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ACUTE GASTROENTERITIS



Zulekha Hospital
Your Health Matters

What Is Acute Gastroenteritis?

Acute gastroenteritis or simply diarrhea refers to the passage of loose or watery stools. Infectious diarrhea, also called, is one of the most common infectious diseases that occur in humans. Approximately five billion episodes of diarrhea occur worldwide annually, accounting for 15 to 30 percent of all deaths in some countries. Death related to diarrhea is one of the five leading causes of death worldwide.

How Is Acute Gastroenteritis Diagnosed?

The history will be asked by the doctors with emphasis on the frequency of stools passed & the character of stools which is watery. Other associated symptoms like abdominal pain, fever, bloatedness & vomiting are important clues in the Diagnosis of the disease. A simple stool exam can determine the presence of Infectious Diarrhea & can aid the doctor in the management of the condition.

What causes Acute Gastroenteritis?

The causes could be classified either Infectious or non-infectious. The infectious causes are usually caused by viruses which are self limiting meaning no need for medications. On the other hand bacterial or parasitic diarrhea needs attention especially on the setting of fever, severe abdominal & dehydration so that the healthcare provider can prescribe the appropriate medications & most importantly institute rehydration. Non-infectious causes could either be due to Lactose or milk containing foods or drinks or some have genetic or anatomical problems of the gastrointestinal tract causing poor absorption leading to Diarrhea.

What will I do if I have Acute Gastroenteritis?

The most important thing to do is to increase fluid intake to replace the water lost from the body. However when it is already prolonged accompanied by fever, bloody stools, vomiting & signs of dehydration like weakness, decreased urine, muscle cramps, palpitations seek consultation right away.

Why is Dehydration dangerous?

Dehydration is defined as the loss of excessive fluids in the body due to Diarrhea, It is dangerous because it can cause Acute Renal Failure, once diarrhea is severe it decreases the fluids in the body to the point that it cannot maintain adequate blood flow to the kidneys causing decreased urination. Furthermore diarrhea causes Potassium loss which will lead to severe muscle weakness & cardiac arrhythmias all of which can lead to serious complications & eventually death if doctor's consult is not sought after.

How can you prevent Acute Gastroenteritis?

- Strict hand washing before & after eating
- Drink boiled or purified water, avoid drinking Tap water
- Cook food properly
- Wash hands when handling or preparing food
- Avoid eating street foods
- Avoid raw foods as much as possible
- Don't share the same food & utensils with persons having diarrhea
- There are new vaccines that can be acquired to avoid diarrhea
- Avoid eating food exposed to the environment for a long time
- Maintain good personal Hygiene