14

Common Childhood Diseases

14.1 Introduction

In the previous lesson, you have learnt about various diseases, their mode of infection, symptoms and prevention. Children are more prone to diseases. They catch disease easily and recover fast too. You must learn to protect your children from diseases and also from many other problems which can be prevented, if you care a little.

In this lesson, you will learn about some diseases which are more likely to affect a child in the first few years of life.

14.2 Objectives

After reading this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain the importance of immunisation for children;
- give the immunisation schedule for children;
- group some common childhood diseases as
  a) those against which a child can be immunised
  b) those which occur repeatedly, but are not severe;
- explain the causes, symptoms and prevention of common diseases;
- take care of a sick child.

14.3 Immunisation Schedule

In the earlier lesson, you have read about immunisation. Do you remember its importance in preventing a disease?
Even though medical science has not advanced to the stage when a person could be immunised against all the diseases, immunisation against many diseases is possible. Most of the immunisation shots have to be administered during childhood- only then are they effective.

In the case of some of the diseases, immunisation has only a short term effect and therefore has to be taken repeatedly. For example, immunisation against typhoid has to be taken every year. Similarly, to guard against tetanus, you should take immunisation every year. If this is not the case, then it must be definitely taken if an injury has occurred or an accident has taken place.

On the other hand, in the case of tuberculosis, the immunisation shot taken during infancy is effective for the entire lifetime. The same is true for diphtheria, whooping cough, polio and measles also.

Timely immunisation of the child against diphtheria, whooping cough, tuberculosis, measles, chickenpox and polio, gives protection from these diseases forever.

Immunisation, however, is effective only if it is given at the right age. The following table gives you the immunisation schedule and the correct age at which immunisation against the various diseases should be given.

**IMMUNISATION SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>WHY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 3 months</td>
<td>BCG Vaccine</td>
<td>Protects against tuberculosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1½-9 months</td>
<td>3 doses of DPT and Polio vaccine at intervals of 4-6 weeks each</td>
<td>Protects against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12 months</td>
<td>Chickenpox</td>
<td>Protects against chickenpox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12 months</td>
<td>Measles vaccine</td>
<td>Protects against measles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>MMR</td>
<td>Protects against measles, mumps and rubella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>Ist booster for DPT and Polio</td>
<td>Protects against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6 years</td>
<td>DT booster</td>
<td>Protect against diphtheria and tetanus.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Vaccines are also available for Hepatitis B and typhoid and can be given depending upon the availability of the vaccine and ability of the person to pay.

As you can see, immunisation for certain diseases is given in more than one dose, spread over a few months. Each one of these doses is essential for complete protection. The second dose is called the ‘booster dose’. Remember, if at any stage you miss out on even one dose, the immunisation will not be effective and will have to be started all over again.

Immediately after the child has been immunised, you may find that the child has mild fever. However, there is no reason to worry as the fever will not last longer than a day or two.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.1

1. Fill in the blanks using words given below:
   Diphtheria, chickenpox, measles, mumps, tuberculosis, influenza, whooping cough, polio, hepatitis, short, long, booster, roaster, fourth, fifth.
   (i) Immunisation against typhoid has a ............... term effect.
   (ii) Timely immunisation against ............., ............., ............. and ........... protects the person from these diseases forever.
   (iii) Without the ............. dose, immunisation would not be effective.

14.4 Some Common Diseases

You already know how diseases are spread. Some diseases which commonly occur in children are being discussed here-their incubation period, the approximate duration of the diseases, their symptoms and the specific care to be taken for that disease.

For your convenience, we have put it all in a table.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.2

Given below are a few statements. Write ‘T’ in front of the true ones and ‘F’ in front of the false ones:-

