

GERD- Scope and Limitations of Homoeopathy

Homeopathy has a real answer to cases of GERD even in cases who don't show improvement even after lifestyle modifications. Homeopathic medicine when given on constitutional basis removes the person's tendency to acidity.

Gastro-oesophageal reflux resulting in heartburn affects approximately 30% of the general population.² Occasional episodes of gastro-oesophageal reflux are common in healthy individuals. Reflux is normally followed by oesophageal peristaltic waves that efficiently clear the gullet, alkaline saliva neutralises residual acid and symptoms do not occur. Indigestion is a nonspecific term that encompasses a variety of upper abdominal complaints including heartburn, regurgitation, and dyspepsia (upper abdominal discomfort or pain). These symptoms are overwhelmingly due to gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).¹

Pathophysiology

Gastroesophageal reflux disease develops when the oesophageal mucosa is exposed to gastroduodenal contents for prolonged periods of time, resulting in symptoms and, in a proportion of cases, oesophagitis.²

This can occur due to gastric motor dysfunction, or visceral afferent hypersensitivity. A wide variety of situations promote GERD like:

- **Gastric contents**
Gastric acid is the most important oesophageal irritant and there is a close relationship between acid exposure time and symptoms. Pepsin and bile also contribute to mucosal injury.²
- **Defective gastric emptying**
Gastric emptying is delayed in patients with gastro-oesophageal reflux disease. The reason is unknown.²
- **Increased intra-abdominal pressure**
Pregnancy and obesity are established predisposing causes. Weight loss may improve symptoms.²
- **Dietary and environmental factors**
Dietary fat, chocolate, alcohol, tea and coffee relax the lower oesophageal sphincter and may provoke symptoms. The foods that trigger symptoms vary widely between affected individuals.²
- **Patient factors**
Visceral sensitivity and patient vigilance play a role in

determining symptom severity and consulting behaviour in individual patients.² Certain medications can cause the trigger.

- **Abnormalities of the lower oesophageal sphincter:**
The lower oesophageal sphincter is tonically contracted under normal circumstances, relaxing only during swallowing but in some patients with gastro-oesophageal reflux disease has reduced lower oesophageal sphincter tone, permitting reflux when intra-abdominal pressure rises. In others, basal sphincter tone is normal but reflux occurs in response to frequent episodes of inappropriate sphincter relaxation.²

Other factors that can contribute to GERD:

- Pertain medications
- Smoking
- Ageing
- Food allergies
- Hiatus hernia
- Lying down immediately after eating
- Stress



Clinical Features/Signs and Symptoms

- Heartburn and regurgitation < bending, straining or lying down
- Waterbrash', which is salivation due to reflex salivary gland stimulation as acid enters the gullet, is often present.
- Some patients are woken at night by choking as refluxed fluid irritates the larynx
- Difficulty swallowing
- Odynophagia or dysphagia
- Dry cough
- Hoarseness ('acid laryngitis'), or sore throat
- Atypical chest pain that may be severe and can mimic angina; it may be due to reflux-induced oesophageal spasm.

Evaluation

The presence of dysphagia, odynophagia, unexplained weight loss, recurrent vomiting leading to dehydration, occult or gross bleeding, or a palpable mass or adenopathy are all "alarm" signals that demand directed radiographic, endoscopic, and surgical evaluation. Pts without

alarm features are generally treated empirically. Individuals >45 years can be tested for the presence of H. pylori. Pts positive for the infection are treated to eradicate the organism. Pts who fail to respond to H. pylori treatment, those >45 years old, and those with alarm factors generally undergo upper GI endoscopy.¹

Hiatus hernia causes reflux because the pressure gradient is lost between the abdominal and thoracic cavities, which normally pinches the hiatus. In addition, the oblique angle between the cardia and oesophagus disappears. Many patients who have large hiatus hernias develop reflux symptoms but the relationship between the presence of a hernia and symptoms is poor. Hiatus hernia is very common in individuals who have no symptoms, and some symptomatic patients have only a very small or no hernia. Nevertheless, almost all patients who develop oesophagitis, Barrett's oesophagus or peptic strictures have a hiatus hernia.² scope of homeopathy where there is Hiatus hernia is limited as there is a structural disorder there. So auxiliary management and homeopathy can help in cases where it's a minor one. If it's a bigger hernia, surgical intervention might be needed in those cases.

