



Health Connect

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Greetings from GHPL!

Each month we try to provide information which would lead to positive health changes. Summers are filled with fun for children and busy times for adults. Vacations and travel have their side effects too. One has to take extra care during summers and hence we have some 'Summer Care' tips for you in this issue.

In the focus article we have dealt with Meningitis which if detected in an early stage can be cured. It causes more than 1.3 lakhs death a year worldwide and prevention through vaccination is the best way to combat this.

With the new Health regulations in place and the guidelines on 'standardization in health terms' released by IRDA one can see a positive change coming in the health insurance segment. With the clearance for rate hike received from IRDA, the rate for individual health insurance is set to rise by around 20% this year whereas the Group health insurance rates are expected to remain stable.

We've introduced a new feature 'Daadi Maa kee Potli (From the Grandmother's closet) dealing with generations old home remedies. Hope you like it!

We hope you find this issue informative and enjoyable and look forward for your feedback!


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Meningitis

The word "meningitis" comes from the Modern Latin word *meninga* and the Greek word *Menix* meaning "membrane". The suffix *itis* comes from the Greek word meaning "pertaining to". The membranes that surround the brain and the spinal cord are collectively known as the meninges and meningitis means inflammation of the meninges. The inflammation may be caused by infection with viruses, bacteria, or other microorganisms and less commonly by certain drugs. Meningitis can be life-threatening because of the inflammation's proximity to the brain and spinal cord. Therefore the condition is classified as a medical emergency.

Types of Meningitis

Viral meningitis

Viral meningitis is the most common one and is rarely a serious infection. It can be caused by a number of different viruses, such as mosquito-borne viruses. There is no specific treatment for this type of meningitis. In majority of cases the illness resolves itself within a week without any complications.

Bacterial Meningitis

Bacterial meningitis, formerly called spinal meningitis, is a very serious and potentially fatal infection. It can progress quickly and can lead to death, so it is essential that it be diagnosed and treated as soon as possible. It can cause serious complications such as, brain damage, hearing loss or learning disabilities due to its contagious nature. It spreads through secretions from the mouth or nose.

There are several pathogens (types of germs) that can cause bacterial meningitis but the most common of those are *Neisseria meningitidis*, *Haemophilus influenza* and *Streptococcus pneumoniae*.

It is important to identify the bacteria so that an appropriate antibiotic can be prescribed. With effective vaccines to help prevent all the three types of bacteria, bacterial meningitis occurs less often.

Fungal Meningitis

Fungal meningitis is an infection of the meninges, which is caused by fungus. It is



Daadi Maa Kee Potli (from the Grandmother's closet)



When the season changes to summer one is most likely to get affected with common summer illnesses like sore throat, cold, fever etc. The traditional Indian age old home remedies are available to cure an ailment or disease with the help of certain spices, vegetables or other common items. Home remedies are typically passed through the generations by elderly persons at home as a result of tradition. A significant number, however, have been demonstrated to effectively treat ailments such as sprains, headaches, fevers and even the common cold. However, it is advised to use this remedy by applying the principles of common sense. Depending on the severity of the condition one should approach a medical practitioner.

Here are some home remedies for the most common summer illness 'Sunburn'.



- Apply mixture of 2 tbsp of oatmeal + 1 bowl of crushed papaya + 1 tbsp of honey; Wash with cold water after 20-30 mins.
- Apply mixture of (Juice of 1 bowl of crushed cucumber + 2 tbsp of lemon juice); Wash with cold water after 15-20 mins.
- Apply mixture of 2 tbsp of lemon juice + 4 tbsp of honey; Wash with lukewarm water after 15-20 mins.



Slit open a broad leaf of Aloe vera and apply the gel directly to the burnt area for 5-6 times a day.

- Apply sliced cucumber or potato on the sun-burnt area
- Apply mixture of tomato juice and buttermilk (in the ratio of 1:6) wash after 30 mins.
- Apply Boiled and mashed cabbage leaves over the sun-burnt areas. Wash after 15 mins.
- Apply paste of sandalwood powder and water. It provides relief from the burning sensation
- Apply nutmeg and rosewater paste by adding equal parts of pea flower, sandalwood and coriander powders

Take Care!!!

most common in patients who have a weakened immune system like those with AIDS, cancer, etc.

There are several types of fungi which can cause meningitis and the most common type is Cryptococcus. It is not contagious. Fungal meningitis may be an after effect of taking medications that weaken the immune system. Examples of these medications include steroids (such as prednisone), medications given after organ transplantation, etc.

Symptoms

In very young children, symptoms may be particularly hard to detect. Babies may be cranky and refuse to eat and may have a rash and cry when held. Young children may act like they have flu. They may cough or have trouble breathing. Older adults and people with other medical problems may have only a slight headache and fever. A person in later stages of bacterial and fungal meningitis may have seizures and lose consciousness.