(i) You should cover your mouth with a handkerchief when you cough.
(ii) It is harmful for joint patient and healthy person to sleep together.
(iii) There is no need to have windows in the house.
## Table 14.1 Common Diseases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the disease</th>
<th>Incubation period</th>
<th>Approximate duration</th>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Specific care and prevention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Whooping cough</td>
<td>1-3 weeks</td>
<td>A few days to several weeks</td>
<td>(i) Cough, accompanied by sudden intake of breath, producing the characteristic whooping sound. Blood may be coughed out (ii) Vomiting may follow the cough</td>
<td>(i) Give food in frequent, small amounts (ii) Early diagnosis and isolation of patient is important (iii) The disease may be prevented through immunisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Diphtheria</td>
<td>2-5 days</td>
<td>A few days</td>
<td>(i) Painful swelling of throat (ii) Difficulty in swallowing (iii) High fever (iv) Difficulty in breathing</td>
<td>(i) Early diagnosis and isolation of patient important (ii) The disease may be prevented through immunisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Measles</td>
<td>10-12 days</td>
<td>11-12 days</td>
<td>(i) Fever (ii) Cough (iii) Running nose and eyes (iv) Appearance of rash fist on the face and neck and later on the rest of the body (v) The eyes become very sensitive to light. They cannot withstand strong light.</td>
<td>(i) Continue giving food (ii) Isolate the patient (iii) Early treatment is important since chances of serious complications are very high (iv) If the skin is very itchy apply calamine lotion several times a day (v) Protect eyes from bright light (vi) Children from infected house should not be allowed to go to school (vii) The disease may be prevented through immunisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Chickenpox</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>(i) Slight fever (ii) Mild headache (iii) Rash- usually appearing first on the chest. The rash soon fills up with pus.</td>
<td>(i) Give lots of fluid (ii) Isolate the patient (iii) Calamine lotion or tincture of iodine may be applied on the skin to prevent itchiness (iv) When the coat of rash dries up and falls off, it must be collected and safely disposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mumps</td>
<td>12-26 days</td>
<td>7-10 days</td>
<td>(i) Fever (ii) Enlargement of salivary glands As a result, there is painful swelling at the sides of the face, below the ears. (iii) Difficulty in opening the mouth</td>
<td>(i) Isolate the patient (ii) Rinse mouth with salt water (iii) Only liquid and soft foods should be given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Diarrhoea</td>
<td></td>
<td>1-2 days</td>
<td>(i) Frequent defecation (ii) Loose, watery stools, greenish in colour (iii) Mild fever</td>
<td>(i) Give plenty of fluids e.g., boiled water, ‘dal’ water and juice, to the patient (ii) Give easily digestible food e.g., khichri and curd. The food should be without spices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2-4 days</td>
<td>(i) Same as in diarrhoea. In addition, however, there may be presence of blood and mucus in the faeces</td>
<td>(Same as in diarrhoea)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Incubation Period

- Whooping cough: 1-3 weeks
- Diphtheria: 2-5 days
- Measles: 10-12 days
- Chickenpox: 2 weeks
- Mumps: 12-26 days
- Diarrhoea: 1-2 days
- Dysentery: A few days

### Approximate Duration

- Whooping cough: A few days to several weeks
- Diphtheria: A few days
- Measles: 11-12 days
- Chickenpox: 3 weeks
- Mumps: 7-10 days
- Diarrhoea: 2-4 days
- Dysentery: A few days, may be longer.
(iv) The chances of catching a communicable disease are more in a crowded place.
(v) A person suffering from whooping cough does not be isolated.
(vi) In diphtheria, there is difficulty in breathing.
(vii) Measles commonly occurs in adults.
(viii) Chickenpox usually lasts for about 3 weeks.
(ix) In mumps, the rash appears first on the chest.

14.5 Minor Ailments in Children

Now, you already know about the diseases which may be dangerous but can be prevented to a large extent if the child is immunised. Apart from these, there are a few diseases which are not dangerous or fatal and only require simple treatment which can be done at home.

For example, sometimes you have headache and feel that your body is slightly warmer, that is, you have a fever, you do not go to the doctor but by simply treating yourself at home you become well again.

Minor ailments are diseases which are not dangerous and require simple treatment and subside on their own after sometime. Children keep getting one thing after the other. After about of cough and cold, there might be boils on the skin or diarrhoea or an earache or something else. These are not serious problems and you can easily deal with them at home.

For the sake of convenience, we have grouped these ailments under the following categories:

I Cough and cold
II Fevers including malaria, vomiting, constipation
III Skin infections- boils, scabies, ringworm
IV Eye infections- sore eyes, stye
V Ear infections- ear ache
VI Worm infection
VII Pain in abdomen, diarrhoea and dehydration.

If the condition does not improve after some time, it is best to consult a doctor.

Let us study these in detail now.

