

About home remedies today and yesteryears?

Toddler has just fallen down in the courtyard and has suffered a minor graze on the knee. Mother, along with the whole household goes into action. Get an antiseptic spray and a plaster to cover the graze and be quick. Comparing it with our younger days, we got an encouragement from mother, come on dear get up and be brave and the hug and a kiss from mum made the child forget everything. The graze would not only heal itself, but provide much needed resistance and immunity to common infections. Encouragement and hug is more important than the spray and band-aid for child to grow, both physically and mentally. In fact covering the minor wounds and applying all sorts of applications is more harmful. Natural bodily function is to stop bleeding from minor cuts and bruises within a minute or two, forming an airtight seal around the cut or braised skin. Drying and hardening of this clotted blood seals the wound in the form of a scab which falls off in due course, leaving a scar which also, unless very deep cut, disappears in time. Covering minor cuts, bruises or burns only prolongs the natural healing and alters the natural resistance building processes in the body. And obviously, major cuts and injuries to the skin requires medical attention and appropriate treatment should be sought. Not forgetting protection against tetanus, as routine immunisation is the most helpful modern intervention. This should be a part of growth monitoring among Under-5s through regular immunisation schedules to be completed within the first year of life for basic protection against immunisable diseases. Unfortunately there is some objection to immunisations from public, but not against unnecessary use of antiseptic sprays and use of band-aid for most trivial injuries!

Similarly, common colds and sore throats, which are generally due to viral infections, tendency is to rush antibiotics, both by medical practitioners and on demand from the patients. Natural remedies, which are equally effective, such as plenty of fluids, ginger and honey hot drinks, steam inhalations with eucalyptus oil etc. In any case the viral infections lasts for a week or so and again provides immunity to the body from same infection again. Answer is not in shopping around for cheaper drugs but to avoid any drug as much as possible. What is needed is public awareness and education for recognising the condition as minor illness and avoiding unnecessary doctor's consultation, prescriptions and over the counter medications.

Consider diarrhoeas, especially in children, most diarrhoeas are self-limiting and are of viral infection in nature. However, if diarrhoeas persists medical help is essential. The need for remaining hydrated is of essence. Body is trying to evacuate harmful toxins and/or bacteria. Medicines, especially antibiotics, are not helpful but are undoubtedly harmful, as they kill normal flora in our guts which are essential for our normal digestion of food. Taking tablets to stop purging leaves one bunged up for days after the episode. Having said that, it is beyond the scope of this article to cover this subject adequately. Suffice is to state that mismanagement of diarrhoea is one of the top causes of death for children Under-5 worldwide. Hygiene and clean water prevent diarrhoea and are the first things to be considered. Recurrent diarrhoea and under nutrition are inter-reliant and common in very young children. Prof. David Morely, a British paediatrician, working in Africa in the 1960s published his work in Medical Care in Developing Countries, suggesting a simple solution made up of a litre of boiled water with a fistful of sugar and a pinch of salt for diarrhoea. This is as good today as it was sixty years ago. Studies demonstrate that commercial rehydration drinks for children are no better at hydrating sick kids than any other clear fluids, even though these rehydration drinks promise—and cost—more.[\[1\]](#)

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of microbes in most situations. It is understandable to use hand sanitizers in clinics and hospital settings. But to have them in super market entrances and other public places is wasteful and meaningless. It has become fashionable to carry an antiseptic spray in one's bag to sanitise hands every now and then. Moreover it

encourages the development of resistant bugs. Use of medicated soaps is another example. Carbolic acid, Chlorhexidine, Dettol and other antiseptics have been used to make soaps to clean skin to ward off bacteria for daily use.

When we were small, we did not have access to plasters or sprays on our minor cuts and burns. Did not get any antibiotic for our common colds, coughs and diarrhoeas. Washing hands was mainly with running water and occasionally use of soap. I do not think we did get any more infections than the children today. In fact it seems we were less prone to illnesses than what children seem to get today.

There are many more examples which could be used here, but the purpose of this article is to encourage use of common sense. Excessive use of commercial agents, with all their promises, is a waste of money and keeping us from developing natural immunity and resistance to diseases. Moreover, most of these things directly or indirectly are environmentally unfriendly.

The sale hype and propaganda is to sell all sorts of goodies under the pretext of protection from dangers of disease and illness and should be taken with a pinch of salt. Sales pitch is to make money and there is a lot of it in this business. Just take into account the multibillion dollar industry that is thriving because of this approach to minor illnesses and is estimated to cost the U.S. economy roughly \$40 billion a year in loss of work, doctor's visits and remedies -- substantially more than other conditions like asthma, heart failure and emphysema. Brand name bandages, gauze and the like of a single company is estimated to be a 361 million U.S. dollars in sales in the United States in 2018 and there is constant aping of USA in the world.

Understanding the evidence surrounding your own health and asking your health care provider clear questions about his or her recommendations can help you avoid medical interventions that you not only don't need, but could potentially harm you.^[1]

Reference:

[1] <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/evidence-based-living/201901/is-medical-intervention-doing-you-any-good>