

Childhood Asthma

Introduction

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Dr.K.Senthil Kumaran

Asthma is a common disease in children and adults alike. It is a chronic inflammatory disease of the airways, experienced when there is an inflammation of the airways restricting the oxygen that flows in the lungs and which should be expelled afterwards. Simply asthma in children is called as childhood asthma. When translated in a medical language, it is called asthmatic Bronchitis. Asthma means panting (Breathlessness).

Symptoms of asthma are variable. That means that they can be mild to severe, intermittent to chronic. The one point to remember is that even when symptoms are mild, asthma should not be ignored, Untreated or under treated, asthma can lead to severe respiratory distress and in rare cases, sudden death. Asthma is the most common chronic disease of childhood affecting 12.5 % of children.

Pathophysiology

- Let us briefly understand the structure and functions of the lungs. The lungs are two cone shaped vital organs on either side of the chest. Air which we breathe through the nose enters into the lungs through the air tube (called Trachea) which bifurcates into two tubes, each going to the respective lungs. Each of the bronchus (Plural Bronchi) branches into multiple, innumerable small tubes called bronchioles. The bronchioles lead to terminal sacs called alveoli. The air eventually passes through the bronchioles to the alveoli to exchange CO₂ with oxygen in return.

A u t h o r

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• In the normal circumstances, there is a clear passage in the bronchi and the bronchioles facilitating effortless breathing process. In case of the asthmatic episode, due to certain factors the bronchi and the bronchioles go into spasm leading to obstructed air passage, not allowing the oxygen to go across. This is a typical phenomenon of the acute asthmatic episode. As a result of the entire process, which involved spasm and an inflammation of the lung tubules, the child may present with cough, difficult breathing (Called Dyspnea), panting and weakness.

Pre-disposing factors

1. Allergic - Pet dander, pollen and dust mites etc
2. Non-allergic - Exercise, viral infections, smoke or other irritants

Our immune system is designed to defend against invasions of bacteria and viruses.

Our medicines makes easy to help the immune system to work faster.

Risk factors

- A family history of allergy, eczema and asthma.
- Smoking in the home increases the risk of asthma.
- House dust and dust mites are also risk factors. There is evidence that early exposure to large amounts of house dust and dust mites increases the risk for asthma
- Premature Births. Asthma is also more prevalent in premature infants, those born at less than 36 weeks of gestation
- Pets should be avoided in families where allergic disease such as hay fever and eczema exist.

Symptoms

Asthma in children comprises of a set of variable symptoms. The onset of asthma may have typical cold and running of the nose, sneezing, nose block, sore throat, with or without fever. Then the symptoms might settle to the chest producing cough and congestion, leading to the typical chest spasm which is described as a wheeze in common language.

Asthma Categories

The severity of a child's asthma symptoms will fall into one of four main categories of asthma, each with different characteristics and requiring different treatment approaches:

1. Mild intermittent asthma

A child who has brief episodes of wheezing, coughing, or shortness of breath no more than twice a week is said to have mild intermittent asthma. Symptoms between flare-ups are rare, with one or two instances per month of mild symptoms at night.

2. Mild persistent asthma

Kids with episodes of wheezing, coughing, or shortness of breath more than twice a week but less than once a day are said to have mild persistent asthma. Symptoms usually happen at least twice a month at night and flare-ups may affect normal physical activity.

3. Moderate persistent asthma

Kids with moderate persistent asthma have daily symptoms and need daily medicine. Nighttime symptoms happen more than once a week. Flare-ups occur more than twice a week, last for several days, and usually affect normal physical activity.

4. Severe persistent asthma

Kids with severe persistent asthma have symptoms continuously. They tend to have frequent flare-ups that may require emergency treatment and even hospitalization. Many kids with severe persistent asthma have symptoms at night and can handle only limited physical activity.

