

Treatment

1. Lay the child on his back when convulsions begin
2. Loosen the clothing
3. Place a cloth seat between teeth so that tongue remains unhurt
4. If shaking goes on uncontrollably rub the patient's hand-feet and cover him with a blanket
5. Immediately take the patient to a doctor

IMPORTANT POINTS

1. The early symptoms of common diseases are- changes in behaviour, loss of appetite, irregular bowel movements, change in body temperature, activeness, skin, weight, sleep, etc.
2. Diarrhoea is a result of irregular eating habits and time, excessive consumption of milk or cold and rancid milk or fat-rich milk by an infant, beginning of dentition, etc.
3. Constipation is a condition in which there is difficulty in emptying the bowels, usually associated with hardened faeces.
4. Liver disease or intestinal infection leads to loss of appetite.
5. After feeding milk holding the baby over shoulder, rubbing hand on his back so that he belches reduces chances of milk vomiting.
6. Round worm, tape worm and hook worm is found in stomach.

7. Consuming contaminated food and water and eating with dirty hands causes entry of worms in body.
8. If cough-cold are not treated on time they may cause pneumonia and typhoid.
9. Goitre is a throat related disease.
10. Fever is defined as having a temperature above the normal range due to an increase in the body's temperature.
11. A convulsion is a medical condition in which body muscles contract and relax rapidly and repeatedly, resulting in an uncontrolled shaking of the body, teeth tighten, face becomes yellow.

EXERCISE

1. Choose the correct option-

- (i) The body temperature rises because of
 - (a) Fever
 - (b) Indigestion of food
 - (c) Not bathing
 - (d) Un-cleanliness
- (ii) When sick child
 - (a) Plays
 - (b) Feels tired and lethargic
 - (c) Feels happy
 - (d) Eats excess of food
- (iii) When faeces are discharged from the bowels more than 4 times a day, it is a symptom of
 - (a) Constipation
 - (b) Vomiting
 - (c) Diarrhoea
 - (d) Worms in stomach
- (iv) Which of the following is infectious-?
 - (a) Cough
 - (b) Constipation
 - (c) Jaundice
 - (d) Jaundice
- (v) Which body part is affected by _____?
 - (a) Liver
 - (b) Stomach
 - (c) Intestine
 - (d) Pancreas

- (a) Ears (b) Throat
(c) Eyes (d) Mouth

2. Fill in the blanks-

- (i) Temperature _____ above the normal body temperature in fever.
 - (ii) In _____ throat as well as glands swell.
 - (iii) Prolonged cough-cold may result in _____ and _____
 - (iv) When _____ are present, worm adheres to the wall of intestines and suck blood.
 - (v) Weakening digestive system of a child is a symptom of _____
3. Explain the disease caused by worms in stomach.
 4. What are early symptoms of diseases?
 5. What are the causes of diarrhoea?
 6. Write the causes and treatment of constipation.
 7. Write in short on loss of appetite and milk vomiting.
 8. How many types of worms are found in the stomach of child?
 9. Write the main causes and treatment of cough and cold.
 10. Explain the causes and treatment for eye pain.
 11. Explain in detail convulsions and fever.
 12. Write the symptoms of goitre and eye pain.
 13. Write about the treatment of constipation and diarrhoea.
 14. Write the importance of vaccination.

ANSWERS

1. (i) a (ii) b (iii) c (iv) a (v) b
2. (i) 98.4°F
(ii) Goitre (iii) Pneumonia and Bronchitis
(iv) Worms in stomach (v) Disease