

Homoeopathic Treatment of Diarrhoea

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1. Definition

Diarrhoea is defined as the passage of three or more loose stools per day or more frequent passage than is normal for the individual.

2. Introduction

This article discusses the homoeopathic treatment of diarrhoea. In diarrhoea, stools are frequent, loose or liquid. There may exist some crampy abdominal pain (colic) which generally reduces after a stool is passed. This is quite common and usually not a cause of serious concern.. Looseness of stool varies as it could be soft or watery. Diarrhoea usually lasts for about 2-3 days, but can sometimes last for weeks. In many cases diarrhea goes away without any treatment.

Acute diarrhoea– comes suddenly and lasts for a brief time.

Chronic diarrhoea– affects someone for an extended period of time.

Criteria for Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is present if one of the following criteria is fulfilled:

- Frequent defecation: > three times per day
- Altered stool consistency: water content > 75%
- Increase in stool quantity: more than 200–250 g per day
- Acute diarrhoea: lasting less than 14 days
- Chronic diarrhoea: lasting more than 14 days

Homoeopathic view

Homoeopathy treats the person as a whole. It means that the medicine for diarrhoea in homoeopathic treatment focuses on the patient as a person, as well as his pathological condition. The homoeopathic medicines for diarrhoea are selected after a full individualized examination and case-analysis, which includes the medical history of the patient, physical and mental constitution etc.

A miasmatic tendency (predisposition/susceptibility) is also often taken into account for the treatment of chronic conditions. The homoeopathic medicine for diarrhoea given below indicate the therapeutic affinity but this is not a complete and definite guide to the treatment of this condition.

The symptoms listed against each medicine may not be directly related to this disease because in homoeopathy general symptoms and constitutional indications are also taken into account for selecting a homoeopathic remedy for diarrhoea.

Arsenicum Album

Stools in small quantities. Restlessness, anguish and intolerance of pain. Thirst for small quantities and often. The prostration and weakness are out of all proportion to stool. Burning in the rectum, which almost amounts to a tenesmus. The stools of arsenicum are dark yellow, undigested, slimy or bloody; they are often dark green and very offensive; they are worse at night and after eating or drinking. An additional indication, is chilling of the stomach by cold food, ice water or ice cream. It is also the remedy for diarrhea from tainted food and so-called ptomaine poisoning.

Veratrum Album

The stools of Veratrum are watery, containing therein flakes, and are commonly called rice-water discharges. Preceding the stool is a severe pinching colic in the abdomen, and this pain is apt to continue during the stool. Nausea, too is often an accompaniment. Cramps in the feet and legs may also be present. Among the prominent general symptoms of Veratrum is the great thirst for very cold water in large quantities.

Cinchona officinalis

The stool is undigested. The characteristic Cinchona diarrhea is a painless one, of a cadaverous odour. It is slimy, bilious, blackish and mixed with undigested food; it is worse at night and after eating, with a rapid exhaustion and emaciation, and this exhaustion, emaciation and debility at once distinguish the remedy from Phosphoric acid, which is similar, lacking the debility. The Cinchona diarrhoea is worse after eating. If it be caused or made worse by fruit. It is a great remedy for summer diarrhoea. It is also good for the chronic diarrhoea of aged persons.

Sulphur

- It has changeable stools, yellow, watery, slimy, and in scrofulous children may contain undigested food.
- It is worse in the morning about four or five O'clock, when it weakens the patient and drives him out of bed in great haste.
- There is a tendency for rectal soreness, there is itching and soreness at the anus, the stools being acrid and excoriating.
The stools of Sulphur are offensive and the odor of the stool follows the patient about as if he had soiled himself. The stools often alternate between constipation and diarrhea, and if haemorrhoids be present it is an additional good indication for Sulphur.
- A diarrhea of mucus streaked with blood, preceded by colic, is also often found under the remedy.

Aloes socotrina

It produces a constant desire to stool, and the passages are accompanied with a great deal of flatus. Feeling of

uneasiness, weakness, and certainly about the rectum; there is a constant feeling as if stool would escape, the patient dares not pass flatus for fear of the escape of faeces. This condition is met in children sometimes, they pass faeces when passing flatus. It is worse from eating but it seldom continues during the day. The weakness of the sphincter ani. The Aloes patient will also pass stool when urinating. Haemorrhoids which are characteristically swollen and sore accompanying the Aloes stool. The stool themselves are yellow and pasty or lumpy and watery, and before the stool there are gripping pains across the lower part of the abdomen and around the navel. These pains also continue during stool and relieved after passage of stool.

Croton tiglium

Its characteristics are a yellowish, watery stool pouring out like water from a hydrant, and especially associated with nausea and vomiting and aggravated by eating and drinking. This has a stool expelled "all at once", with much relief following. Stools thin and watery.

Rheum

- Sourness of stools and of the whole body.
- They may be wanting in sourness. Debility is also characteristic of the remedy. Gripping colic often followed by tenesmus.
- In color, the stools are brown and frothy, and usually sour; they are worse from motion and after eating. Chilliness during stool is also characteristic.
- The continuance of the colic after the stool also suggests the remedy.