Dehydration
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the disease</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Prevention and Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Cough and cold</td>
<td>• Associated with diseases of throat and lungs</td>
<td>• Running nose</td>
<td>• Give steam inhalation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Viral infection spread through air</td>
<td>• Red eyes</td>
<td>• If there is sore throat, ask the patient to gargle frequently with salty, hot water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cough may be dry or wet (with sputum)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Fever</td>
<td>Associated with other diseases</td>
<td>Body temperature is more than normal 37°C, and body is hot to touch</td>
<td>Treat for the disease which is causing the fever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Skin becomes red</td>
<td>• Give plenty of fluids to drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Irritability</td>
<td>• Sponge body with cold water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>Associated with fever and diseases like measles</td>
<td>Pain in the forehead and behind eyes</td>
<td>• Place cold compress on forehead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vomiting</td>
<td>Associated with other diseases. Infection by taking contaminated food or water; by giving food which is spicy or insufficiently cooked and improper feeding techniques in case of babies</td>
<td>Baby usually brings up much more fluid than normal. Pale and loses weight</td>
<td>If accompanied by stiff neck, dizziness, vomiting and swelling, go to a doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constipation</td>
<td>Improper feeding habits</td>
<td>• Pain in abdomen</td>
<td>If vomiting continues for a longer time, give oral rehydration solution and take to the nearest doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Pain in passing stools</td>
<td>• Give boiled water with spoonful of sugar once a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Hard stools which may scratch the rectum and make it bleed.</td>
<td>• Give soft fruits like banana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Never give a newborn child any medicines to make him pass stools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Skin Infections</td>
<td>• Infection</td>
<td>• Red painful swelling of skin usually at places where hair grows, mostly on legs, arms or face</td>
<td>Give hot fomentation by putting cotton in hot water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boils</td>
<td>• Dry surroundings</td>
<td>• If neglected, develops into abscess which contains pus</td>
<td>Don’t squeeze the boil. If accompanied with fever, take to doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unclean habits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scabies</td>
<td>• Spreads by contact from person to person</td>
<td>Itching and lesions all over the body especially on skin between fingers, wrists, around waist and genitals</td>
<td>Bathe daily with soap and water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Frequent in communities with poor personal hygiene and environment sanitation</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Clothes should be boiled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Bed sheets and pillows should be exposed to sun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOAP AND WATER PREVENT SKIN INFECTIONS**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the disease</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Prevention and Cars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| IV Eye Infections  | Sore Eyes | - Infection of eyes or eyelids by contact  
- Injury by foreign body such as dust or thorns, chemicals like pesticides  
- In children suffering from measles  
|        |        | - Crusting of skin  
- Red watery eyes  
- Burning sensation and pain  
- Aversion to sunlight  
- Pus collects on the lid, margin and corners  
- Eyelids get swollen and stick  
| Wash eyes with boiled water with a pinch of salt  
- If there is an injury or foreign body in the eye, go to the doctor  
- Do not let the child play with other children  
|         |
|        | Stye | - Caused by infection in the small glands around the eyes lashes  
|        |        | - Small red swelling on eyelids  
- Pus may also be formed  
| Hot fermentation 2-3 times a day  
- If one eye is affected, do not touch the other eye  
- Wash eyes with clean water. Do not squeeze the stye as this spreads the infection  
|         |
| V Ear Infections | Ear ache | - Infection associated with ailments like cough and cold  
- Cleaning the ear with match sticks, hair pins, etc.  
|        |        | - Discharge and pain in the ear  
- Fever  
| Treat immediately before the drum perforates (breaks)  
- If there is discharge, clean gently with cotton swab before putting ear drops prescribed by the doctor  
|         |
| VI Worm Infestation | Thread Worm Infestation | - Spreads through dirty finger nails and improper personal hygiene  
- Worms live in large intestines and rectum. They come out at night to lay eggs  
|        |        | - Irritation around the anus  
- Worms are seen in stool as 1 cm long white or pink thread like creatures  
| Nails must be cut short  
- Maintain personal cleanliness  
|         |
|        | Hook Worm Infestation | - Infection acquired from walking bare foot on contaminated soil  
|        |        | - Worms in small intestine suck the blood causing anemia.  
| Ensure adequate and proper disposal of sewage.  
- Take the patient to doctor for deworming  
- Deworming of all children should be done every six months  
|         |
|        | Round Worm Infestation | - Poor hygienic conditions  
- Improper disposal of sewage  
- Impure water and contaminated vegetables  
- Children acquire infection through the habit of eating mud.  
|        |        | - Very hungry initially but lose appetite later on  
- Becomes listless and develop swollen abdomen  
- If in large number, acute intestinal obstruction and pain accompanied with vomiting  
| Soft diet with no spices  
- If accompanied by fever and vomiting take to the doctor  
|         |
| VIII Pain in abdomen | Stomach ache | - Can be due to worm infestation  
- Indigestion  
- Uncooked food/stale food  
- Constipation  
|        |        | - Severe pain in stomach  
- Difficulty in passing urine  
- Vomiting and fever  
| The water and salts lost must be replaced  
- Give oral rehydration solution  
- If severe dehydration, take the patient to doctor as it can be fatal  
|         |
|        | Diarrhoea and dehydration | - Caused by germs or parasites which live in dust, dirty water and stools  
- Unhygienic conditions in and around home  
- Personal hygiene not observed.  
|        |        | - Loose watery stools which leads to dehydration  
- Feels thirsty  
- Sunken eyes  
- Weight loss and weakness  
- Does not pass urine for hours together  
- Skin elasticity is lost.  