Management

Lifestyle changes may help reduce the frequency of heartburn:

- Maintaining a nearly optimum weight as per height and age
- Avoid foods and drinks that trigger heartburn
- Elevation of the head of the bed
- Avoid smoking, caffeine, alcohol, chocolate, fatty food, citrus

juices

- Avoid heavy and large meals at one go
- Don't lie down after a meal at least for 3 hours
- Avoid smoking
- Reducing intake of tea and coffee or drinks that contain nicotine/caffeine
- Few food items which work like a natural antacid in most of the cases are : Cold milk, Ice cream.

Homeopathy for GERD

Homeopathy has a real answer to cases of GERD even in cases who don't show improvement even after lifestyle modifications. Homeopathic medicine when given on constitutional basis removes the person's tendency to acidity. For this one needs to see a homeopathic doctor and give the entire case history needed for a homeopathic prescription. The changes or betterment is reported within three to four weeks of starting the treatment and gradually all your symptoms start subsiding. The triggers which increase the reflux no longer cause trigger under normal circumstances. The duration of treatment varies from case to case as it depends from patient to patient and for how long the illness has been there; The benefit achieved with homeopathy is that person's tendency to get the attacks of acidity go away and that's the biggest benefit. But remember, the scope is limited In case patient has hiatus hernia as there the cause is structural anomaly and not just increased acid secretion.

Indications for few common medicines for acidity are given

below: There are some acute remedies which help in acute attack of acidity and give relief from symptoms on immediate basis, but there are many remedies for acidity in homeopathy and you need to ask your doctor for which will suit you best. However, we share some indications of remedies for your reference. Following remedies will give relief from the acute attack of acidity, gastritis but for people who have a chronic problem and have recurrent acute attacks would need a deeper remedy covering the constitutional totality of the patient.

Arsenic Album³

Arsenic album is a good drug for burning pain in the stomach which is relieved by drinking sweet milk. The patient craves for cold water and drinks small quantities at a time. Intense nausea and retching and regurgitation. Soreness and tenderness in the epigastrium. Complaints are associated with intense weakness and debility, restlessness and lot of anxiety.

Carbo Vegetabilis³

Burning in epigastrium with eructation. Pain in upper abdomen and discomfort. Sensation of fullness and burning in upper abdomen. Pain and heaviness in chest and upper abdomen, which is relieved by eructations.

Phosphorus³

Eructations of food, empty; vomiting of food or blood; vomiting temporarily amel. ice-cold drinks, vomiting as soon as the food becomes warm in stomach. Extreme faintness and goneriness in the region of the stomach.

Capsicum³

Burning pains after eating, heartburn, ulcers, nausea after coffee. Great thirst before during chill, after stool and diarrhoea. Flatulent colic. burning. colitis.

Colocynth³

Nausea and vomiting when pain gets intense. Violent pain especially at pit of stomach, ameliorated pressure, bending double, from vexation, indignation. Colic ameliorated coffee.

Nux Vomica³

Most common and an effective drug for digestive complaints. Sour eructations, sour water-brash, intense nausea wherein the patient feels relieved only after vomiting. Pain from epigastrium goes to the chest and is better after vomiting. Individual often eats and drinks alcohol in excess.

Robinia³

This is an exclusive remedy for acid reflux in children and adults who are sour smelling. It works well in cases of pronounced acidity where starch digestion is perverted in children. The acidity is accompanied with frontal headache, burning pain in stomach, acrid eructations, sour smelling stools, acrid and greenish vomiting. Their symptoms are worse at night on lying down preventing them from sleeping.

Reference

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