

Dysentery

Dysentery is a serious condition affecting the large intestine. It is characterized by inflammation and ulceration of the bowel, a colic pain in the region of the abdomen and passing of liquid or semi-formed stools with mucus and blood.

Symptoms

Dysentery may be acute and chronic. The acute form is characterized by pain in the abdomen, diarrhoea and dysenteric motions. Yellowish white mucus and sometimes only blood from the intestinal ulcers passes with stools. The evacuations are preceded by pain and tenesmus. The patient feels a constant desire to evacuate, although there may be nothing to throw off except a little mucus and blood. There is a feeling of pain in the rectum and along the large intestine. With the advance of the disease the quantity of mucus and blood increases. Occasionally casts or shreds of skinlike mucous membrane, from small fragments to 12 inches or so long and an inch wide, are seen to pass out with motions. Sometimes pus is also thrown out with motions and often the smell of the stools becomes very foetid. All the digestive processes are upset and secretions are changed or stopped. The saliva becomes acid instead of being alkaline and the gastric juice itself may become alkaline. The stomach loses power to digest and absorb food. The bacilli create toxins and the foetid matters formed also augment further manufacture of toxins and consequent absorption in blood.

Chronic cases are after-effects of acute attacks. The patient does not recover completely. Stool remains putrid and may contain blood, while diarrhoea and constipation may alternate, and general health is disturbed. In severe cases, the temperature may rise to 104 - 105 o F. It may occasionally become subnormal also.

Treatment

The treatment of dysentery should aim at removing the offending and toxic matter from the intestines and for alleviating painful symptoms, stopping the virulence of the bacteria and promoting healing of the ulcer.

Fasting is the only correct remedy for dysentery to bring with. The patient should fast as long as acute symptoms are present. During the period of fasting, only orange juice and water should be taken. In the alternative, the patient should subsist on buttermilk till the acute symptoms are over. Butter- milk combats offending bacteria and helps establishment of helpful micro-organisms in the intestines.

The patient may be given small doses of castor oil in the form of emulsion. This acts as a mild aperient and facilitates quicker removal of offensive matter, minimizes the strain during motion and also acts as a lubricant to the ulcerated surfaces. In addition to administration of castor oil, the mechanical removal of accumulated poisonous matter should be attempted by giving very low pressure enema, admitting as much water as the patient can tolerate. This can be done twice or thrice daily. The patient should take complete bed rest as movement induces pain and aggravates distressing symptoms. A hot water bag may be applied over the abdomen. After

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the acute symptoms are over, the patient may be allowed rice, curd, fresh ripe fruits, especially bael, banana and pomegranate and skimmed milk. Solid foods should be introduced very carefully and gradually according to the pace of recovery. Flesh foods of all kinds should be avoided in future as far as possible. Other foods which should be avoided are tea, coffee, white sugar and white flour and products made from them as well as alcohol in all forms. Foods which have a detoxifying and cleansing effect upon the intestines on their passage, through, such as fruits and vegetables, are most essential to a future dietary.

Among specific food remedies, bael fruit is, perhaps, the most efficacious in the treatment of dysentery of both the varieties. Pulp of the fruit mixed with jaggery should be given thrice daily. To deal with a chronic case of dysentery, unripe bael fruit is roasted over the fire and the pulp is mixed with water. Large quantities of the infusion so made should be administered with jaggery. The pulp of the unripe fruit mixed with an equal quantity of dried ginger can also be given with butter milk.

The use of pomegranate rind is another effective remedy for dysentery. About 60 grams should be boiled in 250 grams of milk. It should be removed from the fire when one third of the milk has evaporated. It should be administered to the patient in three equal doses at suitable intervals. It will relieve the disease very soon.

Lemon juice is very effective in dealing with ordinary cases of dysentery. A few lemons, peels and sliced, should be added to 250 ml. of water and boiled for a few minutes. The strained infusion should be administered thrice daily.

Other remedies considered useful in the treatment of dysentery are the use of small pieces of onions mixed with curd and equal parts of the tender leaves of the peepal tree, coriander leaves and sugar chewed slowly.

Reference

Shri H.K. Bakhru. (1999). Natures Cure.