Diarrhoea is very common in children. As you know, in diarrhoea, the faeces are watery and defaecation occurs many times during the day; as many as 15-20 times. As a result, a lot of water and mineral salts are lost from the body. This condition is called dehydration.

Dehydration can lead to death.

In fact, every year, thousands of children in our country die because of dehydration. This is all the more sad because their lives could have been saved so easily.

To prevent dehydration, take a glass of water (boiled and cooled). Mix in a handful of sugar and a pinch of salt. Make the patient drink it frequently, at least after every defaecation.

This should be done not only in the case of diarrhoea, but also in dysentery and cholera.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.3**

Select the most appropriate answer.

1. A person is said to have fever when the body temperature rises above
   A. 37.8°C
   B. 37.5°C
   C. 37°C
   D. 36.4°C

2. Malaria is caused through the bite of a
   A. fly
   B. mosquito
   C. rat
   D. louse

3. In order to diagnose malaria, it is necessary to have a
   A. Blood test
   B. Urine test
   C. Stool test
   D. sputum test

4. Scabies spreads through
   A. insect bites
   B. dog bites
5. A child with sore eyes should not be allowed to
   A. sleep
   B. wear spectacles
   C. play with other children
   D. bath

6. A person suffering from diarrhoea must be given
   A. nothing to drink
   B. only small quantities of water
   C. a lot of water
   D. a lot of water containing sugar and salt

14.6 Feeding and Care of Sick Child

A sick child needs nutrition, so that he/she can fight the disease. Many diseases can turn out to be dangerous, if proper care is not taken. Some times when you are sick, you must have felt that you do not feel like eating. But it is wrong. When one is sick one needs proper food. This is more important in case of children.

Following are a few tips on feeding and care of a sick child:

- If the child is on breast milk, continue breast feeding the child during illness as it helps to fight the infection and protects the child.
- Small meals of soft cooked foods at frequent intervals must be given to help the child recover faster.
- A sick child must drink plenty of fluids such as water, tea, milk, etc. During fever children sweat a lot. They can become dehydrated.
- A child suffering from fever must be kept cool. It is necessary to uncover the body. If the fever is high, wipe the body with a cool towel, or give a cold water bath.
- The sick child should be kept in a clean, well ventilated room.
- Avoid contact with sore eyes or skin infections and prevent use of clothes, towels of people suffering from these infections.
- In many cases, medication is not required but doctor’s advice may be sought.
- Seek medical attention immediately for complications.
14.7 What You Have Learnt

**COMMON CHILDHOOD DISEASES AND ALIMENTS**

**DISEASES**
- Diptheria
- Polio
- Tuberculosis
- Chickenpox
- Measles
- Whooping cough

**AILMENTS**
- Cough and cold
- Skin infection
- Ear infection
- Pain in abdomen
- Fever
- Eye infection
- Worm infection

Need immunization
Need symptomatic treatment

14.8 Terminal Exercise

1. How would you look after a child suffering from diarrhoea?

2. How does immunisation help in protecting the body from diseases?

3. Match the disease in column A with the symptoms in column B:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Tuberculosis</td>
<td>(a) Cold, cough, sneezing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Diphtheria</td>
<td>(b) Pus-containing rash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Influenza</td>
<td>(c) Cough accompanied by whooping sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Measles</td>
<td>(d) Persistent cough and loss of weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Chickenpox</td>
<td>(e) Stiff neck, back bent like a bow, severe pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Tetanus</td>
<td>(f) Rash that appears first on the face and chest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(g) Difficulty in swallowing and breathing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(h) Swelling of salivary glands.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. How can you prevent a child from getting dehydrated?
5. What points will you consider regarding the diet of a sick child?
6. What steps will you take to make a child suffering from fever, comfortable at home?

14.9 Answers to Intext Questions

14.1 1. (i) short

   (ii) diphtheria, measles, tuberculosis, whooping cough, polio, chickenpox.

   (iii) booster

14.2 (i) T (ii) F (iii) F (iv) T (v) F (vi) T (vii) F (viii) T (ix) F

14.3 (1) (c) (2) (b) (3) (a) (4) (c) (5) (c) (6) (d)