Diagnosis

A typical and full-fledged episode of asthma could be diagnosed without difficulty by parents as well as by the suffering child. When the attending physician auscultates the chest with a stethoscope, a diagnostic broncho- spasm (wheeze) may be found which confirms the diagnosis. Additional clinical test with a small device called Spirometer which is used to decide the flow of air inhaled and exhaled. In brief, this device is used to judge the extent of the airway obstruction. The tests with the Spirometer are also called Pulmonary Functions Tests (PFT).

Treatment

Child asthma finds amazing cure with homeopathic treatment. Many pediatricians (Child specialist doctors) in India opt for getting their own children treated for asthma using homeopathy. Homeopathy drastically reduces the frequency of attacks of asthma; reduce severity as well as duration of attack. Also, after using homeopathic treatment, most children may not require use of steroid inhalers as often. It also helps reducing the frequency of cold. The length of the treatment, dosage and frequency are very patient-specific and depend on how deep and reversible the pathology is. The power and beauty of homeopathy lies in its individual approach to each patient.

Natrum Sulph

It is one of the most important natural homeopathic medicine for treating chronic asthma. This homeopathic remedy is often asked for treating asthma in children. Dr Kent (a 19th century homeopathic pioneer), in an essay on homeopathic remedy Natrum Sulph says: "If a child has asthma, give Natrum Sulph as the first remedy". It is very useful when asthma is hereditary. Often, asthma that gets aggravated in humid weather and dampness, requires this homeopathic medicine Natrum Sulph. Wheezing is very important symptom for Homeopathic remedy Natrum Sulph to be used.

Arsenic Album

It is one of the best homeopathic remedy for all forms of asthma. It is beneficial both in the acute phase and the chronic state. It is often indicated when attacks are frequent during night (midnight and after), accompanied with great restlessness and fear of suffocation on lying down. According to J.H. Clarke (a major homeopath also of the 19th century) an inter-current course of Bacillinum will often make a wonderful change in patients -who have a personal or family history of asthma and chest infections. This homeopathic medicine is a deep-acting and is required for those patients who have asthma and are very sensitive to cold, having a personal or family history of tuberculosis.

Many asthmatics can relate the origin to an attack of pneumonia. A few doses of this natural medicine Kali Carb can work wonders for them. Homeopathic medicine Kali Carb is also indicated in asthma

attacks that occur early in the morning.

Sambuccus

Homeopathic Medicine for asthma in children

Kali Bichrome

For asthma when attacks occur in after midnight. Farrington calls Homeopathic medicine Kali Bichrome a "certain remedy" if attacks are after-midnight (from 3 a.m to 4 a.m). Relief is obtained from sitting up and bending forward, and from the expectoration of stringy mucus. It is indicated for attacks that are liable to return in winter. It is also useful in bronchial asthmatic breathing.

Nux Vomica

Homeopathic Remedy when there are gastric symptoms with Asthma. Nux Vomica is for difficult breathing associated with a feeling of fullness and heaviness in the stomach, particularly manifested after a major meal. The symptoms are aggravated after the meal, in the morning, and are increased by cold air. Belching provides relief to symptoms of asthma. It is sometimes useful also in difficult breathing arising from gastric disturbance.

Carbo Veg

Where there is much abdominal irritation present with much flatulence (gas), Carbo Veg should be thought off. Carbo Veg also corresponds to asthma in the aged who are much debilitated and are in search of breath. Passing of wind gives relief. Homeopathic remedies Nux Vomica and Carbo Veg are invaluable in controlling acute asthmatic attacks. Self-medication should be avoided in such chronic disorders.

Arsenic album, Heparsulph, Ipecac, Natrum Sulph, Aconite, Blattaorientalis are the top homeopathic wheezing remedies.

Homeopathic Remedies for Asthma Cough-Drsoera, Antim tart, Phosphorus are best suited for cough that occurs with asthma.

Homeopathy for Asthma and Allergies-Asthma is in itself a form of allergy but it can co-exist with other symptoms of nasal and skin allergy. Homeopathic medicine Arsenic, Histaminum and Allium cepa is one of the top grade homeopathic medicines when asthma is present with nasal allergy.