

DIET DURING JAUNDICE

Introduction

Jaundice is a disease that affects the liver, causing a yellow discolouration of the skin, mucous membranes and the white of the eye. Among various causes of jaundice, the infective jaundice is caused by viruses. Hepatitis A and hepatitis E are the main causes of water borne jaundice, commonly called as acute viral hepatitis. These viruses should not be confused with hepatitis B and hepatitis C which are acquired mainly through blood transfusions or using the infected needles or syringes.

Contaminated water is considered the main source of infection. It could be infected either due to bad personal hygiene of food vendors or due to sewage contamination of drinking water, or contaminated bore well water. Jaundice cases rises in summer due to more chances for intake of contaminated water. Due to intermittent water supply, the chances for contamination also increase.

Jaundice is caused by an increased amount of bilirubin in the blood. Bilirubin is a by-product of the daily breakdown of red blood cells in the body. Normally, the liver acts on the bilirubin and excretes it in the form of bile. However if there is a problem with this process, jaundice occurs.

Symptoms

Common signs and symptoms seen in people with jaundice:

- yellow discoloration of the skin, mucous membranes, and the whites of the eyes,
- light-coloured stools,
- dark-coloured urine, and
- itching of the skin.

The underlying disease process may result in additional signs and symptoms. These may include:

- nausea and vomiting,
- abdominal pain,
- fever,
- weakness,
- loss of appetite,
- headache,
- confusion,
- swelling of the legs and abdomen

Diet

Treatment of jaundice cannot be done with medications only. The most important aspect of jaundice treatment is the right diet. Jaundice is not a disease but actually a symptom of some other possible disease. There is no proven diet for jaundice, but generally a diet rich in complex carbohydrates, low in fat and providing adequate amounts of proteins is desirable. For this reason including whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables and including vegetarian sources of proteins is a good idea. Nausea is a common problem so drinking fluids at least half an hour before or after meals would be advisable in such cases.

The right food to cure jaundice can help you get better much quicker. In general, oily food must be strictly avoided as when the liver is weak; it does not have the capacity to digest oily foods. However, just avoiding fatty foods is not enough. One also needs to eat the right kind of foods to cure jaundice such as those that detoxify the liver. These detox foods help to rejuvenate the liver cells and get rid of the infection.

Cereals: Rice, Poha, Sooji, Vermicelli and Bread should be included in the diet while ragi, bajra, and other millets should be avoided.

Dals: All dals can be included except green gram, red gram and Bengal gram dals.

Vegetables: Root vegetables like potato, carrot, beetroot should be included while yam, colocasia and tapioca should be avoided. All vegetables and all green leafy vegetables should be eaten while cabbage, cauliflower and capsicum should be avoided. All fruits and fruit juices especially sugarcane juice should be eaten in plenty.

Fruits: Fruits contain a lot of Vitamin C along with antioxidants, minerals and other chemicals that help cleanse the body. Fruits like papayas, lemons, oranges, kinoo and mausambis are especially rich in Vitamin C. Juices are some of the most effective foods to cure jaundice. Sugarcane juice in particular is very helpful for the liver.

Oils and Fats: All oils and fats should be completely restricted as a low fat diet helps the recovery of the jaundice patient.

Water: Water is the most necessary liquid for the body to dissolve and flush out the toxins from the body.