

Homoeopathic Approach to Thumb Sucking in Children

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ABSTRACT

Thumb sucking is a behavioral habit disorder. Thumb sucking is considered as a normal developmental phase but may become a habit in some children. It can be due some insecurities, boredom, and loneliness experienced by the child and may develop after the birth of sibling. Persistent sucking of thumb or fingers in older children is a cause of concern as it may lead to dental malocclusion, soreness of fingers or thumb, and speech difficulties. Homoeopathy offers effective and safe treatment for thumb sucking in children. In this article an attempt is made to explain thumb sucking in children and its homoeopathic management.

Keywords: Thumb sucking, Children, Homoeopathy, Habit disorder.

INTRODUCTION

Placement of thumb into the mouth for various depths is known as thumb sucking.^[1]

Finger or thumb sucking is usually a symptom of hunger, boredom, shyness, teething, fatigue, and sleep. It reaches its peak at 18 to 24 months and gradually disappears by the age of 3 years. Bottle-fed babies are able to finish their feeds quickly from bottle and are more likely to suck their thumbs to satisfy their sucking urge. One should look for the cause in excessive thumb-sucking during both daytime and night time in children older than 2 years. The common causes are insecurity, boredom, and jealousy. ^[2] Homoeopathy can treat thumb sucking in children with individualistic and holistic approach. As

homoeopathic medicines can be administered in the form of sweet pills, children take the medicine without any compulsion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some habits are very persistent in childhood. These are tension discharging phenomena. Thumb sucking is a behavioural habit disorder and is a cause of concern to many parents.^[3]

Types of Thumb-sucking

Type A

Most common type where whole digit is placed inside the mouth. In this type the pad of the thumb pressing over the palate with the presence of maxillary and mandibular anterior contact. Can be seen in almost 50% cases.

Type B

Thumb is placed into the oral cavity with maxillary and mandibular contact but without touching the vault of the palate. Can be seen in almost one-third of children.

Type C

Thumb is placed into the mouth just beyond the first joint and touches the hard palate and the maxillary incisors. There is no contact with the mandibular incisors.

Type D

Very little portion of the thumb is placed into the mouth. ^[1]

Treatment

Treatment is unnecessary in young infants who put their fingers or thumb in their

mouth while sleeping. Use of restraining devices or the application of any bitter substances over thumb or fingers cause psychological disturbances to the child.^[2] Treatment of thumb-sucking should be considered after 4 years of age and when it causes dental problem, digital malformation, or distress to the child.^[1]

Rubrics related to Thumb sucking in children

1.Kent's Repertory

MOUTH: FINGERS in the mouth, children put: *Calc.*, *cham.*, *Ip.*^[4]

2.Boger Boenninghausen's Characteristics and Repertory

UPPER EXTREMITIES: Sucking the thumb: *Calc-p.*, *cham.*, *cean.*, *merc. nat-m.*, *nat-s.*, *sil.*, *sul.*^[5]

3.Augmented clinical synthesis

MOUTH: FINGERS in the mouth, children put: *Calc* mtf33, *Calc-p* mtf33, *Cham* mtf33, *Hell sne*, *Ip* mtf33, *Lyc* mtf33, *Med* mtf33, *Nat-m* sne, *Nat-s* mtf33, *Nit-ac*gk, **Phos** gk, *Sil* mtf33, *Sulph* gk, *Ther* sne, *Verat* nh.^[6]

4.Phatak's Repertory

T-Thumbs-Sucking: *Calc-p*; *Nat-m*; *Sil.*^[7]

5.Murphy's repertory

CHILDREN: FINGERS, in the mouth, children put - *calc.*, *calc-ox.*, *calc-p.*, ***cham.***, ***IP.***, *lyc.*, *med.*, *nat-m.*, ***sil.***, *tarent.*, *verat.*^[8]

Homoeopathic management

There are vast number of medicines in Homoeopathy. Medicine should be administered according to the symptom similarity. The drugs mentioned below can be considered for the management of thumb sucking in children, but they are not conclusive.

Calcarea carb

Child is fat, fair and flabby. Complaints of difficult and delayed dentition. Child craves for eggs, eat dirt, and other indigestible things. Aversion to meat and boiled things. Milk disagrees. Child is late in learning to walk. Sweat over the head iso much, that the pillow becomes wet.^[9]

Calcarea phos

Child is peevish, flabby, anemic. Digestion is feeble. Teeth develops slowly with rapid decay of teeth. Complaints worse on exposure to damp, cold weather.^[9]

Chamomilla

Chamomilla child is oversensitive, chilly and bad tempered. Child is easily affected by mortification, anger, chagrin and contradictions. Child suffers during dentition due various causes such as irritability, sleeplessness, diarrhea and vomiting. He is capricious and want to be carried all the time. Carrying gives amelioration to his complaints.^[10]

Lycopodium

In Lycopodium child, upper part of the body looks thin and lower part is well nourished. Nervous excitement and prostration are marked in lycopodium. He has craving for sweets and warm foods. He has aversion to bread, coffee and meat. Child has intolerance to oysters which cause loose motion and rashes in skin. He likes someone to be near him without disturbing, but has aversion to company. They have anxiety and nervousness to begin any task.^[10]

Natrum mur

Ill effects of fright and anger. Consolation aggravates the sufferings. Child is irritable, awkward, and hasty. He wants to be alone to cry. Tongue of the child is mapped with loss of taste. He is hungry yet losses flesh. Child craves for salt and has aversion to bread and fats. Fingernails are dry and cracked. Aggravation from noise and music, better in open air, cold bathing.^[9]

Phosphorus

Child is tall with fair skin and delicate eyelashes. He is very sensitive, quick in perception, grows rapidly and inclined to stoop. Child is always restless, move continually. He is chilly, sensitive to cold and complaints aggravates from cold except the complaints of head and stomach, which are ameliorated by cold. Phosphorus child is

anxious, has fear of being alone, of ghosts, and thunderstorms. Fear may cause diarrhea. Child answers slowly, does not like to answer. [10]

Silicea

Child is thin, anemic, tired and sickly in appearance. They grow weaker as there is lack of assimilation. There is no self confidence in child and they dread appearing in public. Sweating in upper part of the body and head is characteristic. Child desires cold things and has aversion to meat. There may be slow and difficult dentition. [10]

Sulphur

Child is thin, tall, stoop shouldered. Face of the child looks dirty. He is thirsty, eats less and drinks more. Child has great aversion for bath, cries when attempt to do. [10] Discharges are offensive in character. Child is always irritable. Complete loss of appetite or excessive appetite may present. Dry skin and great thirst. [9]

Veratrum album

Sunken, pale face with icy coldness of tip of the nose. Cold perspiration on forehead is characteristic. Thirst for cold water. Aversion to warm food. Voracious appetite. [9]

Zincum met

Child is lethargic, stupid, repeats everything said to it. Dentition is delayed and difficult. Restlessness of feet, which is in continuous motion, cannot keep still. Child cries out during sleep, wakes up frightened, screams out loudly in sleep. [9]

CONCLUSION

Thumb sucking in children can be effectively managed by homoeopathic medicines. Homoeopathy aims in individualized treatment, which treats the patient as a whole. Appropriate homoeopathic medicines for each case can

be selected through proper case taking, systematic repertorisation and consulting the Materia medica.

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