Podophyllum

Podophyllum has an early morning diarrhoea. The stools are watery, yellow, profuse, forcible and occur without pain any time from three o'clock to nine in the morning, and a natural stool is apt to follow later in the day. It occurs, too, immediately after eating and colic, which is relieved by warmth and bending forward. Sensation of great weakness in the abdomen and rectum, this weakness of the rectum being a great characteristic of the remedy. The rectum prolapses before the faeces are evacuated; here it differs from the prolapses of rectum. Podophyllum has proved useful in the diarrhoea of dentition when cerebral symptoms are present. Sometimes headache alternates with diarrhoea.

Mercurius

- Straining at stool is the great characteristic of Mercurius, and this is more marked under Mercurius corosivus than under the solubilis.
- The former is the great homoeopathic remedy for dysentery.
- The stools of Mercury are slimy and bloody, accompanied by a straining and tenesmus which does not seem to let up; so we have what is characteristically described as a never-get-done-feeling.
- There is accompanying, much hepatic soreness, flabby tongue taking imprint of the teeth, and before the stool there is violent urging and perhaps chilliness. A sickly smell from the mouth is characteristic of the remedy. Prolapsus of the rectum may follow the stool.

Calcarea

- Calcarea should never be overlooked in any intestinal trouble; it is one of the great remedies for sour stools, and for undigested stools.
- It is one of the best remedies for chronic diarrhoea, Diarrhoea occurring during dentition in infants with open fontanelles calls for Calcarea. Calcarea carbonica is more suited to fat children.
- In the Calcarea carbonica patient there is usually a ravenous appetite, and, as in Phosphoric acid, the stools do not seem to weaken.

Phosphorous

- Phosphorous is especially a remedy for chronic forms of diarrhoea.
- It has green mucous stools worse in the morning, often undigested and painless. The stools pass as soon as they enter the rectum, and contain white particles like rice or tallow.
- Chronic, painless diarrhoea of undigested food.
- Stools are profuse and forcible and aggravated by warm food, and the patient often vomits; in fact, one of the characteristics of Phosphorous is the vomiting of what has been drunk as soon as it becomes warm in the stomach.
- With the diarrhoea there is a weak, gone feeling in the stomach, and perhaps burning between the shoulders.
- The frog spawn, or sago, or grain of tallow stool is most characteristic of the remedy.

Argentum nitricum

- The stools are green, slimy and bloody, like chopped spinach in flakes.
- With the stool there is a discharge of flatus and much spluttering, as in Calcarea Phosphorica.
- The stools are worse from any candy, sugar, or from drinking.
- The sudden attacks of cholera infantum in children who have eaten too much candy.
- The children are thin, dried up looking,
- Diarrhoea brought on by great mental excitement, emotional disturbance, etc.

Gelsemium

- It is one of the most prominent remedies for diarrhea produced by fright or fear; it appears suddenly and the stools are yellow and papescent.

What causes Acute Diarrhoea?

- Food poisoning
- Gastroenteritis (treatment of travellers' diarrhea)
- Anxiety
- Sometimes treatment with an antibiotic
- Alcohol (to excess)

What causes Chronic Diarrhoea?

A wide range of problems can cause chronic diarrhea; some of the most common causes include-

Irritable bowel syndrome — It is one of the most common causes of chronic diarrhea.

Inflammatory bowel disease — Crohn disease and ulcerative colitis. These conditions may develop when the body's immune system attacks parts of the digestive tract.

Infections — Intestinal infections are a cause of chronic diarrhea. Intestinal infections can develop after eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water or unpasteurized milk or in people who travel or live in tropical or developing countries.

Endocrine disorders — an overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism) can cause chronic diarrhoea and weight loss. Diabetes can cause chronic diarrhoea if the nerves that supply the digestive tract are injured.

Food allergy or sensitivity — Food allergies and hypersensitivity can cause chronic diarrhoea. People with coeliac disease are sensitive to gluten, a major component of wheat flour which can cause diarrhoea and weight loss.

The workup for diarrhea includes a detailed patient history (e.g., recent travel), physical examination, and laboratory tests to assess severe cases.

Symptoms of diarrhoea

Symptoms depend upon the cause and can vary between acute and chronic diarrhoea.

- Abdominal bloating
- Cramps
- Loose, watery, unformed stool
- Urgency of stools
- Undigested stools
- Weight loss
- Lethargy, weakness
- Recurrent urging
- Inability to control stools
- If diarrhoea persists for longer patient may become dehydrated.

Laboratory tests for Diarrhoea

Laboratory tests are usually not required in acute cases and but needed in diagnosis of severe or chronic disease.

a) Indications for investigation in case of diarrhoea.

- Diarrhea lasting > 4 days
- High fever
- Blood in stools
- Possibility of Irritable bowel syndrome.
- Autoimmune diseases or Immuno-suppression

b) Tests

- CBC: may show anemia or leukocytosis
- Stool examination for Blood, ova and parasites
- Bacterial stool culture
- Indications: suspicion of invasive bacterial enteritis, moderate to severe illness

c) Imaging

- Colonoscopy: in patients with chronic diarrhea without identifiable cause
- CT: if diverticulitis or Irritable bowel syndrome is suspected

Conventional treatment for Diarrhoea

Most cases of acute diarrhea are self-limited, treatment is symptomatic, focusing on oral rehydration, and rarely requires medication.

Supportive treatment includes

- Rehydration (especially in children)
- Mild to moderate dehydration: oral administration of electrolyte-containing fluids (e.g., apple juice or lemonade)
- Severe cases: needs hospitalization; hydration with intravenous fluid.

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