

Summer Ailments

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FEVERS- ?Viral, ?Malaria, ?Dengue, ?Sun stroke (yes, exposure to sun for 3-4 hrs in day and shuttling from air conditioned office to heat outside is enough to give a temperature in the region of 103°F)

ACUTE GASTRO ENTERITIS- Either due to eating wrong foods or maybe without any trigger.

In all of the problems mentioned above or just the feeling of weakness or tiredness in an otherwise healthy individual should bring **SEMI-DEHYDRATION** to your mind.

You may wonder that all the teachings you have had about dehydration is in a patient with major water (fluid) loss then what is this semi dehydration?

This is how it goes...

Say, an average adult consumes 1.5 to 2 lts of fluid + usual 3 meals + some in between snacks; with the conventional losses through sweat, micturition and stools.

Now this average adult gets fever- whatever cause, ranging between 101°F - 103°F - the sheer additional heat (plus the products of inflammation) cause water to evaporate- requiring a larger intake (2.5 to 3 lts of fluid + usual meals) just to maintain the milieu interior.

What does this person do? All patients feel a bitter taste in mouth and aversion to water and food. The intake goes down to 0.5 to 1 lts of fluid + either no meals or *kanji* or ½ glass of milk as all of this creates a deficit both of fluids and nutrition; also electrolytes (if patient has diarrhoea, vomiting, perspiring

too much or out in the sun).

All the complaints of weakness, body ache, fatigue, malaise that persist even after the fever has gone and the diagnosed ailment fully treated can be accounted for by the above mentioned deficit.

Solution? Simple!

While attending to any patient in summer (whatever acute complaint) tell them-

"Body needs an additional fluid and nutrients (20-25% extra) when it is fighting any ailment and we need to be careful to provide that. A minimum of 10-12 glasses of water (including maybe 2-3 glasses of home made lime juice with sugar and salt, if electrolyte loss is suspected - diabetics excluded).

Most of us do not allow cold things sharing the age old myths. Have you ever tried taking warm water in heat or with a bitter taste? Your patient is sick without the cold water - let him have cool things - more palatable eg cucumber, raw tomato, water melon - full of water and palatable. By all means avoid ice and chilled drinks but cool drinks do not aggravate.

Coming to food, conventional meals are not liked, generous servings of milk (cold), bread, fruits (no juices) and salads with soups should be recommended. Nutritious and palatable"! All of this is tested in my clinic for over 20 yrs and has led to good customer retention.

If we, learned physicians don't shatter myths? Who else can?