Common symptoms

- Headache
- Fever
- Stiff neck

Other symptoms:

- Sensitivity to light
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Drowsiness
- Confusion

Diagnosis

A doctor can make a quick diagnosis by withdrawing a small sample of the spinal fluid for examination. This procedure is called a lumbar puncture (spinal tap). It involves inserting a needle into the middle of the lower back and collecting some drops of fluid. Laboratory analysis of the spinal fluid will confirm if the meninges are infected. In mild forms of meningitis the lumbar puncture may alleviate a patient's headache, possibly by reducing the fluid's pressure on the meninges.

Blood tests are also taken to look for the germ in the blood and to check that the patient is otherwise healthy. In newborns, it may also be checked by fluid in their stomach with a small tube passed down the throat and test their faeces for the presence of suspected germs.

Diagnosis cannot be made through imaging tests, such as X rays or ultrasound. However, these tests can be used to insure that there is no damage to the brain from pressure or the accumulation of fluid.

Treatment

Meningitis is potentially life-threatening and has a high mortality rate if untreated or if treatment is delayed. Treatment for meningitis depends on the organism causing the infection, age, the extent of the

Meningitis... contd... # 2

infection, and the presence of other medical conditions or complications of meningitis.

Bacterial meningitis treatment involves strong doses of intravenous antibiotics. Steroids may be used to relieve brain pressure and swelling and to prevent hearing loss that is common in patients with *Haemophilus influenzae* meningitis. Sedatives may be given to make patients more comfortable. Depending on the source of infection, infected sinuses may need to be drained as part of treating meningitis.

Unlike bacteria, viruses cannot be killed by antibiotics. Therefore most viral meningitis treatment does not involve medications to kill the virus. An exception is the herpes virus, which can be treated with the antiviral drug acyclovir. Patients with mild viral meningitis may be allowed to stay at home, while those who have a more serious infection may be hospitalized for supportive care. Fungal meningitis treatment involves intravenous antifungal medications.

Oxygen may be given if patients have trouble breathing and to increase the amount of oxygen in all parts of the body.

Preventive Tips

- Good personal hygiene
- Regular exercise
- Healthy diet
- Sufficient rest
- Avoid sharing objects and food with a infected person
- Wash hands often with soap and rinse under running water.
- Cover your mouth and nose while coughing or sneezing.

Conclusion

Bacterial meningitis as we understand is a potentially fatal disease. There are a number of vaccines available that will protect against some of the different types of meningitis; however there is no single vaccine which will protect against all types of meningitis. It is important to get the right vaccines in meningitis. Few countries have included immunization against *Haemophilus influenzae* type B in their routine childhood vaccination schemes. This has practically eliminated this pathogen as a cause of meningitis in young children in those countries.

Despite the vaccines available even today antibiotics are the most common form of treatment. People need to be educated about the vaccines to prevent contracting this disease.

Summer Care

The scorching summer is back ...and along with it comes the countless summer woes! The temperature is soaring and hot winds have already started to blow. Though it is time to enjoy wearing cool and crisp cottons, head to the pool and enjoy chilled shakes and salads, there is a fear of sun burn, tanning, sun-stroke, dehydration, etc. running at the back of the mind.



During summer the water borne diseases like cholera, typhoid, jaundice, dysentery, diarrhea, etc. are very common. Since, the warm weather is a breeding ground for bacteria, food poisoning and occurrence of diseases due to food infection is also more during summer days. Summer may turn bad for health especially for skin and digestion. So, nourish the body with plenty of vitamins and minerals without adding extra pounds. Here are some dos and don'ts for this summer season.



- Drink plenty of water (atleast 8-10 glasses)
- Drink coconut water, lemon juice, buttermilk, fruit juices, etc.
- Use *tulsi* (holy basil) or *sabja* (basil) seeds in drinks as this has a very cooling effect
- Diet should be rich of citrus fruits and veggies
- Wear sun protective and loose clothing whenever you venture outdoors
- Sunglasses on your eyes is a must
- Wash your eyes and face atleast 4-5 times in a day with cold water
- Bathe twice a day
- Avoid fried food as it slows down the digestive process
- Reduce tea and coffee as it causes increased urination leading to water loss and dryness of skin.
- Avoid Cigarettes and alcohol and also carbonated or fizzy drinks.
- Avoid sun exposure between 10:00 am - 4:00 pm, since the ultraviolet rays are at their peak.

Conclusion

The season offers a great opportunity to nourish your body with numerous fresh food options, abandon the TV for outdoor activities, dress up in eye-catching fluorescent colours and enjoy the fragrance of fresh jasmine in the pots lining your balcony. So make the most of the season by taking good care of health.

