

Intestinal Antispasmodics

“Intestinal spasm” is a broad term referring to the abnormal convulsion of involuntary muscles of internal organs. The problem is most commonly seen in organs like the small and large intestines, bile ducts and the ureter. Colic often occurs in intestinal spasm. Convulsion of the large or small intestines may also be accompanied by abdominal distention and diarrhea.

Spasm has various causes. Lithiasis, gastroenteritis, food allergy, drug reaction and emotional stress are some of the examples.

Intestinal antispasmodics have the major functions of muscle relaxation and convulsion control, thus alleviating spasmodic pain. Given the numerous causes for convulsion, intestinal antispasmodics offer only pain relief rather than a permanent cure. Indiscriminate use of these drugs should therefore be avoided. To effect a radical cure, identify the cause of illness and get proper treatment. Taking intestinal antispasmodics before identification of such cause or medical consultation may cover up signs of serious illnesses such as acute appendicitis, resulting in unobvious symptoms and difficulties in making the right diagnosis by your doctor. Treatment will then be delayed and the consequence may be very serious. A doctor will not prescribe intestinal antispasmodics for his/her patient for alleviation of discomforts unless he/she has got a clear understanding of the patient's conditions and made a confirmed diagnosis.

Common examples of intestinal antispasmodics include propantheline bromide and hyoscine-N-butylbromide, both of which can relieve colic caused by gastrointestinal stress.

Advice on Medication

- (1) It is advisable to take the drugs 30 minutes to an hour before meals or as instructed by the doctor.
- (2) Do not overdose. Common side effects include mouth dryness, blurred vision, constipation and difficulties in urination. Such effects will subside if medication stops.

Storage of the Drugs

The drugs should be stored in a dry and cool place. Generally, they do not need to be refrigerated unless otherwise stated in the drug labels. Oral drugs should be stored properly to avoid accidents of mistaken consumption by children.